



Kenya's National Civic Education Programme

Press Release | 5 August

On the eve of the elections, Kenyans are ready to vote!

But they lack trust in the process, have experienced some malpractice and are concerned about hate speech

Friday 5 August, Nairobi: As the general elections approach, Kenyans in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Uasin Gishu (Eldoret) and in six counties of the arid or semi-arid lands in the north and east know major details about the elections and they say they are registered and plan to vote. Nine out of ten citizens can correctly name the coordinating body for the elections (lowest in Mandera, Wajir and Garissa (89%) and highest in Kisumu (96%)) and the date of the elections (lowest in Mandera, Wajir and Garissa (95%) and highest in Mombasa (99%)). Similarly, nine out of ten Kenyans in these seven regions say they are registered and intend to vote in the elections. There is some variation with women and young people being less likely to say they are registered or intend to vote. Overall 93% of men and 85% of women say they intend to vote, and 94% of adults over 50 intend to vote compared to 87% of Kenyans between 18 and 24. Geographically, residents of Nakuru are less likely to be registered (93%) or say they will vote (86%).

Half or less of Kenyans living in these seven regions or 11 counties say that it is important that people vote:

- Because it is a democratic right (44% in Mandera, Wajir and Garissa, 52% in Nakuru)
- To elect leaders who will bring change (39% in Marsabit, Turkana, and Tana River and 46% in Mombasa)
- To hold those they vote for accountable (15% in Marsabit, Turkana, and Tana River, 25% in Uasin Gishu)

Kenyan voters in these seven regions also state that they judge candidates according to their track record and work, more than innate qualities such as gender or ethnicity. Both men and women express similar views that they are more likely to evaluate candidates based on them having a good development record (women 89%, men 91%), as opposed to the candidate's gender (23%) or own ethnicity (women 17%, men 18%). However, a significant proportion of citizens are concerned with the candidate's relationship with the President (42%) as a criteria for evaluating them.

Kenyans in the 11 counties are also more broadly politically active. Many citizens across the seven regions have:

- Discussed politics with friends and family (Kisumu 79% to Nakuru 87%)
- Attended rallies (Nakuru 42% to Nairobi and Marsabit, Turkana, and Tana River 49%)
- Actively campaigned in person or on social media (Nakuru 23% to Mombasa 40%)

These findings were released by Twaweza in collaboration with Uraia Trust and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) in a brief titled *Heading to the Polls: Citizens' opinions on preparation for the general elections*. The briefs are based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The data are representative for Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Uasin Gishu (Eldoret) and six counties of the arid or semi-arid lands in the north and east of Kenya (the six counties arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) have been grouped for analysis as follows: Marsabit, Turkana, and Tana River and Mandera, Wajir and Garissa). 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.

At the same time as being informed and engaged in political issues, Kenyans in the 11 surveyed counties also express some reservations around the elections. In particular a significant minority of citizens has experienced or heard about electoral malpractice, lack confidence in the IEBC, and are concerned about hate speech.

A significant number of citizens across the seven regions express 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 (Mombasa 48% - Uasin Gishu 65%), count votes honestly (Mombasa 53% - Nairobi 66%) and report true results (Kisumu 47% - Nakuru 60%). This leaves close to half in each case who lack confidence in the IEBC. Nevertheless, confidence in the IEBC is a little higher now (in these seven regions) than was the case nationwide in December 2021.

Across the regions, many citizens (Marsabit, Turkana, and Tana River 37% - Mandera, Wajir and Garissa, and Uasin Gishu all at 44%) do not think that the general election in 2022 will be free from fraud and vote tampering. A small majority (Mandera, Wajir and Garissa 44% - Nakuru 54%) think the election will be free of fraud.

And citizens are alarmed about the use of hate speech in the country. Six out of ten women (58%) and men (64%) see hate speech as a major problem while a significant group think it is a problem to some extent (women 31%, men 23%). Very few men or women think hate speech is a small problem (women 8%, men 7%) or not a problem at all (women 3%, men 5%).

Dr James Ciera, Country Lead for Twaweza in Kenya, said: *“As we draw closer to elections, it is great to see citizens being politically active, aware of key details for the elections and expressing confidence that electoral violence will be avoided. But they are worried about hate speech, electoral malpractice and have low trust in the process. We must take these worries seriously. We can use this election moment to build trust among ourselves and confidence in the institutions that run the elections.”*

Helen Mudora, Uraia’s Civic Education Programme Manager said: *“It is positive to see citizens expressing high awareness and plans to vote. And citizens’ views about the IEBC have become more positive over time. At the same time the concerns around hate speech, and fraud, are alarming, and need to be addressed decisively. We need to coexist together as Kenyans after 9 August and so avoid divisive and violent rhetoric.”*

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For more information:

Sarah Mwangi, e: smwangi@twaweza.org | t: +254 (0)703 296613
Brezhnev Otieno, e: brezhnevo@gmail.com | t: +254 (0)718 351696

Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org / www.twaweza.org/sauti
- 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).
- Uraia’s work focuses on citizenship. We contribute to the progress of Kenya through the development of its most important resource- citizens (raia in Kiswahili). @UraiaTrust (Facebook), @UraiaTrust (Twitter), uraiatrust (Instagram).
- IEBC is responsible for conducting or supervising referenda and elections to any elective body or office established by the Constitution, and any other elections as prescribed by an Act of Parliament. @IEBCKenya (Facebook), @IEBCKenya (Twitter) @IEBCKenya (Instagram)
- 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 Kenya (the six counties arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) have been grouped for analysis as follows: Marsabit, Turkana, and Tana River and Mandera, Wajir and Garissa). Statistical weightings have been applied to the panel, to ensure it is fully representative of each of these areas. However, with the specific focus on these particular cities and counties, the data are not in this case nationally representative.