



On tap?

Kenyan's' opinions and experiences of water, sanitation and hygiene

1. Introduction

Water is an essential requirement for life. It is also a Constitutional right for every Kenyan. Article 43(1) states that every person has the right “to accessible and adequate housing and to reasonable standards of sanitation” and the right “to clean and safe water in adequate quantities”. The Constitution assigns responsibility for water supply and sanitation provision to the counties.

And yet, surveys have consistently shown that for many these “rights” exist only on paper. For some, the time involved in collecting water is a serious drain on household resources. For others, the challenge is the financial cost. And for many, the only water available to them is neither clean nor safe.

This research brief presents data on citizens' experiences and opinions in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector. How many

residents of urban and rural areas can access drinking water from improved sources? How long does it take for households to collect water, and who bears the responsibility for doing this? And how satisfied are citizens with the water services provided by their county governments?

Data for this brief comes from Twaweza's flagship *Sauti za Wananchi*, which is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. Information on the overall methodology is available at www.twaweza.org/sauti. For this brief, data were collected from 1,705 respondents from Kenya's *Sauti za Wananchi* panel in the eighteenth round of calls to the panel, conducted between November 20 and December 15, 2017. The poll has +/-2.4% margin of error at 95% confidence level.

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Sauti za Wananchi



The key findings are:

- Half of all rural households depend on unimproved water sources
- Access to improved water sources continues to fall in urban areas
- Three out of four households harvest rainwater, but for most this is not a dependable source
- Two out of three citizens say access to clean water is the most serious problem facing their community
- In rural areas, the biggest challenge faced by communities in accessing clean drinking water is distance to water points
- In one out of twenty rural households, collecting water takes at least three hours
- The responsibility for water collection largely falls to women
- Water treatment practices are increasing
- Two out of three households have access to an improved latrine
- One out of four of the poorest households have no toilet facility
- Citizens’ satisfaction with water services has increased since 2016

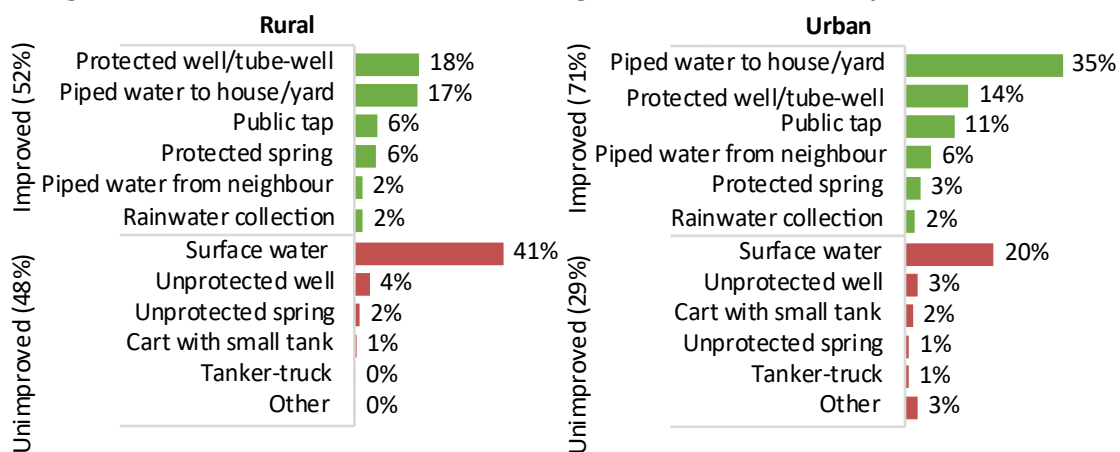
2. Seven facts about water, sanitation and hygiene

Fact 1: Half of all rural households depend on unimproved water sources

One out of two rural households (48%) depend on unimproved water sources, including four in ten households (41%) that collect water directly from surface sources such as rivers, streams and lakes. One out of six rural households (17%) has access to a piped water supply direct to their house or yard.

In urban areas, one out of three households (35%) have access to a piped supply into their house or yard, while one out of five households (20%) collect water from surface sources.

