



Heading for the polls

Kenyan citizens' opinions in preparation for the general elections

1. Introduction

General elections are imminent. As always, they represent an opportunity for citizens to influence the country's direction and to hold leaders to account for their performance. Nevertheless, elections are no more than a blunt instrument – with citizens asked to choose between two or more broad collections of politicians and policies – rather than a precise tool for picking out details. Further, the history of recent elections in Kenya has been far from straightforward, including a controversially annulled election last time around, in 2017, as well as widespread election-related violence in 2007.

This brief presents data on citizens' experiences and opinions on preparations for the election. Are citizens aware of key details of the election? Are they registered to vote and do they intend to vote? Do citizens have

confidence in the ability of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to conduct the election credibly? And do they expect there will be a rerun of the violence that marred the 2007 election?

Data for the brief come from a special round of Twaweza's *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile-phone panel survey, conducted in collaboration with Uraia Trust. This panel was created through random sampling from a database of contacts from previous surveys to establish new representative panels of selected parts of the country: specifically Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Uasin Gishu (Eldoret) and six counties of the arid or semi-arid lands in the north and east of Kenya¹. Statistical weightings have been applied to the panel, to ensure it is fully representative of each of these areas. However, with the specific focus

1 The six counties arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) have been grouped for analysis as follows: Marsabit, Turkana, and Tana River (Mar, Tur, TR) and Mandera, Wajir and Garissa (Man, Waj, Gar).

on these particular cities and counties, the data are not in this case nationally representative. For this brief, data were collected from 2,800 respondents as a special cohort survey of *Sauti za Wananchi*, conducted between 18 and 29 July, 2022.

Key findings include:

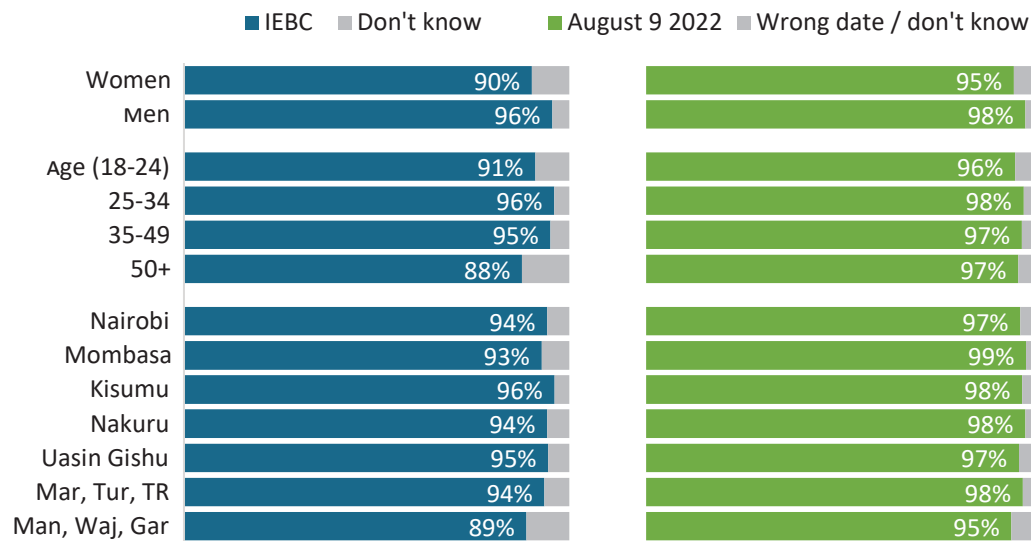
- Most citizens in these parts of Kenya are aware of key details of the upcoming general elections
- Large majorities of citizens say they are registered voters and that they are likely to vote
- A small but significant minority of citizens report experiencing election malpractice
- Most citizens think election-related violence in 2022 is unlikely
- Many citizens lack confidence in the IEBC
- Many citizens doubt that the upcoming general election will be free from fraud and vote tampering
- Most citizens see hate speech as a serious problem in Kenyan politics
- Citizens’ main source of information on election matters is national TV, followed by social media and radio

2. Kenyan citizens’ opinions on election preparedness

Insight 1: Most citizens in these parts of Kenya are aware of key details of the upcoming general elections

Across the seven regions covered in this data, a large majority of citizens are aware of key details of the upcoming general elections. This includes the name of the coordinating body (IEBC; 89-96%) and the date of the elections (9 August, 2022; 95-99%).

