TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
KENYA

# COUNTY GOVERNANCE STATUS REPORT (CGSR) 2025

# ABOUT TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL KENYA

Transparency International Kenya (TI-Kenya) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1999 in Kenya with the aim of developing a transparent and corruption-free society through good governance and social justice initiatives. TI-Kenya is one of the autonomous chapters of the global Transparency International movement that are all bound by a common vision of a corruption-free world. The vision of TI-Kenya is that of a corruption-free Kenya and the mission is to champion the fight against corruption by promoting integrity, transparency, and accountability in both public and private spheres.

**Author:** Transparency International Kenya.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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# ACRONYMNS

| | |
|---|---|
| **ADP** | ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN |
| **CIDP** | COUNTY INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN |
| **EACC** | ETHICS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION |
| **ECDE** | EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION |
| **MCA** | MEMBER OF COUNTY ASSEMBLY |
| **MP** | MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT |
| **NG-CDF** | NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transparency International Kenya has been collaborating with County governments in Kenya to promote the vision of transparent, accountable and effective governance at the local level.

One of the strategies has been evidence- generation to identify areas of strength and advocacy towards better governance. The County Governance Status Survey 2025 is a follow-up of similar surveys conducted in 2019 and 2017. The report examines the state of governance at the County level from the perspective of various key stakeholders.

The survey evaluates the county's performance across four key themes: accountability, transparency, service delivery, and integrity. It is anticipated that the findings will sustain the discourse about the need for constant vigilance from both the duty bearers and the right holders in the context of devolved governance.

The survey targeted three distinct sample populations. The sampling point was picked among the general citizenry. These composed of adult Kenyans of 18 years and over, selected from 15 counties. Participants were chosen through simple random sampling methods, with working quotas for rural-urban divide, gender and age considerations. The sample included the executive officers in the selected counties specifically the Chief Officers in Education, Health, Water and Finance departments. The third group comprised Members of the County Assembly chairing the departments of education, health, water and finance. The MCAs were specifically chosen to provide the political perspective of the service delivery and governance issues within the counties.

The total sample consisted of 1,029 adults aged 18 and above which constituted 48% females and 52% males. Of these respondents, 73.8% lived in rural areas. Employment status revealed that 49.8% of the participants were self-employed or worked in family businesses; 20.4% were in formal employment; 21% being unemployed while 6.4% of the respondents were students and 2.4% were retirees. About 12.3% were either retired or in full-time education.

In terms of how well the citizens understood the role of the different elected offices, the position of the Member of Parliament (MP) and Governor received the highest level of recognition with respondents showing awareness of these roles at 79.3% and 75.8% respectively.

In contrast, the roles of the Woman Representative and the Senator were the least understood, with awareness levels being at 41.3% and 54.1% respectively. Given this limited knowledge, it is expected the residents would have less interaction with the offices and subsequently lower levels of civic demand for accountability.

The Office of the Woman Representative had the lowest reported contact with respondents at only 4%. This was followed by the Office of the Senator with a contact rate of 5.4%. In comparison, the Office of the Member of the County Assembly had the highest contact rate at 24.9% while the Office of the Governor had a contact rate of 18.7%.

The survey revealed low levels of understanding of vital governance documents among citizens. Although a vast majority (94%) reported being aware of the Constitution of Kenya only 52.2% of the respondents indicated that they had actually read it. This level of awareness represented an improvement from 76% in the 2019 survey. In terms of the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), only 29.8% of the respondents were aware of the document leaving 70.2% clueless of this critical planning tool at the County level. However, this marked an improvement from the 20% awareness level reported in the 2019 survey. Among those aware of the CIDP, only 20% stated that they had read the plan for their own County.

Of those who reported awareness of a county project in their area, the researchers sought to establish if the respondents were informed about the project cost. A significant majority (93.5%) indicated that they were not aware of the cost of the projects. A total 44% of the respondents believed that the county should prioritize health needs followed by road improvements at 21%. This prioritization is understandable in light of the rising cost of living in recent years, which has made access to these essential services more challenging.

In regard to the perceived achievements of devolution, 32.4% of the respondents identified improved service delivery as one of the greatest successes while 27.9% of the respondents highlighted closer proximity of services as another success of devolution.

When asked to identify key challenges or failures in devolved governance, respondents identified five main issues. The most frequently mentioned was the problem of incomplete or stalled projects indicated by 29.8% of the respondents. Slightly more than a fifth (22%) cited excess staff as the biggest failure. Corruption and mismanagement were identified as obstacles by 20.8% of the respondents. To address key challenges facing the counties, 31.8% suggested tackling corruption at the County level. Additionally, 28.7% advocated for allocation of more funds to the health sector to ensure adequate medicine supplies while 17.6% recommended improving public participation in decision making.

Regarding trends on the perceptions of corruption in 2017, at least 47% believed that the situation would worsen. This figure rose to 55% in 2019 and reduced to 47% in the current survey. Additionally, the proportion that thinks corruption levels will fall in the subsequent year remains roughly a quarter of the respondents with a measure of 25% in 2017 to 21% in 2019 and eventually settling at 25% in the current survey.