Figure 1: What is the main source of drinking water for members of your household?¹

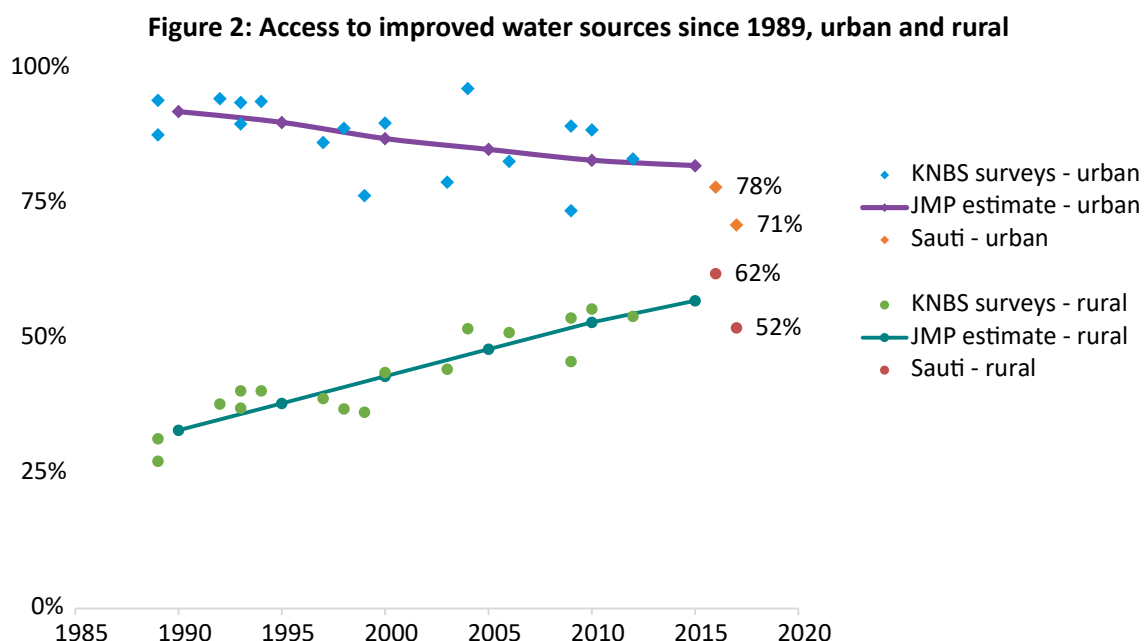


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19 (November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

1 Percentages in charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

The number of households with access to improved water sources continues to decline in urban areas of Kenya. Three out of four urban households (71%) now have access to improved source, down from nine out of ten (90%) in the early 1990's².

In rural areas the long-term trend is more positive, with the number of households having access to improved water sources increasing from one out of three (33%) in 1990 to over half (52%) now³.



Sources: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19 (November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,741) and Round 8 (November 5-28, 2016; n=1,741; JMP and KNBS⁴

Fact 2: 3 out of 4 households harvest rainwater, but it does not last

Three out of four households (77%) harvest rain water. This is mostly as a supplement to another source, as just 2% cite rainwater harvesting as their main source (see Fact 1).

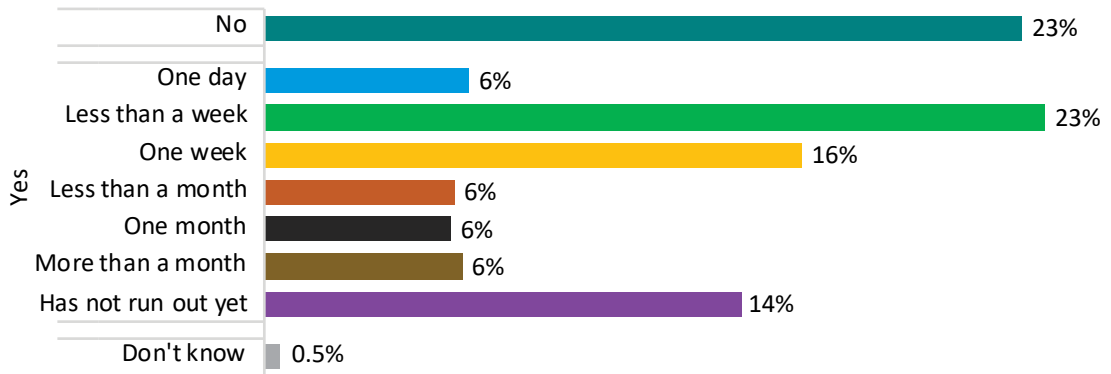
In most cases, rainwater harvesting does not constitute a long-term solution to water supply challenges. In half of all households (51%), harvested rainwater lasted less than one month before running out.