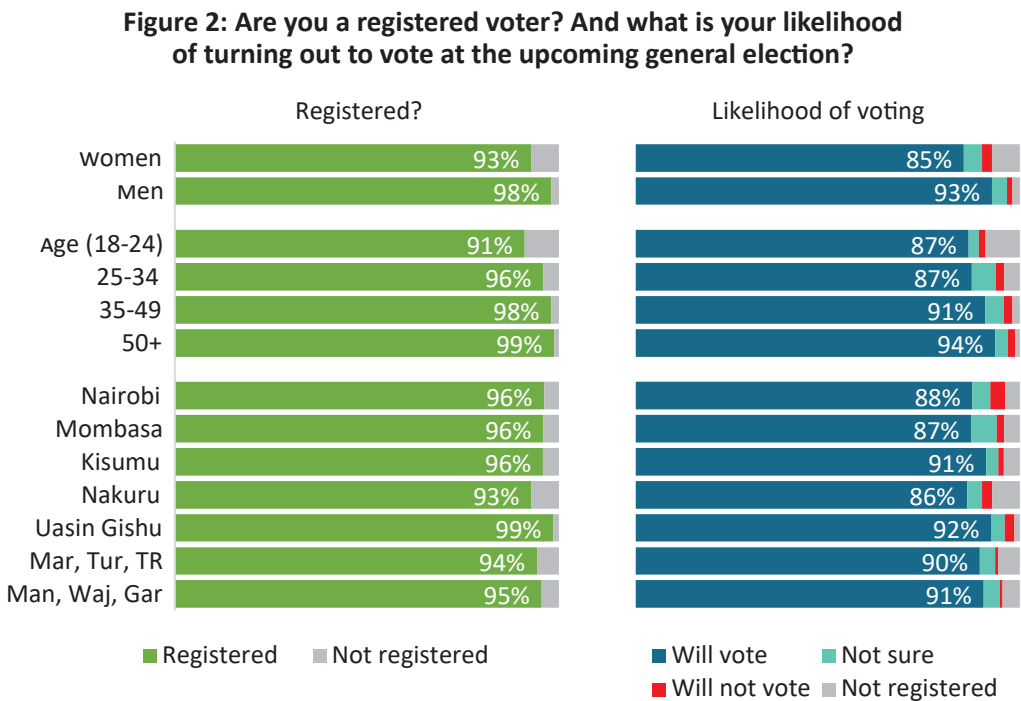
Figure 1: What is the name of the body that coordinates, supervises and oversees elections in Kenya? And when is the next general election being held?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)
Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 2: Large majorities of citizens say they are registered voters and that they are likely to vote

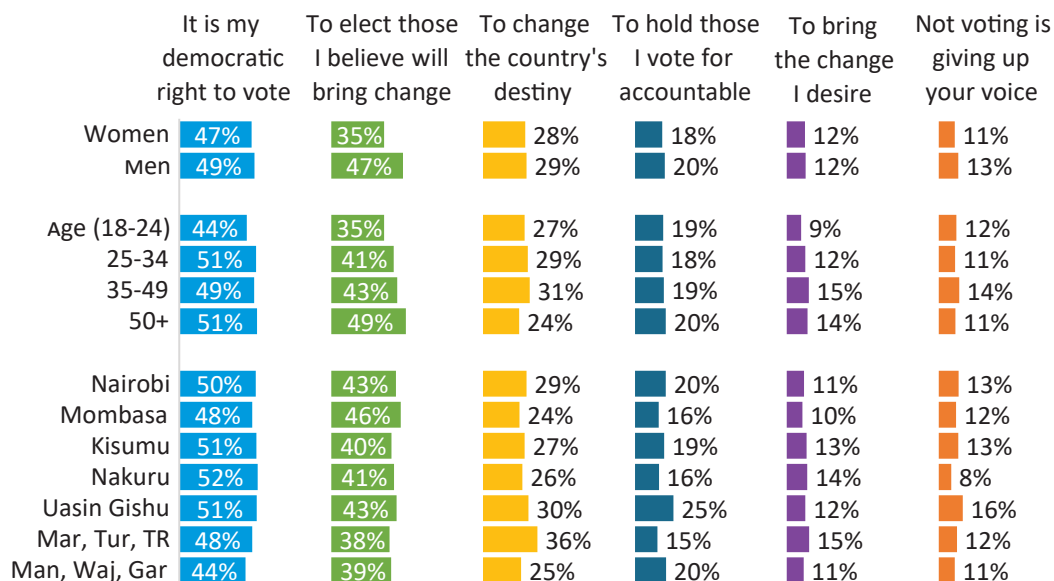
Across the seven regions, a large majority of citizens say that they are registered voters (93-99%) and that they will vote (86-92%). These figures are a little lower among younger citizens and among women.



Source: Sauti za Wananchi mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)
Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

The main reasons given for why it is important to vote are that it is a democratic right (44-52%), to elect those who can bring change (38-46%) and to change the country’s destiny (24-36%).