The report recommends the following:

i.   There is a need to increase awareness on the roles of the Senator and the Woman Representative. The current situation where many Kenyans do not seem to understand the roles of these two offices could hinder their effectiveness and reduce civic demands for accountability.

ii.  The County governments should make deliberate efforts to ensure the citizens can access and understand key documents such as the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP), annual plans and budgets. The low awareness level of these documents as demonstrated in this survey highlights weaknesses in public participation in their formulation and implementation. This could greatly undermine the counties' vision of open and inclusive governance.

iii. Counties should improve transparency and openness in project implementation. It is concerning that only a paltry minority of citizens are aware of the details such as = the contractors, contract values or contract periods for projects in their locality. Increased awareness on project implementation could enhance civic oversight and in turn improve effectiveness and efficiency at the county level.

iv.  There is need for the national government to enhance the reliability of fiscal transfers to the County governments.  Delayed disbursement has been identified as a significant obstacle to smooth service delivery in the counties.

v.  Counties should progressively work towards strengthening local level revenue mobilisation to reduce overreliance on equitable share to fund service delivery. One key step towards this is digitizing revenue collection to minimize leakages. Some counties like Nakuru and Machakos have made notable progress in this area and could provide valuable lessons.

vi.  Lastly, county governments should go beyond mere compliance driven integrity measures and implement effective anti-corruption strategies. Although the County governments seem to have established all the integrity measures as per the law, their functionality and effectiveness remain questionable, given the persistent threat of corruption and waste.

# CHAPTER 1:
## INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The call for a new constitution in Kenya was primarily fueled by the concerns over the excessive centralization of resource allocation decisions and limited avenues for public participation.

Citizens felt that the central government was making all the critical decisions, often sidelining the very individuals that these decisions impacted.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 was therefore designed with the explicit goal of placing the people at the forefront of the development agenda. Citizens were to be provided with increased opportunities to shape, drive and impact the social economic development in their localities. Consequently, Chapter 11 of the Constitution regarding devolved Governments outlined several key objectives, including:

- Promote accountable and democratic exercise of power
- Grant powers of self-governance to the people
- Provision of proximate easily accessible service provision

These objectives, among others, necessitate constant vigilance to achieve high levels of accountability to the public, transparency in leadership, quality service delivery and integrity in public financial management.

Since their establishment, the devolved governments have experienced three electoral cycles. Progress toward these objectives presents a mixed narrative of both successes and challenges. Notably, county governments have succeeded in engaging citizens in decision making, enhanced service delivery in historically marginalized areas and ensured equitable distribution of public resources.

These achievements, however, are still work in progress. There have been many hurdles in realizing the vision outlined in Article 174 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. The level of accountability among County governments has raised significant concerns as highlighted in various reports from the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, the Office of the Auditor General, the Office of the Controller of Budget, Parliament and other oversight bodies.

Regarding transparency, the goals set out in the Access to Information Act 2016 have not been fully achieved. While some counties have even localized the act through their own freedom of information law, citizens continue to encounter difficulties in obtaining information about decisions made on their behalf.

Although all counties have established measures to enhance public participation, barriers to effective public input in policy making remain. Without the engagement of citizens in decision making processes, counties risk centralizing policy making and undermining the very essence of devolution.
Lastly, there is an ongoing need to ensure that the quality and reliability of service delivery remain the central focus of county governance.

Transparency International Kenya has been collaborating with County governments in Kenya to help them achieve effective, transparent and accountable governance at the local level. One of the strategies has been evidence-generation to identify key strengths and advocacy towards improved governance. The County Governance Status Survey 2025 is a follow-up of similar surveys conducted in 2016 and 2019. This report therefore evaluates the county's performance across the four key themes of accountability, transparency, service, delivery and integrity.

## 1.2 Purpose and Scope

The overall objective of the assignment is to enhance transparency and accountability in county governance by progressively bolstering county governance structures. The study sought to evaluate progress made by county governments in entrenching transparency, accountability and integrity in their operations as well as identifying gaps that undermine governance systems.

Furthermore, the assessment also examined the quality-of-service delivery by the county governments with regard to transparency, accountability, and integrity. The evaluation was conducted in 15 Counties: Machakos, Mombasa, Kilifi, Isiolo, Murang'a, Nairobi, Nakuru, Kiambu, Uasin Gishu, Elgeyo Marakwet, Kakamega, Vihiga, Kisumu, Siaya and Homa Bay.

## 1.3 The Structure of this report

**The Structure of this report**
This report is organized into four chapters:

**Chapter 1**

Provides background and introductory information that dissects the context within which the study was conceptualized and conducted.

**Chapter 2**

Covers the study methodology, outlining the research design, data collection approaches and tools, data evaluation, analysis and reporting.

**Chapter 3**

Presents the findings of the study, including their policy implications on transparency, accountability and service delivery at the County level.

**Chapter 4**

Provides a summary of key lessons and recommendations to inform future advocacy interventions

# CHAPTER 2
## METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 Study Design

This was an analytical survey that gathered and analyzed the experiences of various stakeholders regarding the functioning of the County governments.

The study sought to examine patterns and trends of governance and service delivery at the County level to formulate actionable advocacy evidence. The analysis was based on the responses collected during the survey and compared with the findings from similar surveys conducted in 2016 and 2019.

## 2.2 Target population

The study identified three levels of target populations. The first level consisted of the general citizenry comprising adult Kenyans of 18 years and above. Participants were sampled from 15 selected counties using simple random sampling ensuring representation based on rural-urban divide, gender and age considerations.

The sample included executive officers in the select counties. The survey focused on the Chief Officers given their role as technical heads in various departments. They were therefore considered key informants on the issues of service delivery and governance. The survey specifically targeted Chief Officers in the Education, Health, Water and Finance departments.

The third group targeted the Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) who chair the departments of education, health, water and finance. The selection of MCAs was aimed at incorporating a political perspective on service delivery and governance issues within the counties.

## 2.3 Sampling and Sample Distribution

A total of 15 counties were sampled to represent various aspects of diversity including ethnic, geography, urban-rural divide, economic activity and political diversity.

The projected sample size was 1000 respondents. The actual sample size varied marginally to 1029 people. The sample was spread across the 15 counties based on their weighted population sizes as per the 2019 National Population and Housing Census by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. According to the census, the total population in the selected counties was 21,572,645.