2 Data and definition of “improved” source from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF – see <https://washdata.org/>

3 ibid

4 KNBS and JMP data available from <https://washdata.org/data>

Figure 3: Do you harvest rain water? The last time you did, how long did it last?



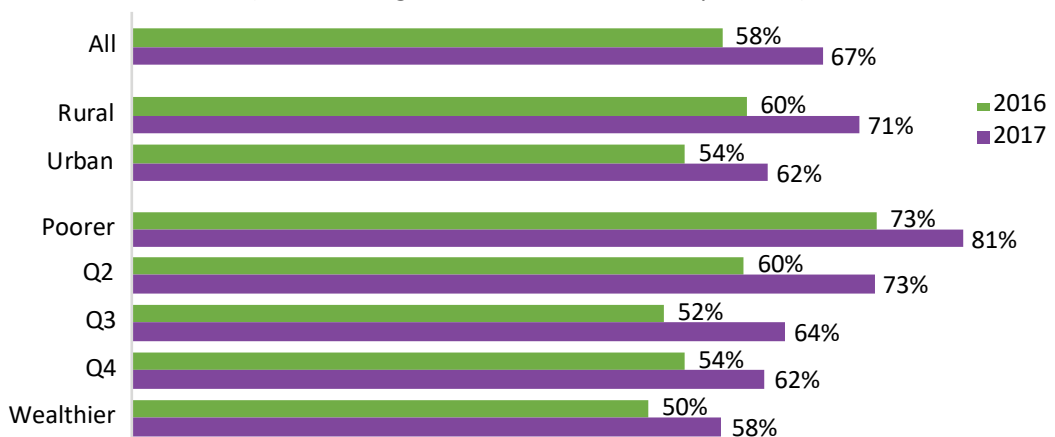
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19
(November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

Fact 3: Access to clean water is more of a problem now than in 2016

Two out of three citizens (67%) say access to clean and safe drinking water is either *a* or *the most* serious problem facing their community. This represents an increase since 2016, when six out of ten citizens (58%) felt this way.

The figure is slightly higher in rural areas (71%) than urban (62%), and substantially higher among poorer households (81%) than for their wealthier counterparts (58%).

Figure 4: How much of a problem is access to clean drinking water in your community?
(% answering 'a' or 'the most' serious problem)

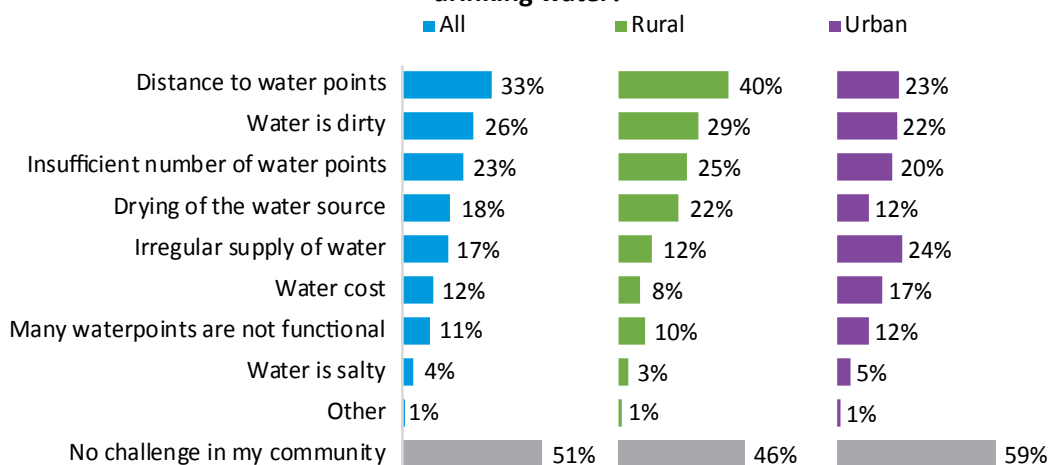


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19
(November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

In rural areas, the biggest challenge faced by communities in accessing clean drinking water is the distance to water points, cited by four out of ten households (40%). A further one out of four rural households (25%) cite an insufficient number of water points. Dirty water (29%) and dry sources (22%) are also widely mentioned.

In urban areas, the challenges are similar, but the biggest single issue mentioned is the irregular supply of water (24%).

Figure 5: What are the two main challenges your community is facing in accessing clean drinking water?



