

Press Release  
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**Households in Greater Kampala are ten or more times more likely than those in northern Uganda to have access to piped water**  
*Across the country, 6 out of 10 Ugandans say access to water is a serious problem*

**Tuesday 21 November, 2023, Kampala:** Across Uganda, 6 out of 10 citizens (63%) name access to water as a serious problem affecting their communities including 4 out of 10 who say it is the most serious problem (39%). However, there are significant disparities between Ugandans' views on this issue. Citizens from rural areas (45%), poorer households (53%), and households with no education (47%) are much more likely to say access to water is a serious problem.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Turning on the taps? Ugandans' experiences and opinions on water, sanitation and hygiene*. They are 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 2,809 respondents across Uganda in August and September 2023.

These inequalities become even more visible when it comes to whether Ugandans are able to access safe water from an improved source. Across the country, 2 out of 10 households (20%) access water from an unimproved or unsafe source, including a significant proportion who use surface water (7%). But Ugandans in specific regions are likely to be worse off, in Western Region 4 out of 10 citizens (40%) access water from an unimproved source including 15% using surface water, and in Central Region 3 out of 10 Ugandans (29%) are using unimproved sources.

Regional and demographic disparities are even more pronounced when it comes to who has access to piped water:

- Rural 11%, Urban 46%
- Poorer households 5%, wealthier households 41%
- Greater Kampala 70%, Central 17%, Western 27%, Northern 6%, Eastern 9%

Geographically Western Region has the most households using unimproved sources and piped sources (excluding Greater Kampala).

Despite these stark inequalities, there is some positive news in terms of access to clean and safe water. Nationwide, the proportion of households that access drinking water from a piped or other improved source has risen from 74% in 2018 to 80% in 2023. Most of this improvement has been seen in rural areas (69% to 77% over the same period), while in urban areas – where access is higher – the change has been smaller (86% to 90%). However, there are also signs of stagnation in access to piped water in the last five years.

Although 6 out of 10 Ugandans (61%) report treating their water in some way before drinking it, this number has declined from 70% in the last five years. Again, the urban, the wealthy and residents of Greater Kampala are much more likely to say they treat their water before drinking. Those who access

water from piped sources are also the most likely to report treating their water (75%), at higher rates than for any other source, including surface water (67% of surface water users treat their water). Users of non-piped but improved water sources are least likely to report treating their water before drinking (48%).

When it comes to the major challenge of accessing water, most Ugandans, from all areas, report the related problems of water points being distant (44%) and an insufficient number of water points (43%). These are consistently cited by the most Ugandans but in urban areas, residents also report challenges with the cost of water (36% of urban dwellers), while in rural areas, another common problem is that the water is dirty (28% of rural residents mention this).

In terms of sanitation, half of all households (51%) use a pit latrine without a slab as their toilet facility, and a further 5% do not have access to any facility. A small number have a flush toilet (2%), dominated by households in Greater Kampala (15%), use a pit latrine with a ventilation pipe (5%), or a pit latrine with a slab. Lower quality toilet facilities are much more common in rural areas, among poorer households, and in eastern, northern and western parts of the country.

One out of four households (24%) has a functional handwashing facility with either soap and water (12%) or just water (12%) located close to the toilet / latrine facility that they use. Handwashing facilities are more common in wealthier households (39%) and those in urban areas (39%), Greater Kampala (56%) in particular.

Violet Alinda, Country Lead for Uganda at Twaweza added: *“Access to clean drinking water (and other aspects of water, sanitation and hygiene) are highly dependent on where in Uganda you live and how wealthy you are. This presents a trade off in policy terms: to prioritise public investment on improving services for the poorest and least-well-served – which often represent greater value for money in terms of quantity – or to focus on expanding the more expensive water pipe networks to reach more middle-class households. For the majority of Ugandans, the answer is clear.”*

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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/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)
- Twaweza works to demonstrate how citizens can come together to collectively address their problems, and make government work better for them; enable citizens' voices, interests and experiences to be heard and taken seriously in decision-making; promote and protect open civic space which enables citizens to freely assemble or organise, speak and act 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 *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. Follow us at Twaweza Uganda (Facebook), @TwawezaUganda (Twitter), Twaweza East Africa (Instagram).