The representation of the sample size as a proportion of this population derives from the sample sizes presented below-

| County | Number of participants |
|---|---|
| Elgeyo Markwet | 20 |
| Homa bay | 55 |
| Isiolo | 21 |
| Kakamega | 85 |
| Kiambu | 110 |
| Kilifi | 76 |
| Kisumu | 71 |
| Machakos | 60 |
| Mombasa | 60 |
| Muranga | 44 |
| Nairobi | 201 |
| Nakuru | 95 |
| Siaya | 48 |
| Uasin Gishu | 56 |
| Vihiga | 27 |
| **Total** | **1029** |

*Table 2.1 : Distribution of respondents by county*

## 2.4 Data Collection approach and Tools

Data for the study was collected using face-to-face interviews conducted by a team of well-trained and experienced field enumerators. For the general population, the researchers used questionnaires that included a mix of closed and open-ended questions.

The responses were recorded using Kobo Collect software and relayed to a central server for quality checks and processing. Interviews with the County Executive and the Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) were conducted using open-ended questionnaires to elicit in-depth responses on their interactions with the subject matter of the study.

## 2.5 Data Quality and Research Ethics

The researchers implemented sequential actions to ensure the data collected was of high quality and reliability. The first step involved constructing data collection tools designed to elicit the expected responses for analysis. Each item in the tools was reviewed to ensure the data collection exercise was reliable. The review of the tools was done in close consultation with TI-Kenya.

Additionally, the data collection team received specialized training encompassing all critical aspects of field data collection, including research ethics, observation of quotas, informed consent and confidentiality. Technical training was provided to ensure that enumerators were skilled in using Kobo Collect software for accurate data input.

## 2.6 Data Analysis

Field data was transmitted to a central server where the data analyst took charge of cleaning and collating it. The cleaned data was then examined in line with the objectives of the study to generate meaningful findings from which conclusions were drawn.

The data cleaning and analysis were carried out under the close supervision of the researchers to ensure all responses were accurately processed and the analysis truly reflected the original field responses. An experienced data visualization expert played a critical role in ensuring that the graphics effectively reflected the analysis.

# CHAPTER 3
## FINDINGS

## 3.1 Overview

This section presents the findings of the study organised into the four themes of accountability, transparency, service delivery and ethics and integrity. It also outlines the policy implications of these findings to provide a foundation for the study recommendations.

The opening section describes the sample composition detailing the various stakeholders interviewed in this study.

**Sample distribution by age, group and gender**

The sample consisted slightly more male respondents (52%) than females' respondents.
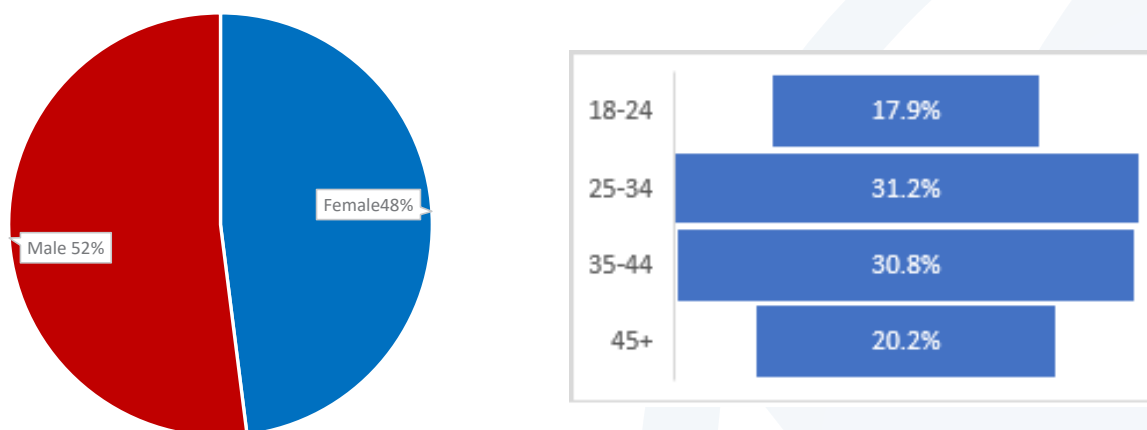


*Figure 3.1: Distribution by gender and age*

In the sample by age, the largest group was those between 25-34 years making up 31.2%. This was closely followed by the 35-44 age group which accounted for 30.8%. Together, these two age bands constituted a significant 62% of the overall sample. It is likely that these age groups more engaged in seeking public services as they typically include young parents, businesspeople and workers in both the formal and the informal sector. Their perspectives on service delivery and governance are therefore quite valuable.

**Distribution by residence**

The Majority of the respondents (73.8%) were residents of rural areas with just above a quarter living in urban areas.
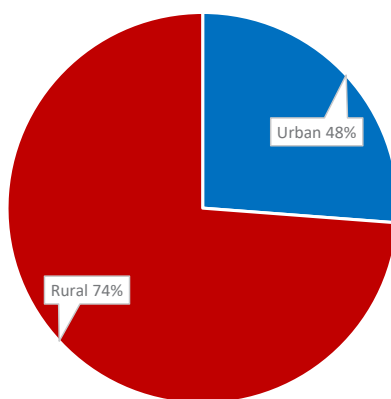


*Figure 3.2: Distributions by residence*

**Sample distribution by employment status**

Just under half of the respondents (49.8%) were self-employed or worked in family businesses, while 20.4% were in formal employment and 21.0% were unemployed. It was also noted that 6.4% of the respondents were students, and 2.4% were retirees.