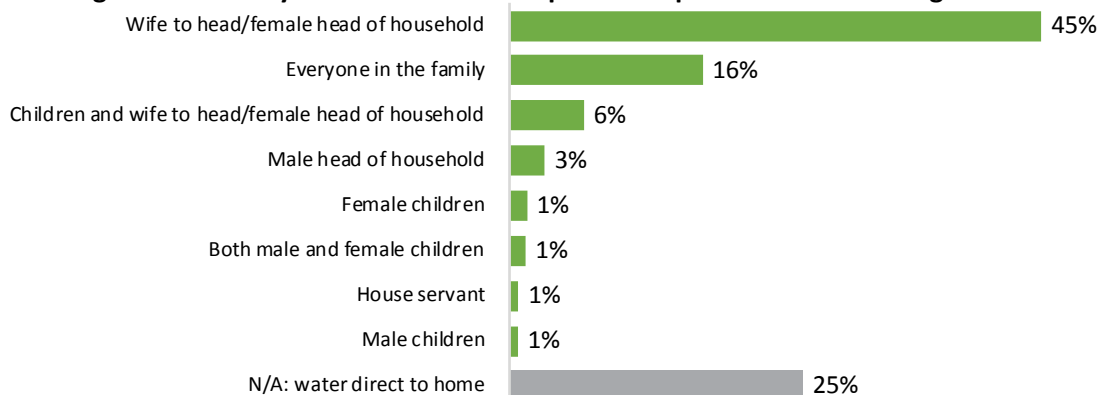
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19
(November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

The average collection time for household drinking water in rural areas is 45 minutes, up from 37 minutes in 2016. In three out of ten rural households (30%), it takes an hour or more to collect water from their main source, and in one out of twenty rural households (5%) this takes three hours or more (not shown in charts).

Fact 4: The responsibility for water collection largely falls on women

In just under half of all households (45%), the responsibility for water collection falls to the wife of the head of household or the female head of household. One out of six households (16%) report that this responsibility is shared by the whole family.

Figure 6: Who in your household is the person responsible for collecting water?

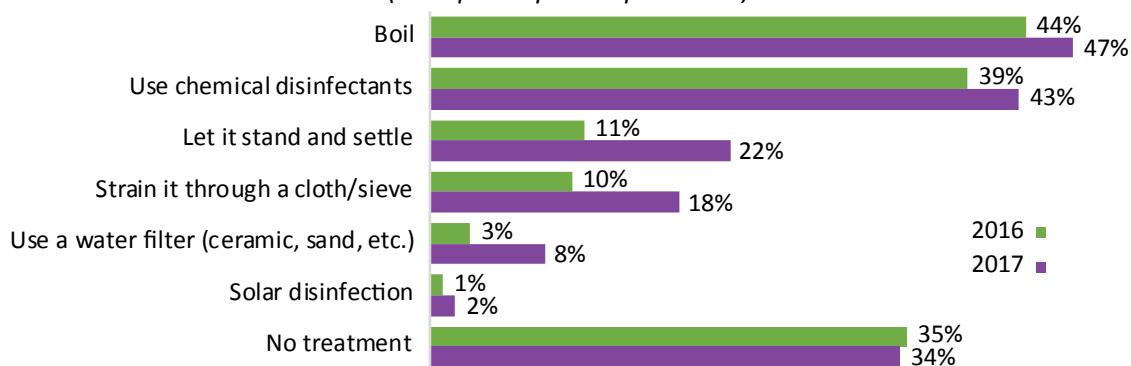


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19 (November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

Fact 5: Water treatment is becoming more common

Two out of three households (66%) carry out some form of water treatment at home, and many use more than one method. Half (47%) report boiling water before drinking, and a similar number (43%) use chemical disinfectants. One out of five households (18%) strain water through a cloth, and one out of ten (8%) use a water filter. In all these cases, water treatment has increased slightly since 2016.

Figure 7: Do you do the following to the water to make it safer to drink?
(multiple responses permitted)