Figure 3: Why is it important that people vote in the coming elections?
(multiple responses permitted)



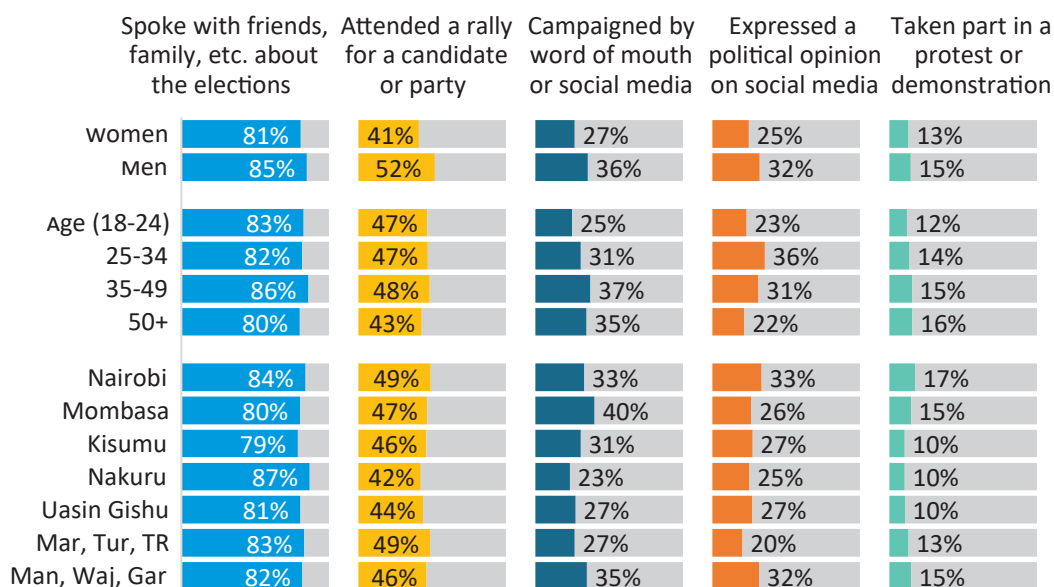
Source: Sauti za Wananchi mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 3: Significant numbers of citizens are politically active

Most citizens across the seven regions have discussed politics with friends and family (79-87%). Substantial numbers have also taken more significant actions including attending rallies (42-49%), actively campaigning in person or on social media (23-40%), expressing political opinions on social media (20-33%) and/or participating in a protest or demonstration (10-17%).

Figure 4: Percentage who have done the following at least once:



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 4: A small but significant minority of citizens report experiencing election malpractice

Small but significant minorities of citizens across the seven regions report either personally or via an acquaintance experiencing various forms of election malpractice². This includes politicians promising gifts or money in return for votes (9-15%), threats of violence if votes are cast a particular way (4-9%), instructions being given to register and vote more than once (4-8%), promised a gift in return for not voting (4-8%) and threats of violence for voting (4-8%).

² These figures include both cases of respondents and other people they know experiencing election malpractice. As such it is impossible to use this data to estimate how many cases are taking place, but rather the data can potentially be used to compare across different regions or (later) across different time periods.

Figure 5: In the last few months, have you or someone you know experienced any of the following?



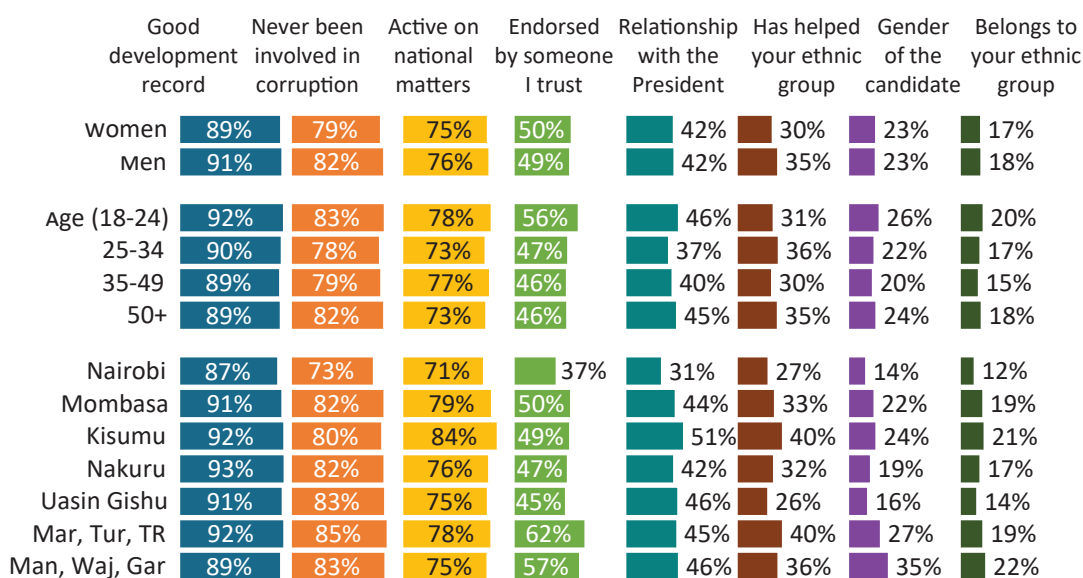
Source: Sauti za Wananchi mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 5: Citizens say they prioritise a politician's record over their gender or ethnicity when evaluating candidates

Across the seven regions, citizens say they evaluate candidates based on their record (71-93%) rather than their gender or tribal identity (12-35%). These figures vary a little between regions, with those in arid areas more likely to say a candidate's gender is an important factor.