Excluding the fewer than 10% who comprised full-time students and retirees, the remaining e respondents were active citizens either employed in various sectors or seeking employment. Consequently, it would be expected that this group is actively seeking public services offered by the Counties making them a valuable source of insights for the survey.

| Employment status | Proportion |
|---|---|
| Unemployed | 21% |
| Student | 6.4% |
| Self employed | 49.8% |
| Employed in the private sector | 12.3% |
| Employed in government | 4.7% |
| Employed in community sector (Church, NGO, CBO) | 3.4% |
| Retired | 2.4% |

*Table 3.1: Employment status*

**County Executive respondents**

The study surveyed 34 respondents holding executive position of Chief Officer in the selected counties. These respondents were intentionally chosen as technical officers overseeing key service delivery departments of health, water and education. Finance was specifically included to offer insights on financial management and integrity within the selected counties.

| Position | Number |
|---|---|
| Chief Officer Finance | 7 |
| Chief Officer Health | 10 |
| Chief Officer Water | 9 |
| Chief Officer Education | 8 |
| **Total** | **34** |

*Table 3.2: County executive respondents*

**Respondents from the County assembly**

The study specifically focussed on the chairs of the County assembly responsible for key departments involved in service delivery. To gain insight into financing and oversight, the finance chair was also purposefully included in the sample.

| Position | Number |
|---|---|
| Chair, Finance Committee | 7 |
| Chair Heath Committee | 3 |
| Chair, Water and Sanitation Committee | 6 |
| Chair, Education Committee | 5 |
| **Total** | **21** |

*Table 3.3: County assembly respondents*

## 3.2 Accountability

### Awareness of the role of leaders

To provide a background for analysing accountability, this study aimed determine    whether the respondents understood the role of various elected leaders. The purpose of this question was to assess if the respondents had clear expectations of the different offices. Without a solid understanding of these roles, it is likely that the demand for accountability would either be low or based on misguided expectations.

Among the examined offices, respondents demonstrated highest level of understanding of the roles of the Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Governors with the knowledge rates of 79.3% and 75.8% respectively. In contrast, the offices of the Woman Representative and that of the Senator were the least understood with the comprehension rates of 41.3% and 54.1% respectively.  This limited knowledge could result into, relatively less interaction with the two offices and consequently lower levels of civic demand for accountability.

It is notable that even when respondents claimed to understand the roles of the different offices, their knowledge was sometimes incorrect. For instance, some mentioned that the primary role of MCAs was to build roads and schools. The most significant misconception, however, was pertaining the role of MPs with many respondents incorrectly citing bursary issuance, construction of development projects or managing National Government- Constituency Development Fund.
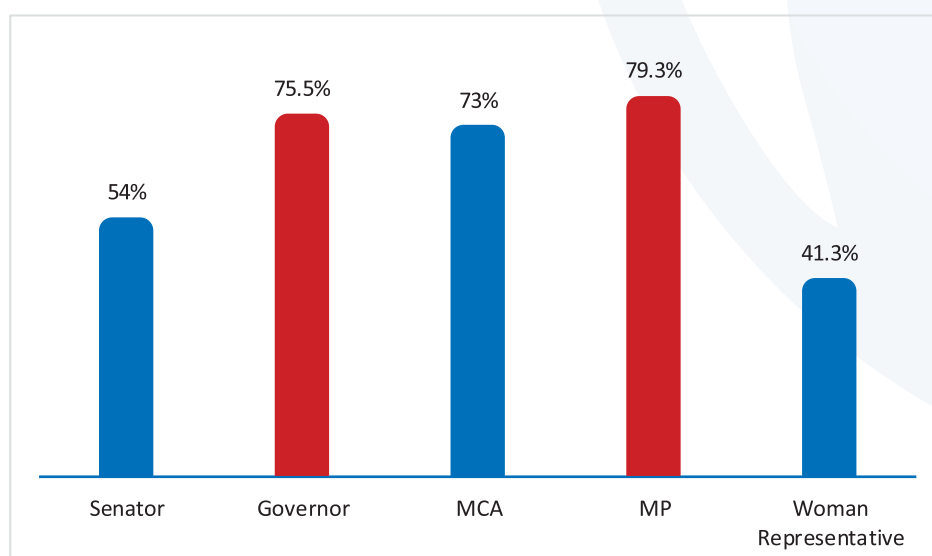


*Figure 3.3: Awareness of the role of the named leaders*

### Interaction with leaders

When asked whether they had been invited to a forum or meeting to express their views by any of these leaders, a vast majority of the respondents replied in the negative. The Office of the Woman Representative reported the lowest engagement with the respondents at 4%. This was followed by the Office of the Senator which had a contact rate of 5.4%. The Office of the Member of the County Assembly reported the highest rate of engagement at 24.9% while the Office of the Governor recorded the second highest at 18.7%. Over time, the patterns of engagement with these offices have remained consistent.

The Office of the MCAs recorded the highest level of contact in the previous two surveys in 2016 and 2019 with rates of 36% and 24% respectively. However, there has been a significant drop of 12-percentage points in the latest survey. Although this study did not aim to establish the reasons for the decline, it may reflect the decreasing confidence among citizens leading to lower turnout at forums.

It is also notable that the level of interaction with both the office of the Woman Representative and the Senator remains consistently low. This could be attributed to the low understanding of the roles of these two offices. The other probable explanation would be the geographical proximity of the Office of the MCAs and MPs who represent much smaller areas compared to the Women Representative and the Senator whose constituencies encompass entire counties.