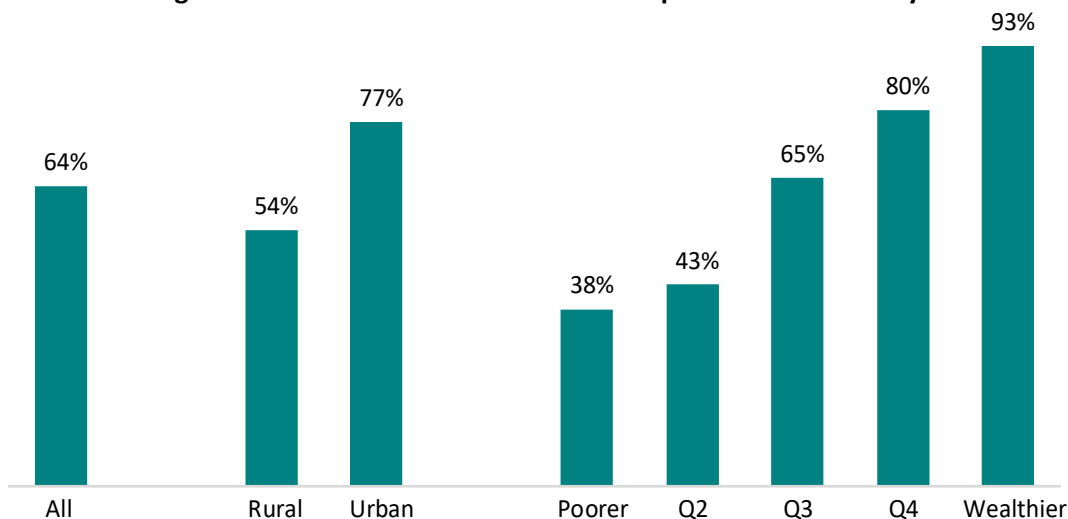
Sources: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19 (November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705) and Round 8 (November 5-28, 2016; n=1,741)

Among those who do not treat water, the majority (65%) say this is because their water supply is already safe for drinking, and one in five (21%) say they lack the resources to treat water (not shown in charts).

Fact 6: 2 out of 3 households have access to an improved latrine

Two out of three households (64%) have access to an improved latrine facility. The figure is higher in urban areas (77%) than rural (54%), and much higher among wealthier households (93%) than among the poor (38%).

Figure 8: Households with access to an improved latrine facility



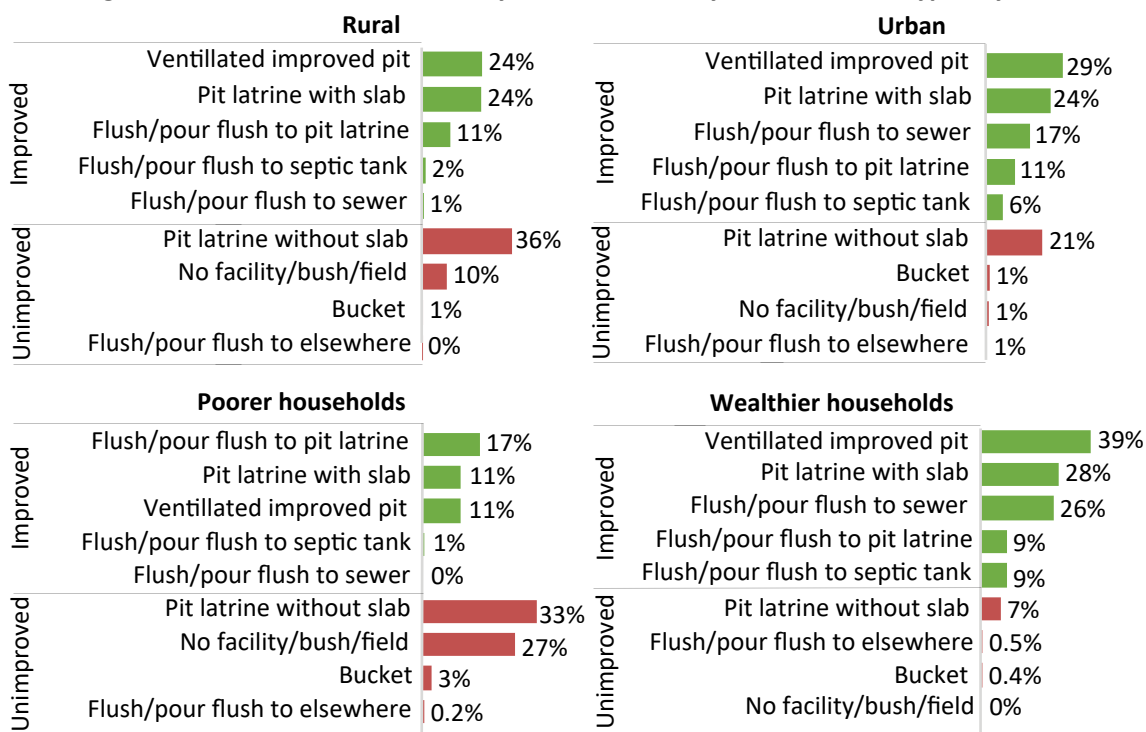
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19
(November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

In rural areas, the most common type of latrine facility is the pit latrine without a washable slab (classified as an “unimproved” source⁵). In urban areas, higher standards of pit latrine are more common, including ventilated improved pit latrines (29%) and pit latrines with slabs (24%). One out of six urban households (17%) has a toilet connected to a piped sewer system.