Figure 6: Percentage who say the following attributes are important or very important when evaluating elected public officials?



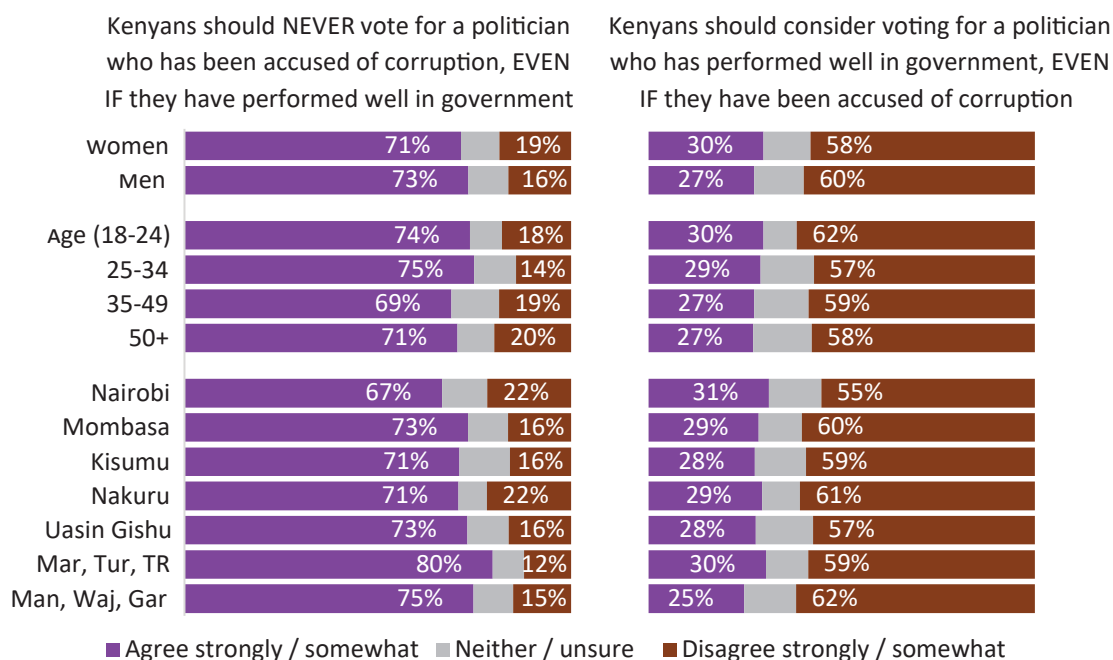
Source: Sauti za Wananchi mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 6: Most citizens say voters should never elect those who are accused of corruption, even if they have a good development record

Most citizens across the seven regions (67-80%) agree with the statement that Kenyans should never vote for a politician who has been accused of corruption, even if they have performed well in government. Far fewer citizens (25-31%) agree with the contrasting view that Kenyans should consider voting for a politician who has performed well in government, even if they have been accused of corruption.

Figure 7: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

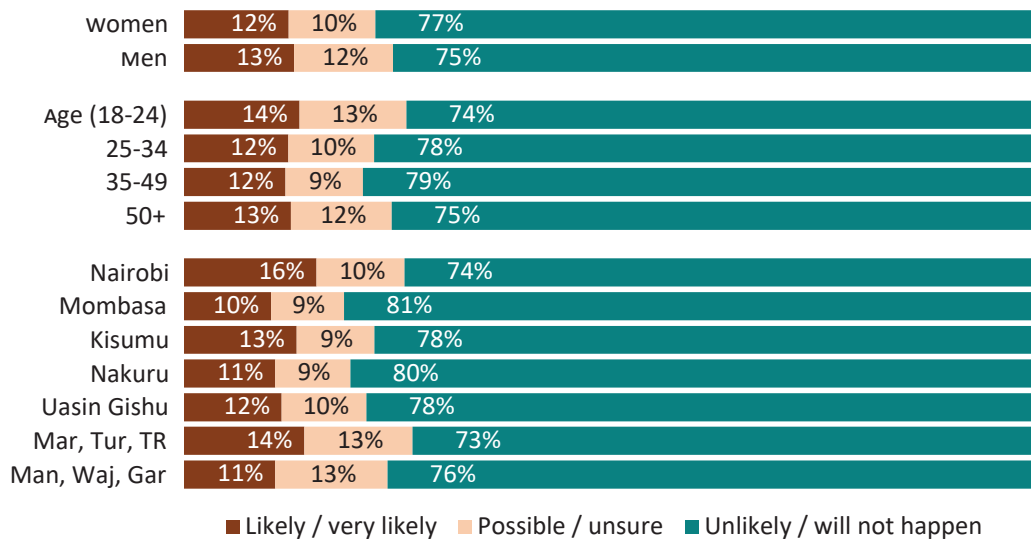
Insight 7: Most citizens think election-related violence in 2022 is unlikely

A clear majority of citizens across the seven regions (73-81%) hold the view that significant election-related violence is unlikely in this year's elections. A relatively small number (10-16%) say such violence is likely, while a similar number (9-13%) are unsure or say violence is possible. Citizens in Nairobi are a little more likely than others to think violence is likely.