The low levels of contact with elected leaders is likely to compromise the quality of public participation in governance at the County level. In a situation where only 24% of citizens engage the leaders indicates a disengaged populace that is not taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the law in engaging and holding their leaders to account.
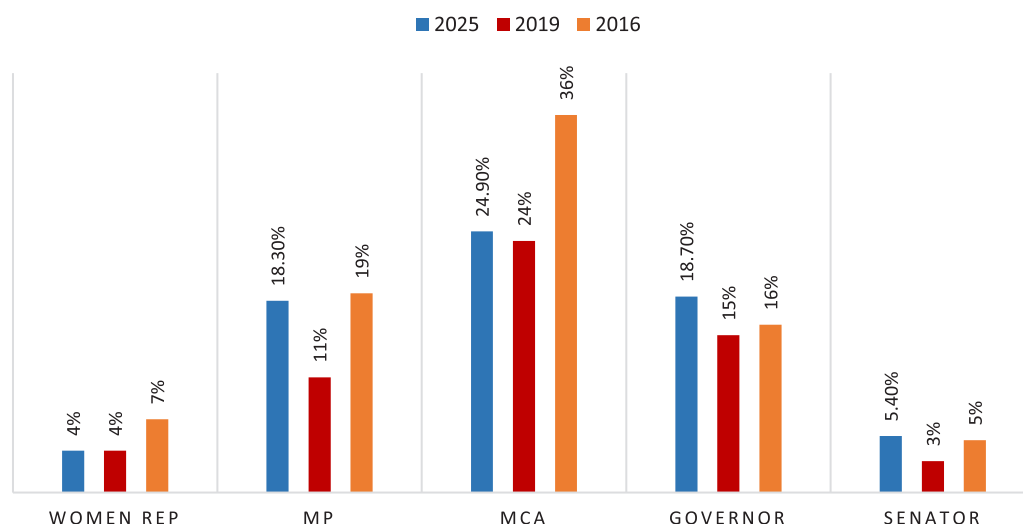


*Figure 3.4: Contact with leaders*

### How the leaders were contacted

Public meetings, project launches and barazas were reported as the most common avenue for the citizenry to engage or contact their leaders. This channel was used mostly by the Office of the Governor with more than 61% of the contact being in this form. The prominence in the use of this channel saw a 10 percent rise from 51% recorded in 2019.

The use of public meetings was also the preferred mode of contact when dealing with the office of MP at 48%. Across time, there was a slight fall on the use of public meetings by MPs from 55% recorded in 2019.

The use of the phone was also prominently reported as a channel for engagement. For those who contacted the office of the MCA, 23% used either telephone calls or messaging. Phone was also the dominant channel to contact the office of the Senator at 20%. There was no significant change in the use of this medium in comparison to 2019. The two offices reported a preference rate of 19 and 21% respectively.

For those who physically reported contact through physical visits, the office of the Senator was seen as the most visited at 30%. This was followed by the office of MCA at 19.4%. The office of the Governor was the least accessible through physical visits by reporting only 7.7%. Compared to 2019, there is a huge drop in the use of physical meetings in the office of the Governor from 30% registered then. The most plausible reason to explain this drop could be that Counties have opened more ward level offices to handle public concerns cutting off majority traffic to Governors' offices.

The use of social media was below 10% for all the offices. The highest use of social media was recorded for the office of the Woman Representative at 9.1%. The tends are however encouraging given that social media was the medium of choice by only 1% of the respondents In 2019 except for the office of Woman Representative that recorded 2%.

There are governance implications to the mode of contact reported. First is the note that most of the contact was through public meetings like barazas. On a positive note, this could imply the various elected officials are getting out of their way to create forums to engage the citizenry. Conversely, it can also be deduced that most of the engagement is one-way communication as would normally happen in a baraza as opposed to two-way engagement.

The low usage of social media is a concern especially to the extent to which the youth are taking up opportunities to engage elected officials. Since youths are mainly likely to use this mode, low usage may imply less youths are active in governance discourse at the county level.

| Type of contact | Senator | Governor / Deputy | MCA | MP | Women Representative |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Media announcements | 6.7% | 7.7% | 0.0% | 3.9% | 3.0% |
| Phone call or messages | 20.0% | 9.3% | 23.3% | 13.9% | 9.1% |
| Public meetings, barazas, public announcement, project launches | 36.7% | 61.2% | 36.7% | 48.3% | 36.4% |
| Social gatherings (funeral, church, weddings) | 0.0% | 0.0% | 5.0% | 9.4% | 24.2% |
| Social media | 6.7% | 8.2% | 8.8% | 6.7% | 9.1% |
| Through their offices | 30.0% | 7.7% | 19.6% | 14.4% | 12.1% |
| Incidental Communication | 0.0% | 6%% | 6.7% | 0.0% | 3.0% |

*Table 3.4: How leaders are contacted*

Among those who contacted various elected officials, just above half of them had their issue or concern attended.
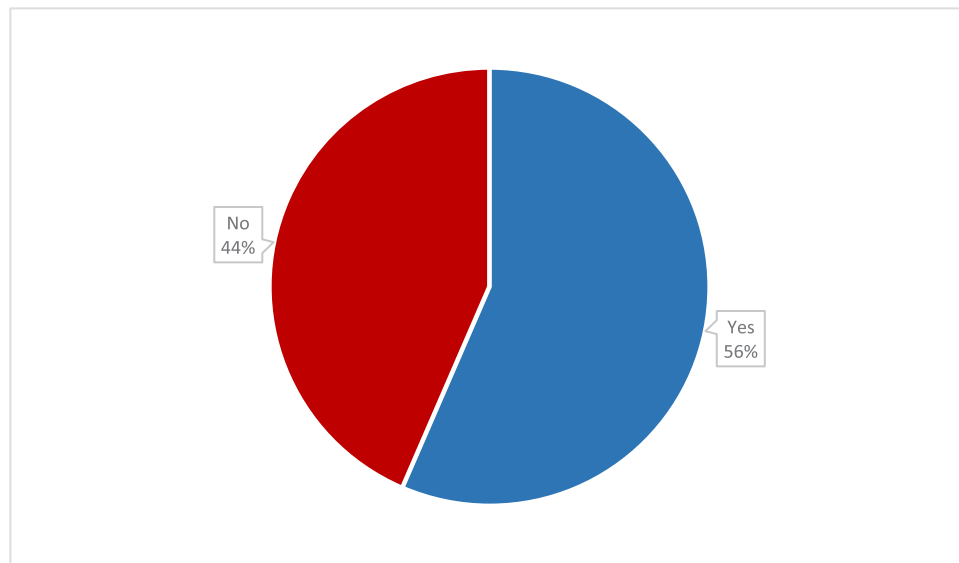