Among poorer households, one out of three (33%) use a pit latrine without a slab, and one out of four (27%) have no toilet facility at all.

5 As defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF – see <https://washdata.org/>

Figure 9: What kind of toilet facility do members of your household typically use?



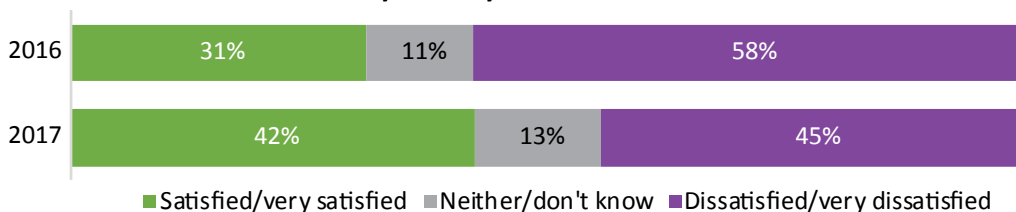
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19
(November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

In one out of five households (21%), access to latrines is shared with at least one other household. One out of twenty households (7%) share their latrine with ten or more other households.

Fact 7: Citizens’ satisfaction with water services has increased since 2016

Four out of ten citizens (42%) are satisfied or very satisfied with the performance of their county government in providing water services. This represents an increase since 2016, when one out of three citizens (31%) felt this way. However, more citizens remain dissatisfied (45%) than satisfied (42%).

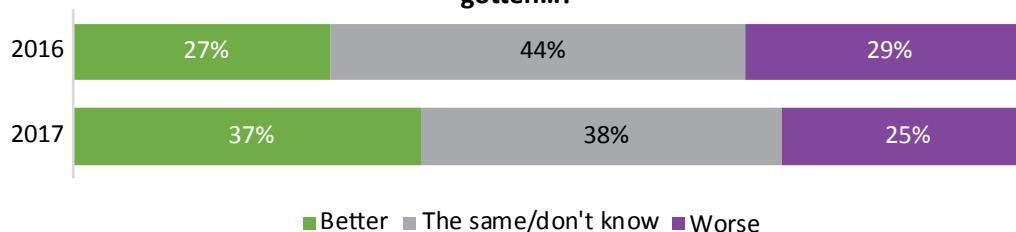
Figure 10: How would you rate your county government in terms of providing water services to you and your household?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19 (November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

Similarly, citizens are now more positive that their water services are improving (37%) than in 2016 (27%).

Figure 11: If you reflect on the past 12 months, has your access to clean and safe water gotten...?




Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 19 (November 27 – December 15, 2017; n=1,705)

3. Conclusion

A large majority of citizens say that water is the most serious problem facing their community, and there are two specific serious areas of concern. First, access to improved water sources continues to decrease in urban areas, a trend that reflects at least three decades during which the expansion of water supply services in Kenya’s towns and cities has not managed to keep up with population growth.

The data themselves show huge variation, access to water is so dependent on climatic variance that huge drops and jumps in access figure are common and depend significantly on the time of year. In some senses these figures demonstrate both the worry and the value of *Sauti za Wananchi* data. Though the mobile phone polling mechanism there is some scope to collect these data fairly frequently and ideally establish a more accurate picture of the realities of water availability. At the same time, the *Sauti za Wananchi* data will always post lower than official data, potentially providing a more accurate picture of how people live or driven by people’s desires to see their own situation as difficult and worthy of support.



A large part of the water challenge is distance to water points and the time it takes to get there. The average water collection time for rural households is 45 minutes, 30% of rural households need an hour or more to collect water, and for a significant number (5%) it takes at least three hours. This is a long way from turning on a tap. It means that each trip to collect water must be carefully weighed up and each drop of water carefully rationed. And since water collection responsibilities are borne by women in most households, this is potentially a major restriction on the ability of women to engage in other, more productive activities.

There is some good news. More citizens are now satisfied with the water services provided by their county governments than in 2016, and a growing number of households are engaging in water treatment practices. Devolving this service seems to have led to improved delivery.

