

Press Release  
6 August 2020

**Eight out of ten (85%) Kenyan households have lost income or are facing financial constraints due to Covid-19**

*Seven out of ten (68%) say they are eating less during the past month*

**Thursday 6 August 2020, Nairobi:** Most citizens (85%) report that their household has faced lost income or other financial constraints due to the Coronavirus. Citizens have also been affected by increased food prices (28%) and reduced interaction with friends (23%).

Furthermore, when asked to cite the negative impacts of the Coronavirus, 7 out of 10 citizens name negative business and economic impacts (70%) and 55% cite the closure of businesses and schools. Also, one in three mention deaths (28%) and one in four (25%) fear contracting the virus themselves.

Seven out of ten households (68%) report that their basic daily food intake has become worse over the previous month, including three out of ten (26%) who say it has become much worse. This may be related to half of citizens (52%) reporting that food prices have increased in the last two weeks.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Coping with Coronavirus? Kenyan citizens' knowledge, attitudes and practices* based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The panel was established through random sampling from a database of contacts from previous surveys to establish a new representative panel of the country's population. For this brief, data were collected from 3,000 respondents in the first round of the special *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between 29 May, 2020 and 30 June, 2020.

Despite the worries expressed by citizens, 2 out of 3 are confident in the ability of national (66%) and county (64%) government to handle the outbreak. More specifically citizens are aware of a number of the measures instituted by government to protect against the spread of the virus and are largely supportive of these:

- Wearing masks in public: 75% are aware and 59% support it
- Keeping 1 metre away from others: 64% are aware and 46% support it
- Businesses mandated to have hand-washing facilities: 51% are aware and 38% support it

And citizens have been largely responsive to the public messaging and guidance from government: 9 out of 10 report washing their hands regularly (89%), 7 out of 10 wear masks in public (69%), while 5 out of 10 (48%) report only going out when necessary. Fewer citizens report not touching their faces (2%), avoiding public transport (4%), and avoiding public places (18%).

Citizens are also largely aware of critical facts about the Coronavirus. Almost all of them have heard of the virus with 63% saying they know a lot about it. Eight out of ten citizens (82%) correctly identify human-to-human contact as one of the ways the Coronavirus can be transmitted, and a similar number (80%) point to coughing and sneezing. A small majority (57%) mention contact with contaminated surfaces or items.

But a significant proportion of citizens do hold some misconceptions about the Coronavirus. One out of four (25%) believe that herbal remedies are effective and the same proportion think that vitamins can cure Covid-19. Two out of ten (16%) also think steam inhalation is an effective treatment and three out of ten believe that hot climate prevents the spread of the virus. Four out of ten (38%) believe that people without symptoms cannot spread the disease and the same share think that people who have recovered need to be avoided to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

James Ciera, Country Lead for Twaweza in Kenya, said: *“These data provide valuable insights. On the one hand it is good to see high levels of awareness of many of the basic facts about Covid-19. However the level of economic stress experienced by citizens is alarming. Many are reporting eating less, and are expressing deep worry about the economic impact of the pandemic.”*

*“Most importantly,” he continued, “we need to keep listening to citizens’ voices so as to understand what they know, how they are changing their behaviour and whether they trust and support the response measures. In this way, we can design more effective messaging and interventions to help pull Kenya out of these trying times.”*

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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. Twaweza Kenya (Facebook), @Twaweza\_Ke (Twitter), Twaweza East Africa (Instagram).