*Figure 3.5: Issue resolving*

**Knowledge on how and where to contact leaders**

The study aimed to investigate whether citizens were aware of how and where to contact their leaders in case they wanted to question service delivery or leadership in their area.  The findings revealed that except for MCAs, majority of citizens did not know how or where to contact their Women Representative (82.5%), Senator (82.3%), Governor or the d=Deputy Governor (63.8%) or Member of Parliament (59.2%). This lack of awareness implies that even if citizens were dissatisfied by the performance of these leaders, they were clueless about how they could reach out to them.

From an accountability perspective, this indicates that the public does not have a clear pathway to hold elected leaders accountable. In matters such as project selection, public oversight and grievance redress, citizenry cannot ably participate or engage.
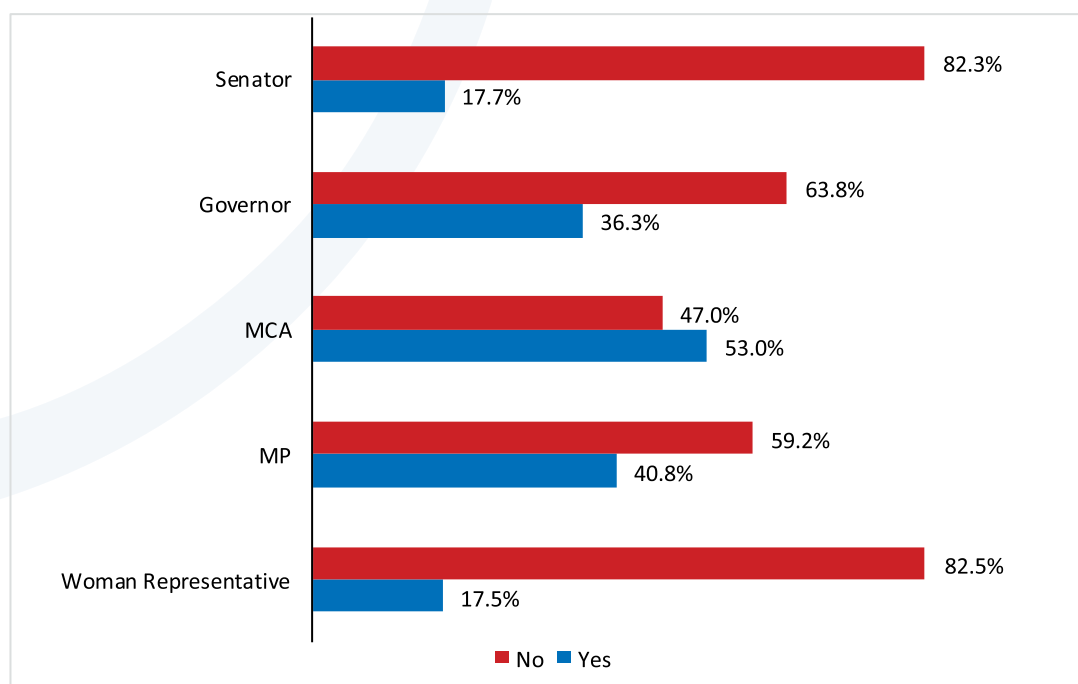


*Figure 3.6: Knowledge on how and where to contact leaders*

### Rating of leaders' performance

The respondents were asked to rate elected leaders based on their performance using a scale of 1-5 where 5 represented the highest score. The Offices of the Senator and the Woman Rep were rated lowest receiving a score of 2 each. The office of the MCA, the MP and the Governor were rated average, with a score of 3. Ideally, a score of 3 could denote an acceptable performance level but slightly above the midpoint of 2.5. Notably, none of the offices scored 4, which would denote a performance level deemed as good enough or very good at a score of 5.

Across the three surveys in 2025, 2019 and 2016, the offices of the MP and that of the MCA maintained an equal score of 3. However, the rating for the office of the Senator dropped from an average score of 3 in 2016 and 2019 to below average score of 2 in 2025. Consistently, the office of the Woman Representative has scored below average for all the 3 surveys.

