

Laikipia residents face struggles with the cost of living Residents call for greater prioritisation of health and education services

Thursday 10 June 2025, Laikipia County: Half of Laikipia residents (49%) say inflation and the cost of living are among the three most serious problems facing Kenya today, well ahead of any other issue. Seven out of ten residents of Laikipia (70%) say any increase in public spending should prioritise healthcare, ahead of any other area of public spending. This is closely followed by education services (64%). These concerns are broadly similar to citizens of Kenya as a whole.

These findings were released by Twaweza a research brief titled *Listening to Laikipia: residents' views and experiences on economics, democracy and participation*, 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 3,658 respondents nationwide, including 400 in Laikipia, in the thirteenth round of the special *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between 3rd and 30th March, 2025.

Within the county, different Laikipia residents experience different levels of economic stress. Most strikingly, there is a strong relationship between level of education and economic stress, with residents who have no more than primary education much more likely than others to have had to cope without cash income, medicine or treatment, electricity, food and fuel.

Six out of ten Laikipia residents (58%) are dissatisfied with the country's direction on citizen participation, well ahead of the wider Rift valley region (41%) and the country as a whole (47%). Further, fewer Laikipia residents (34%) than citizens of Kenya as a whole (42%) have seen or heard of public consultations taking place about county government planning, and fewer residents say they have a reasonable understanding of the county planning process (32% in Laikipia, 41% nationally).

A majority of Laikipia residents (63%) agree with the statements that public participation opportunities within the county are "only really about informing us about what has already been decided." Most residents say it is difficult to influence county decision making (68%) and to access information on county budgets, legislation and project plans (75%).

James Ciera, Country Lead for Twaweza in Kenya, said: *"It is important that we pay attention to the experiences and opinions of citizens across Kenya, including counties like Laikipia. When governments listen, they can act in ways that respond to the needs and challenges facing the local communities. This survey gives us a unique opportunity to do exactly that by providing citizen-centered evidence. And there's a lot that we can do in response: to strengthen the local economy, to improve public services and to make public participation opportunities more inclusive and more meaningful."*

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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).