



Press Release
2 September 2015

Almost half of citizens care most about policies when choosing the next President Citizens report that wealth and religion of the candidate play no part in their choice

2 September 2015, Dar es Salaam: Almost half of all citizens (46%) report that policies are most important determining their choice of President. No other issue was nearly as important: the next most popular criteria was morality and ethics, mentioned by 17% of citizens. Interestingly nobody named religion or wealth as playing a deciding role in their decision. Even age was only mentioned by 1% of citizens.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Do they know? Data on voter knowledge*. 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 1,335 respondents across Mainland Tanzania (Zanzibar is not covered in these results) between 12 and 26 June 2015.

Citizens also believe that the elections will be free and fair and that their choices and priorities will be respected. More than eight out of ten (82%) believe that their vote will count regardless of who they vote for. But almost two out of ten (18%) think that those in power will break rules to win if needed. A large majority (65%) also believe that the candidate with the best policies will win, compared to 35% who think that the candidate with the most money will win.

When it comes to the media, three out of four citizens (76%) think the media will report accurately and fairly on the elections while 24% think that the media will take sides either due to personal preference or financial incentives.

Despite this general optimism, citizens are concerned about election violence. Worryingly, more than half (54%) think there is a high risk of violence around the elections (Twaweza did not collect data on who citizens thought would initiate this violence). Citizens' fears may be reflective of the fact that almost two out of ten (18%) reported directly witnessing violence at the polling station during the local elections at the end of 2014 (*Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey - Round 30 February-March 2015).

Citizens are also aware of a number of the main rules governing the behaviour of political parties during the campaigns. At least three out of four citizens are aware that candidates or political parties are not allowed to give money to voters for votes (75%) and that they are not allowed to distribute food and drink at campaign rallies (79%). However, 6 out of 10 citizens (60%) did not know that political parties and/or candidates are required to keep detailed records about the money they received and how it was spent.

Citizens may be informed through work done by the National Electoral Commission (NEC); and 6 out of 10 (62%) are aware that the NEC is responsible for overseeing the general elections. However just half of citizens (51%) are confident of the NEC's ability to oversee free and fair elections in 2015. Similarly when

asked about a specific aspects of NEC's performance in 2010, half of citizens or slightly more were satisfied with voter education (49%), the correctness of the results (54%) and staff conduct (52%).

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza said *“There is much to be happy about in this survey of citizens’ knowledge about their civic duty as voters. First, Tanzanians are clearly more interested in policies than personalities when making their voting decisions. This challenges the sense one gets from the public and social media that individuals matter more than issues. Second they are optimistic that the elections will be held in free and fair conditions, although they are concerned about the possibility of violence. Third, it is very encouraging that citizens are also aware that being offered money or food or drink in exchange for votes is wrong.*

The message here to those seeking public office in October is that they must make a case to voters founded on bread and butter issues, rather than personal character. Citizens are saying that they want a real discussion about policy options, so that they can make a real choice between competing alternatives. That is a new and exciting challenge to everyone - politicians, reporters and of course, citizens.”

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Notes to Editors

- 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
- You can follow Twaweza’s work
Web: www.twaweza.org **Facebook:** Twaweza Tanzania **Twitter:** @Twaweza_NiSisi
- Twaweza is also currently organizing the Mkikimkiki 2915 election debates series. To express interest in attending please email pr@compass-tz.com or call +255 768 129974. You can also follow Mkikimkiki
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