These figures for those expecting violence are low in comparison with the 2017, when 35-45% of citizens said violence was likely. They are also low in comparison with citizens' expectations in late-2021, looking ahead to the current election period, when 35% said violence was likely or very likely³.

3 Strictly speaking, the previous data cited here is not directly comparable with the new data presented in this brief, as the survey in this case is not nationally representative, whereas the previous surveys were nationally representative. However, this comparison can give a rough indication of how citizens feel now compared to how they felt in the past.

Figure 8: Thinking about the upcoming election and looking at how the campaigns are being conducted, do you think there is a likelihood of election-related violence?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 8: Many citizens lack confidence in the IEBC

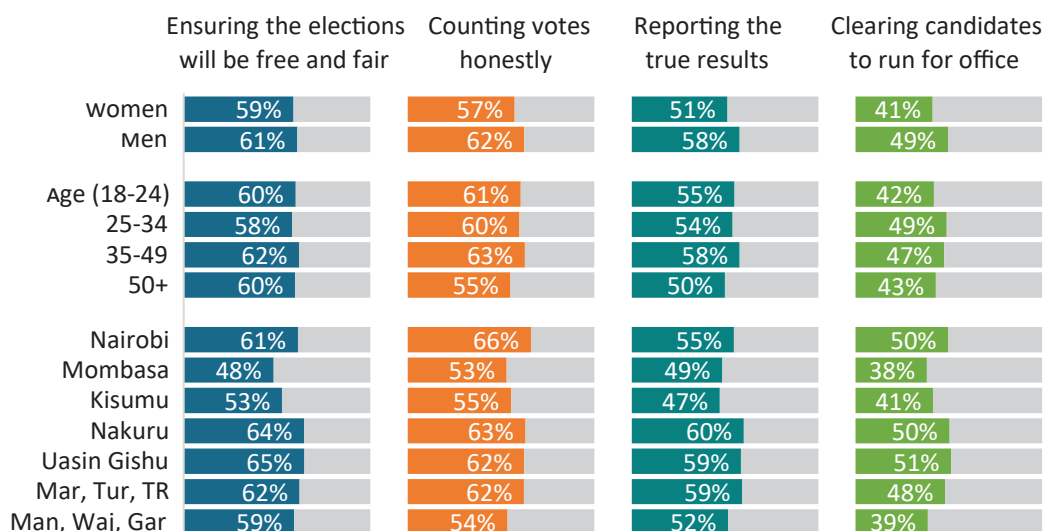
A significant number of citizens across the seven regions have some doubts about the ability of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to conduct the elections properly.

A little more than half think the IEBC can: ensure the elections are free and fair (48-65%), count votes honestly (53-66%) and report true results (47-60%). This leaves close to half in each case who lack confidence in the IEBC.

Confidence in the IEBC is particularly low in Mombasa and Kisumu.

Nevertheless, confidence in the IEBC is a little higher now (in these seven regions) than was the case nationwide in December 2021, when 39-45% had confidence in the IEBC.

Figure 9: Percentage who have confidence that the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) is capable of the following:



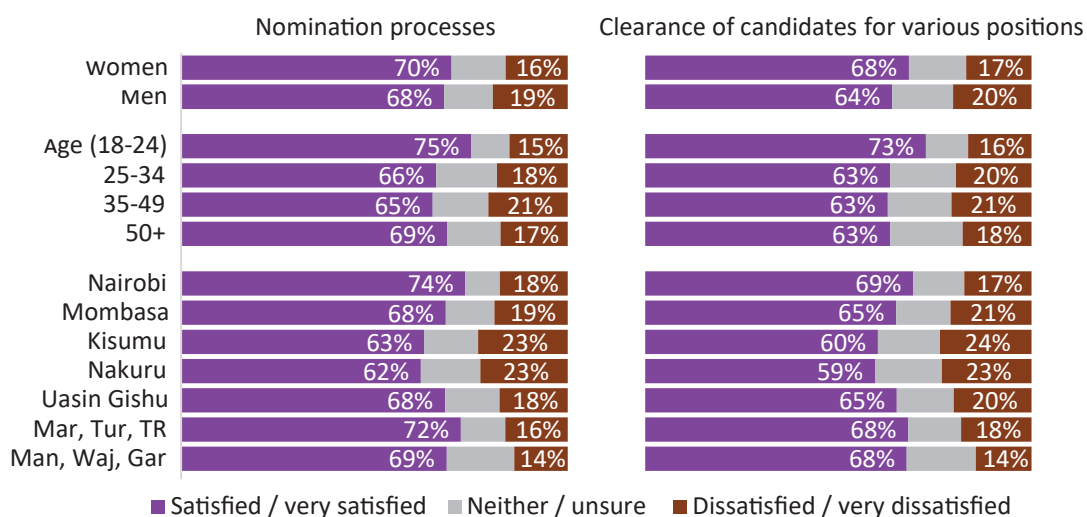
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 9: Most citizens are satisfied with how the IEBC has handled key pre-election procedures

Most citizens across the seven regions are satisfied with how the IEBC has handled the nomination process (62-74%) and the clearance of parties' candidates (59-69%).

