



Press Release
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Three out of ten households in Kenya access their drinking water from unsafe sources

For Laikipia County, access to safe drinking water is above the national average

Friday 22 March 2024, Naibor, Laikipia County: Nationally, four out of 10 households (41%) access their drinking water from a piped supply, and a further three out of ten households (28%) have access to another form of “improved” water supply, such as a borehole or protected well or spring. Three out of ten (31%) access drinking water from either a surface source such as a river or lake (20%) or another type of “unimproved” source (11%).

Access to piped water sources is much higher in Nairobi (71%) and other urban areas (56%) than in rural areas (32%), while dependence on surface water sources, such as a river, stream, lake or dam, is considerably higher in rural areas (25%) than in Nairobi (2%) or other urban areas (10%). Surface water sources are considered by the WHO to be the least safe.

In Laikipia County specifically, 55% of households have access to piped water sources, including four out of ten who have piped water to their premises (42%). These figures are well ahead of the national average.

These findings were released by Twaweza a research brief titled *Clean and Safe? Kenyan citizens’ experiences and opinions on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)* based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa’s first nationally representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The panel for this brief was established through random sampling from an existing database of contacts from previous surveys to establish a nationally representative panel. For this brief, data were collected from 3,603 respondents in the eleventh round of the special *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between January 23 and February 7, 2024.

The two biggest challenges faced by citizens in accessing clean drinking water are irregular supplies (cited by two out of ten citizens (23%) and distance to water points (17%). Other significant challenges include that water is dirty (9%), an insufficient number of water points (8%), drying water sources (7%) and the cost of water (6%). However, these challenges are markedly different in different parts of the country. In urban areas, especially Nairobi, irregular supplies are the leading challenge (47%), while in rural areas, distance to water points is cited as the most significant challenge (21%) – as well as the poor quality of water supplies that are available. Cost is also more commonly cited in Nairobi and other urban areas than in rural areas.

Eight out of ten households (82%) can access their drinking water within 30 minutes. This includes three out of ten households with piped water supplied to their home or yard. The number of households accessing water within 30 minutes has increased from seven out of ten (70%) in 2017.

Citizens are a little more likely to say that their access to clean and safe water has improved in the past 12 months (37%) rather than gotten worse (24%). However, more citizens are dissatisfied (46%) than satisfied (33%) with their county government's provision of water services. This represents a change since 2017, when citizens were evenly split on this point.

In Laikipia County, satisfaction with the county government's provision of water services (41%) is higher than the national average (33%). This reflects the better-than-average figures for household access to piped and other improved water sources.

Hon. Leah Njeri, CECM Water Environment and Natural Resources, Laikipia County said: *"Our quest for progress in water and sanitation services in Laikipia County stands as twin pillars of dignity and development. Access to clean and safe water and proper sanitation is not just a necessity—it is a fundamental right that empowers communities, fosters health, and paves the path towards a peaceful and dignified future. Together with the communities and development partners we shall ensure that every drop of water and every sanitation facility becomes a beacon of dignity, transforming lives, enhancing peace and shaping a county of resilience and prosperity."*

Dr. James Ciera, Country Lead for Twaweza in Kenya, added: *"While many Kenyans are assured of access to clean and safe water, we must not forget that millions of citizens are still accessing their drinking water from unsafe sources such as lakes and dams. Both the national government and the county governments have important roles to play in solving this. We have to ensure that all citizens have clean and safe drinking water regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. This is already the goal of the global sustainable development goals (SDGs). With commitment and goodwill from all stakeholders, it is a goal we can achieve."*

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Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org/ 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. @TwawezaKe (Facebook), @Twaweza_Ke (Twitter), Twaweza East Africa (Instagram).