



Press Release
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Urban, rural divides in access to water: twice as many rural households use surface water and twice as many urban households access piped water
For 1 out of 20 rural households, collecting water takes at least three hours

15 April 2018, Nairobi: There are wide disparities in access to water between rural and urban areas. In rural areas, 2 out of 5 households (41%) use surface water (rivers, streams, lakes etc) while in urban areas 1 out of 5 households (20%) do so. Conversely, in urban areas, 2 out of 5 households (35%) access piped water while in rural areas 1 out of 5 do so (17%).

Rural households need on average 45 minutes to collect water, up from 37 minutes in 2016. For three out of ten households (30%), collecting water takes at least an hour and for one out of twenty households (5%) it takes at least three hours.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *On tap? Kenyans' opinions and experiences of water, sanitation and hygiene*. 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 1,705 respondents across Kenya between October and November 2017.

Rural citizens are more likely to have challenges in the water sector (54%) than their urban counterparts (41%). In rural areas the main water challenges are distance to water points (40%), dirty water (29%) and not enough water points (25%). In urban areas, citizens face irregular supply (24%), long distances to water points (23%) and dirty water (22%), not completely unlike rural communities.

Rural households are also far less likely to have access to an improved latrine (54%) than urban households (77%). But the gap in access to improved latrines is larger between poorer (38%) and wealthier (98%) households.

Despite rural areas facing many disadvantages in terms of access to water, access to improved water sources in rural areas has been rising steadily since the 1990s from one out of three households (33%) to one out of two (52%) in 2017. But in urban areas, access has dropped sharply from nine out of ten households (90%) in the 1990s to seven out of ten (71%) in 2017.

Perhaps unsurprisingly in 2017, seven out of ten citizens (67%) agree that access to water is a serious challenge in their communities, up from six out of ten (58%) in 2016. In rural areas, the proportion of citizens saying that water is one of or the most serious challenges they face rose from 60% to 71% between 2016 and 2017 while in urban areas it rose from 54% to 62% over the same period.

Overall more citizens seem to be making use of more varied water treatment options; 47% of households boil water, up from 44% in 2016, and 43% use chemical treatments, up from 39%. However many more citizens are adopting less safe water treatment activities such as letting it stand and settle

(11% in 2016 to 22% in 2017) and straining it (10% in 2016 to 18% in 2017). And overall the share of people who do not treat their water as is static at 34% (in 2016, 35%)

Yet citizens are, in 2017, more satisfied with how county governments are delivering water: four out of ten (42%) are very / satisfied compared to three out of ten (31%) in 2016. And citizens see improvements in the sector: 4 out of 10 (37%) say their access to clean and safe water has improved over the past year (compared to 3 out of 10 (27%) saying so in 2016). However, in 2017, there are still more citizens who are dissatisfied (45%) with water services than those who are satisfied.

Victor Rateng of *Sauti za Wananchi* at Twaweza, said: *“Despite rural communities facing an array of challenges more acutely than urban communities - including time taken to collect water, accessing clean water and accessing improved latrines - all citizens are positive about improvements in the water sector.”*

“But,” he continued, *“the shocking fact remains that half of rural Kenyans still don’t have access to clean and safe water, and the underlying trend of dramatic declines in access to improved water sources in urban areas is of deep concern. Not only is water essential in day to day life, the crowded conditions in urban areas mean that poor sanitation and the use of dirty water can lead to rapid spreading of disease. Urgent action is needed now to address these stark realities.”*

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Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org, or www.twaweza.org/sauti
- Twaweza works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. We have programs, staff and offices across all three countries, and a globally respected practice of learning, monitoring and evaluation. Our flagship programs include *Uwezo*, Africa’s largest annual citizen assessment to assess children’s learning levels across hundreds of thousands of households, and *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa’s first nationally representative mobile phone survey. We undertake effective public and policy engagement, through powerful media partnerships and global leadership of initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership
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