Figure 10: To what extent are you satisfied by the way the IEBC handled the following?



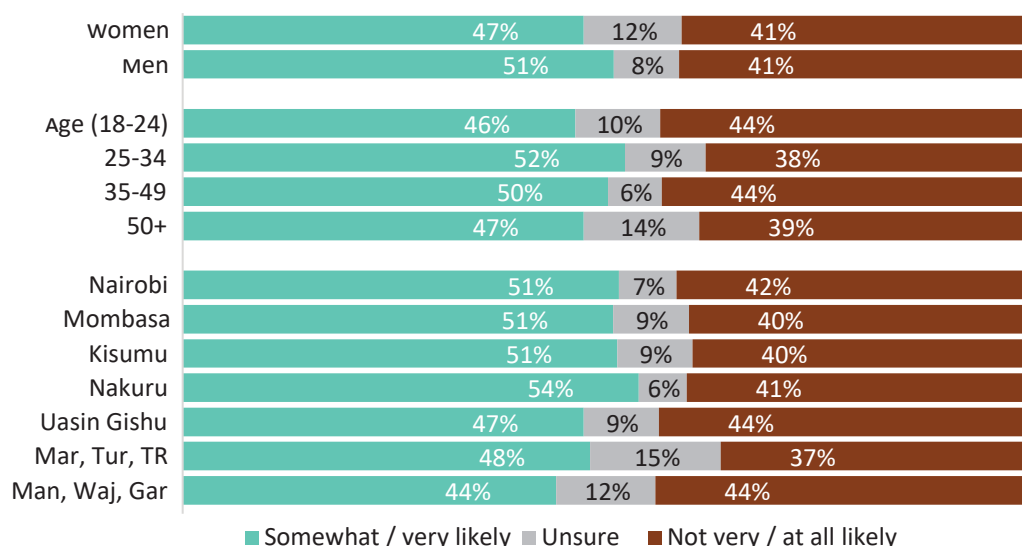
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 10: Many citizens think that the upcoming general election will be marred by fraud and vote tampering

Across the seven regions, many citizens (37-44%) are doubtful as to whether the general election in 2022 will be free from fraud and vote tampering. A small majority (44-54%) think the election will be free of fraud.

Figure 11: From your own observations and analysis of how things are, how likely is it that the general election will be free from fraud and vote tampering?



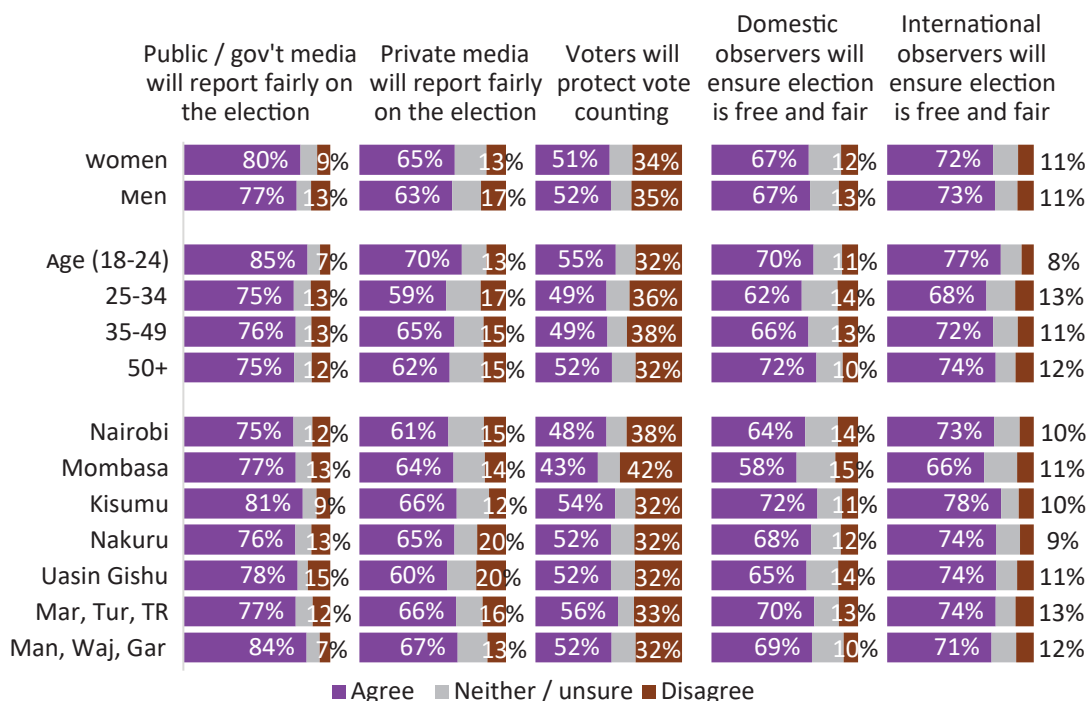
Source: Sauti za Wananchi mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 11: Most citizens agree that participants will work to protect the integrity of the elections

Most citizens across the seven regions agree that the media, official election observers and voters themselves will all play a role in protecting the integrity of the elections. This includes state-owned media reporting fairly on the election (75-84%), private media doing likewise (60-67%), voters protecting the count (43-56%), and domestic observers (58-72%) and international observers (66-78%) ensuring the elections are free and fair.