These results align with the respondents' feedback regarding understanding of the roles of these offices and their ability to contact their leaders. It is evident that for offices where respondents indicated that they do not know how to reach the office holders, the performance ratings were correspondingly low.
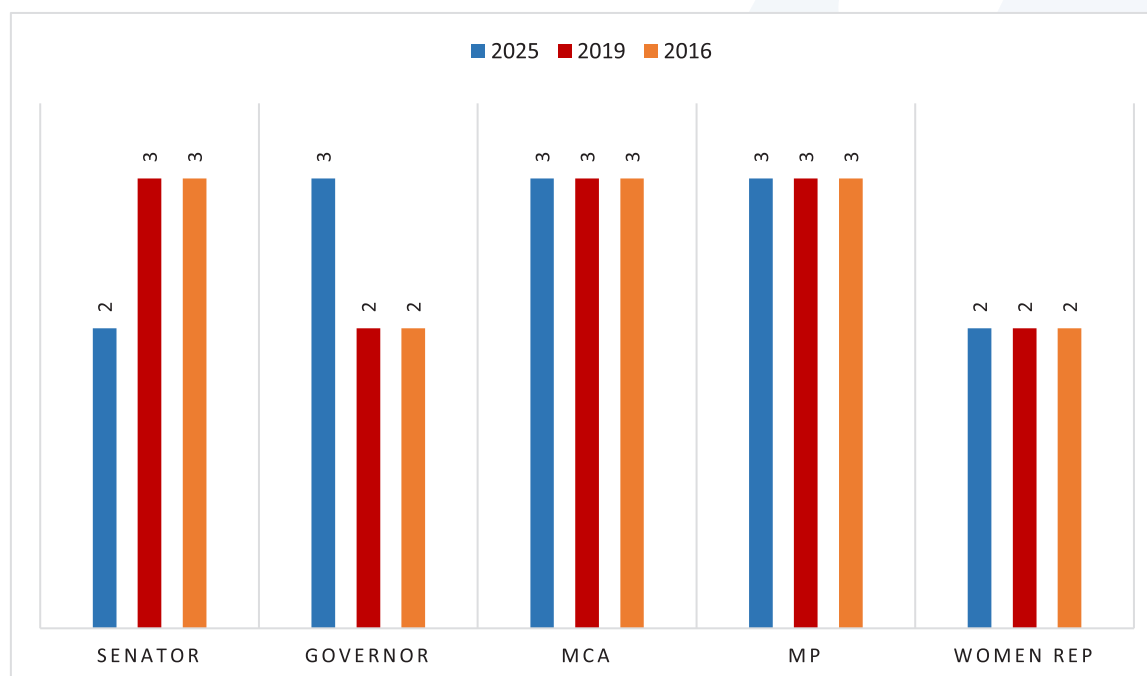


*Figure 3.7: Leader's rating*

### Self-rating by County Officials and MCAs

The evaluation on the effectiveness of MCAs both by themselves and by the county's senior executive was markedly more positive compared to the assessments made by the general public. This disparity is expected since MCAs are likely to view their own performance favorably while the senior executive also have different expectations from them than the general citizenry.

MCAs received a strong score of 4 out of 5 However, the County executive had reservations on the ability of MCAs to interrogate and approve budgets. Specific concerns raised included overly ambitious plans driven by populist development agenda rather than being rounded in budgetary realities. Additionally, project identification was sometimes driven by a misplaced focus on equal project distribution across wards rather than actual needs. This has resulted in the executive being confronted with projects whose viability cannot be clearly justified.
The executive also expressed concerns about the capability of the MCAs to effectively scrutinize technical reports from various departments. One of the concerns raised was the delay in the approval of reports by the assembly which hampers the implementation of the executives' responsibilities. The internal ranking of the MCAs in the 2025 survey showed little variation compared to the 2019 survey.

**Rating: 1= Very Poor; 2= Poor; 3= Average; 4= Good 5= Very Good**

| | MCAs' Scoring | | Executive Officers' Scoring | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2019 | 2025 | 2019 | 2025 |
| **Oversight function** | | | | |
| MCA'S ability to interrogate and approve County Budgets | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Ability to vet and approve nominees | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Ability to review and interrogate reports | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| **Legislative function** | | | | |
| Ability to pass and amend laws | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| **Representation functions** | | | | |
| Ability to represent their Constituents | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |

*Table 3.5: Rating of MCA's*

**How the County Assemblies ensure they remain accountable to the people**

The MCAs reported that their main strategy to maintain accountability to the public is to ensure physical proximity and to facilitate forums for open dialogue.  They highlighted the use of community-level meetings (Barazas) as an excellent channel for real time accountability. Through such meetings, the MCAs can explain their actions and receive feedback from the citizenry.

| | Modalities to ensure accountability | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Holding public Barazas with citizens | 19 | 90.4% |
| 2 | Ensuring reports of the proceedings of the assembly are published | 8 | 38% |
| 3 | Publication of what has been accomplished by the assembly or individual members | 7 | 33.3% |
| 4 | Attending issues raised by the citizenry and reporting back | 17 | 80.9% |
| 5 | Issuing periodic updates on legislative and oversight work | 9 | 42.9% |
| 6 | Remaining publicly accessible to the citizens to ask questions | 20 | 95% |

*Table 3.6: Modalities for accountability*

**MCAs greatest achievement**

When asked about their greatest achievement, a majority of the MCAs (43%) cited their development record at the ward level. This achievement was highlighted by the projects they have initiated or the successful advocacy for County government funding. Following this, 34% of the MCAS emphasized their effectiveness in representing the concerns of the citizenry at the County level.

In contrast, passage of laws and oversight from a governance perspective, the trend raises concerns about the neglect of the oversight role by the MCAs at the expense of physical development. While political expediencies may drive the focus, neglecting oversight may compromise the very development that the MCAs are proud of, as it is essential to safeguard resources that fund these projects.  Additionally, the role of MCAs in leading development at the ward level draws parallels to the ongoing debate regarding the National Government Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF) and the appropriateness of elected officials engaging in fund management.
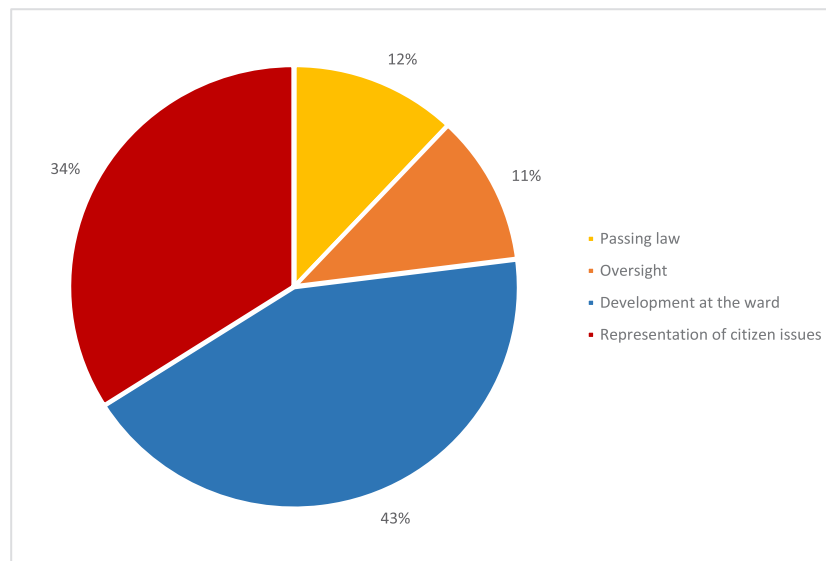
*Figure 3.8: MCA's achievements*

