



Press Release
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7 out of 10 citizens fear there might be violence during the 2017 General Elections

1 November 2016, Nairobi: As elections draw near, 70% of citizens report being afraid that the country may experience violence during the 2017 general elections. Almost half (44%) are very afraid of this possibility. However, three out of ten citizens (28%) are not worried about the possibility of violence in the upcoming elections.

The August 2017 general elections offer Kenyans the opportunity to exercise their democratic right and give fresh mandate to their leaders at the county and national levels. Political competition is expected to be intense and much is at stake for the incumbents and their challengers. The charged atmosphere witnessed earlier in 2016 during the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) protests raises some concerns about the possibility that violence could accompany the elections.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Are we safe? Citizens' views on safety and security in Kenya*. The brief is 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 1,801 respondents across Kenya between 15 August and 6 September 2016.

The high levels of fear about electoral violence may well be driven by Kenyans' daily experiences of safety and security. The prevalence of insecurity in the country has been an ongoing challenge and almost daily, the media contains reports of criminality and violence.

While four out of ten citizens (38%) feel that in the last three months, there has been an improvement in the security situation in their area, a slightly larger proportion (44%) feel that the security situation in their locality has remained the same, while 18% think it has deteriorated.

The good news is that the majority of citizens reported that they have not personally experienced violence or insecurity (80%). Most Kenyans have not felt the need to stay at home due to the fear of potential violence (65%), nor feared crime in their own home (59%), nor felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhood (56%).

However, a sizeable minority of Kenyans - one out of five (19%) - have been victims of violence or insecurity and one in twenty Kenyans (5%) always feel unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods.

On the handling of crimes, six out of ten citizens (60%) believe that the police themselves are the main reason why Kenyans don't report crimes. The main reasons cited by citizens include fear of being asked for a bribe by the police (21%); police not listening or caring (16%); lack of action by the police (11%) and police being involved in the crime (6%).

Brezhnev Otieno, Advocacy Manager for Kenya, Twaweza, said *“There are differences between actual instances of crime and people’s fears of insecurity or political violence. But perceptions matter. A sense of fear is not a healthy start to Kenya’s electoral period. And the worrying lack of confidence in the police by a majority of citizens further heightens the problem. As we approach August 2017, there is a need for public confidence in the electoral system and state mechanisms for law and order. Responsible authorities need to ensure trust in the country’s electoral bodies and instill confidence in law enforcement before and beyond the 2017 elections.”*

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Notes to Editors

- Data for this press statement comes from Twaweza’s flagship *Sauti za Wananchi*, which is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. Information on the overall methodology is available at www.twaweza.org/sauti. For this brief data were collected from 1,783 respondents from Kenya’s *Sauti za Wananchi* panel. This was the fourth round of calls to the panel, conducted between 7 and 28 June 2016.
- Twaweza East Africa works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive 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 *Uwezo*, Africa’s largest annual citizen assessment to assess children’s learning levels across hundreds of thousands of households, and *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
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