Figure 12: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



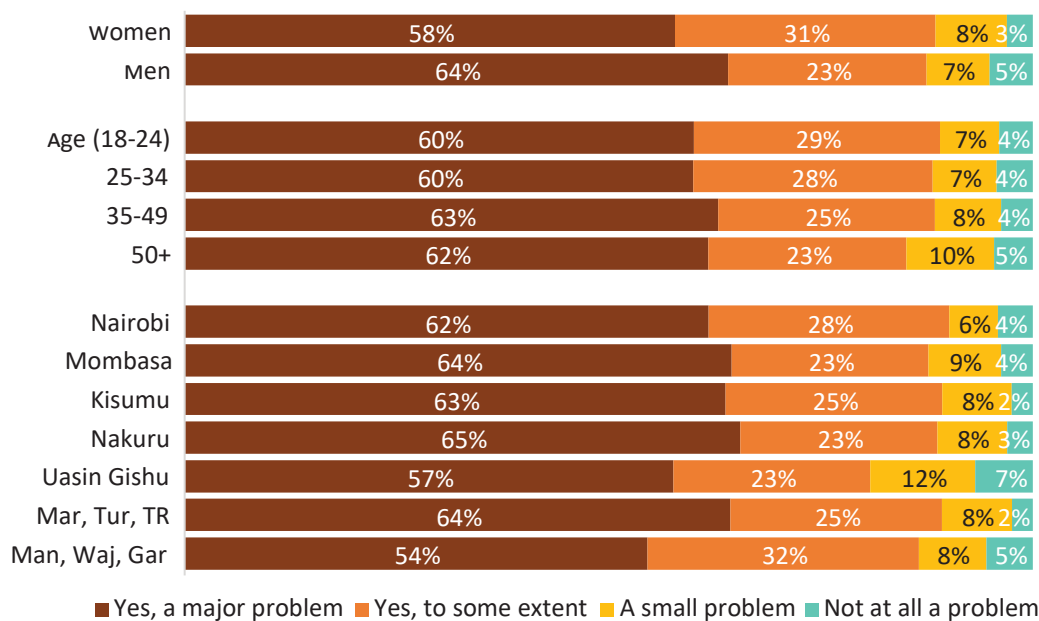
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 12: The majority of citizens see hate speech as a serious problem in Kenyan politics

Across the seven regions, most citizens (54-65%) see hate speech as a serious problem in Kenyan politics, and a substantial number more (23-32%) say it is a problem to some extent. A relatively small number (10-19%) say it is just a small problem.

Figure 13: In your view, is hate speech a serious problem in Kenyan politics?



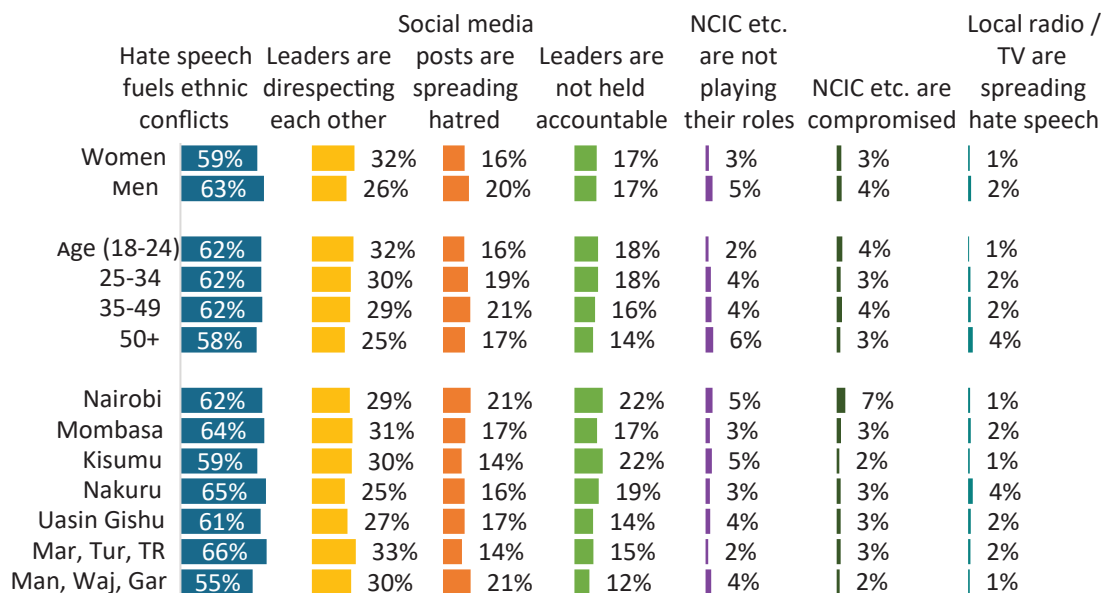
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Citizens point to hate speech fuelling ethnic conflicts as their main reason for saying it is a major problem in Kenya, cited by around six out of ten citizens (55-66%) across the seven regions. Other reasons given include leaders disrespecting each other (25-33%), social media posts spreading hatred (14-21%), and leaders not being held accountable for hate speech (12-22%).

