

Press Release | 8 March 2022

**Half of Makueni residents have a male friend who commits physical violence against their female partner**  
*9 out of 10 Makueni residents say that men should be respected by all women regardless of their behaviour*

**Tuesday 8 March, Wote, Makueni:** Half of Makueni residents (47%) say they have a male friend who commits physical violence against their female spouse or partner. Among them, half (24% of citizens) have challenged this behaviour, one out of four (10% of citizens) have not challenged the behaviour but express willingness to do so while the rest (12%) are not willing to question their friends. At the same time, one out of four Makueni residents (22%) have a female friend who commits physical violence against their male spouse or partner.

These findings were released by Twaweza in collaboration with the Queen Esther Community Based Organisation, to mark International Women's Day 2022, in a brief titled *Gender norms and attitudes: Makueni residents' views and experiences*. The brief is based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The panel for this research was established through face to face interviews with randomly sampled respondents from Makueni. For this brief, data were collected from 739 respondents in the fifth round of the Sauti za Makueni panel, conducted between 29 June and 4 July, 2021.

When asked directly, one out of eight women in Makueni (13%) and one out of fifty (2%) men admit to being victims of gender-based violence. However it is important to note that questions about these types of sensitive areas are often subject to under-reporting. Outside of the home, women (9%) are still more likely than men (6%) to experience physical violence: one out of ten women have experienced at least one the following: being punched or hit, threatened with a knife or other weapon, or threatened with a gun.

Alongside these high rates of physical violence, particularly committed by men against women, Makueni residents hold some regressive views about gender:

- Nine out of ten Makueni residents (87%) say that men, whatever their behaviour should be respected by all women, because they are men. This view is held equally by both women and men.
- A majority (62%) agree with the view that in rape cases we must ask what the woman did to put herself in the situation. Again, this view is held by both women and men equally.
- A large majority of residents (84%) disagree with the statement that it is acceptable for a man to have multiple partners because they are a man, though men (18%) are more likely than women (10%) to agree with this statement.
- A significant minority of residents (15%) agree with the view that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten. Men (17%) are a little more likely than women (13%) to hold this view.

When asked what drives gender-based violence (GBV) in the county on the side of the perpetrators; more than half (53%) of residents say it is alcohol abuse. A significant minority also think that poverty (38%), unemployment (37%), economic and emotional dependence (32%), and a lack of education (31%) are contributing factors to gender violence. Additionally cultural and traditional values are considered as an important driver of gender violence by one out of five Makueni residents (21%).

Beyond gender-based violence, the attitudes and norms among Makueni residents paint a mixed picture. Eight out of ten residents (80%) say that girls need to help their mothers with household tasks with little difference

between men and women's views. Women (67%) are more likely than men (58%) to say that a woman's most important role is to care for the family and home.

However, there is greater diversity of opinion as to whether men should have the final say on all decisions in the household (50% agree). Fewer Makueni residents think that taking care of children is solely the women's responsibility (38%), or that girls should be less ambitious because they have families to think of in the future (28%), or that boys should be allowed to eat first (16%).

In practice, things are different. Women are much more likely to take on full responsibility for children: in 64% of households daily care of the children is the woman's responsibility while parents do it jointly in 27% of households. Similarly in 64% of households in Makueni, women stay home when the child is sick, in 55% of households women collect children from school and in 40% of households women are solely responsible for taking children to their leisure activities.

Similarly, when it comes to household chores and tasks, women are much more likely to have primary responsibility for cleaning the house (71%), washing clothes (70%), cleaning toilets (69%), and preparing food (66%). The household tasks for which men are named as having primary responsibility are in repairs and maintenance (in 44% of households men are responsible compared to 33% in which women are) and paying for household needs (in 43% of households men are responsible compared to 23% in which women are).

When it comes to decision-making at the household, the picture is more nuanced. Joint decision-making is more common in more households than men or women being named as the main decision-maker for a number of essential household decisions including food and household basic needs (in 36% of households, joint decisions are made), spending time with family and friends (40% of households make joint decisions), savings (42% make joint decisions), providing support to extended family and friends (43%), the health of household members (39%), land access and use (35%), large investments (39%), and education (39%).

Dr James Ciera, Country Lead for Twaweza in Kenya, said: *"These data provide rich insight into attitudes, norms and practices around gender roles and gender-based violence in Makueni. We believe they are relevant to all actors – government, community organisations and religious leaders in particular – who are striving for fairness and justice in gender issues. Although we can see clearly that there is an underlying sense that physical violence, especially against women, is wrong, both men and women have a range of views and opinions that can hold women back. As we know, these negative attitudes and assumptions often give rise to gross physical violence against women. That's why, on this International Women's Day, it is critical that we examine our own assumptions and presumptions, our own regressive attitudes and ensure that we break the bias."*

David Gabriel, of Queen Esther's Community Based Organisation said: *"In these data, we can see the results of years of work of advocacy and engagement around gender-based violence. We now need to work to take Kenya to a place where women's roles are not so deeply driven by purely domestic needs, and girls are not burdened with domestic tasks which make their education suffer. We need to build a Kenya in which girls and boys alike can be supported to achieve their dreams."*

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#### Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at [www.twaweza.org](http://www.twaweza.org) / [www.twaweza.org/resources](http://www.twaweza.org/resources)
- Twaweza works to address limited citizen agency and shrinking civic space in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. @TwawezaKe (Facebook), @Twaweza\_Ke (Twitter), Twaweza East Africa (Instagram).
- Queen Esther's Community Based Organization is involved in promoting, developing, encouraging and maintaining development agendas tailor made for the eradication of poverty in the country.