Relatively few citizens point the finger at either the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) or local TV and radio.

Figure 14: Why do you say hate speech is a problem?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

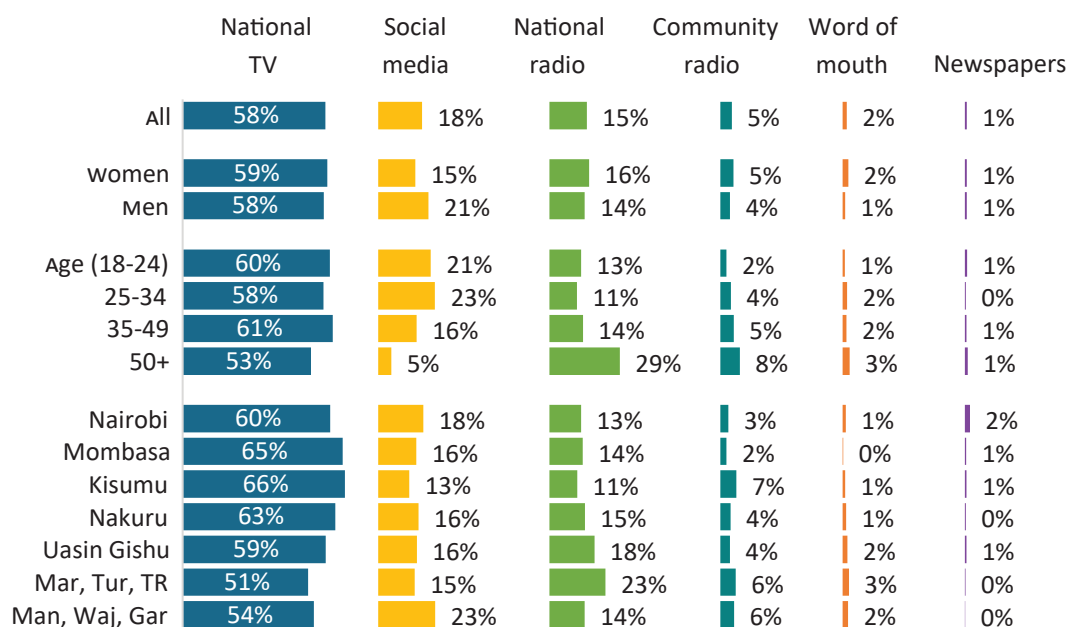
Base: all respondents (n=2,800)

Insight 13: Citizens' main source of information on election matters is national TV, followed by social media and radio

Across the seven regions, citizens' main source of information on election-related matters has been national TV (51-66%), followed by social media (13-23%) and national radio (11-23%). Community radio, word of mouth and newspapers rank very low in comparison.

For older citizens in these regions, radio is much more significant as an information source than social media.

Figure 15: What has been your main source of information on election matters?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r8 (July 2022)

Base: all respondents (n=2,800)


3. Conclusions

This brief presents a last-minute glimpse of citizens' opinions on election matters as Kenya heads into elections in a few days' time. A number of findings stand out.

First, citizens report that they themselves are ready for the elections: they know the IEBC and the election date, they are registered to vote and they intend to do so. It should be noted, of course, that many often intend to vote but fail or are unable to do so when election day itself arrives.

Second, citizens have significant concerns around the integrity of the elections, in particular around the ability of the IEBC to conduct a properly free and fair election. Close to half of those in the seven regions included in this survey think the election will not be free of fraud, and similar numbers doubt the IEBC's capacity to conduct the election fairly. Further, small but significant numbers of citizens report that either they themselves or a friend have experienced election malpractice.

On a more positive note, most citizens say they are not expecting substantial violence at this election. Indeed, they are more confident now than five years ago. And they are broadly happy with how the IEBC has handled the major electoral processes so far.



Nevertheless, citizens do report a serious problem with hate speech in Kenya – either related to ethnic conflicts and/or to leaders disrespecting each other. Social media is identified as a bigger problem in this regard than local TV and radio. Given particularly that around one out of five citizens in these seven regions say social media is their main source of election-related information, this is a significant concern.