## Challenges faced by the MCAs in promoting improved service delivery

Financial constraints were identified as the single biggest challenge (35%) facing the MCAs in their work. Limited budgets created obstacles in terms of their delivery capabilities. This challenge was reflected in in the low-quality infrastructure available to the MCAs. In at least four counties, MCAs reported difficulties regarding office space.  In one of the counties, it was noted that budget constraints limit the County assembly's ability to hire short term experts like quantity surveyors or forensic experts to support MCAs' oversight role.

Another issue mentioned was the low understanding of the role of MCAs. This, it was reported, makes it hard for the citizens to align their expectations with the MCAs formal responsibilities highlighted by 18% of the respondents. However, 13% of the respondents mentioned that there are unreasonable expectations placed on the MCAs even when those expectations are within their formal roles.

Numerous budget reviews and supplementary budgets present a significant challenge. Although necessary, it was noted that such adjustments divert financial resources from previously budgeted projects and programmes. Where such projects were identified through public participation, MCAs are left with the hard task in explaining why the implementation stalled. One MCAS mentioned that this sometimes leads to unfounded accusations of misappropriation, sometimes this raises false accusations of theft of project money.
The challenges identified by the MCAs have largely remained consistent with the 2019 survey, financial constraints remaining the most significant hurdle. This is also reflected in the poor understanding of the role of MCAs by the public.

| Challenge | 2025 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|
| Inadequate funding | 35% | 34% |
| Lack of understanding of MCA roles by the public | 18% | 22% |
| Delay in disbursement of funds | 10% | 17% |
| Failure of executive to implement projects | 2% | 7% |
| Poor relationship between the executive and the assembly | - | 7% |
| Inadequate infrastructure | - | 5% |
| Inadequate capacity building | - | 5% |
| Political interference | 4% | 2% |
| Unreasonable expectations by the citizens | 13% | - |
| Budget reviews within the year | 18% | - |

*Table 3.7: Challenges in MCA's face in service delivery*

In addition to the general service delivery challenges, the researchers aimed to identify obstacles faced by the MCAs in their oversight role. It was reported that the executive at times delayed in providing them with critical documents to inform them about this role.

Another common concern was the funding model for the County Assembly. Unlike the National Assembly that draws its funding directly from the exchequer, the local assemblies are financed through the County executive allowing the executive to influence the assemblies by either cutting or delaying funding.

| | Modalities to ensure accountability | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Delay of relevant reports by the executive hindering timely oversight | 14 | 67% |
| 2 | Political interference from the top executive on sensitive issues | 6 | 28.5% |
| 3 | Political party dynamics and considerations in decision making on accountability | 6 | 28.5% |
| 4 | Limited resources to allow frequent project monitoring | 18 | 85.7% |
| 5 | Reliance of the County Assembly on funding from the executive limits' independence | 9 | 42.9% |
| 6 | Weak compliance by the executive especially failure or delay to honor summons | 4 | 19% |

*Table 3.8: Challenges MCA's face in oversight*

**Working environment for the MCAs**

The survey aimed to assess the quality of facilitation and working environment provided to the MCAs and how that impacts their delivery service. The most positively evaluated aspect was the availability of support staff to the MCAs.

In contrast, the provision of offices at the ward level scored the lowest. While the offices at the County level may be adequate, the same cannot be said of those at the ward level. It was also noted that some wards were too large to be effectively served by a single office. There does not seem appear to be no significant differences in the quality of facilitation across the three surveys conducted in 2016, 2019 and 2025. However, while the financial facilitation was rated as good in 2016, this rating has declined to 'average' in the two subsequent surveys.

**Rating: 1= Very Poor; 2= Poor; 3= Average; 4= Good 5= Very Good**

| Item | 2025 | 2019 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Support staff (Hansard reporters, legislative drafters, secretaries etc) | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Office space at ward level | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Office space at assembly buildings | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Capacity building | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Finances | 3 | 3 | 4 |

*Table 3.9: Working environment of MCA's*

**Likelihood of re-election of the leaders**

The study revealed a low likelihood of reelection for elected officials. Specifically, (58.5%) of senators and (81.0%) of women representatives were found to be likely or very unlikely to be reelected. In contrast, Governors, MCAs and Member of Parliament had an equal 50% chance for reelection.

Overall, no elected official was reported to have more than a 10% chance of reelection. The MP position came closest with a likelihood of 8.9% probably on account of the visibility created by their role in managing of National Government- Constituency Development Fund.

The position of the Woman Representative and that of the Senator showed the least likelihood of reelection which aligns with other findings in the report indicating low levels of public knowledge about these two offices and minimal interaction with the public.

| Likelihood of re-electing | Very unlikely | Unlikely | Undecided | Likely | Very likely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Senator** | 35.6% | 22.9% | 16.7% | 20.6% | 4.2% |
| **Governor** | 29.7% | 23.1% | 19.0% | 21.8% | 6.3% |
| **MCA** | 29.9% | 20.7% | 20.8% | 22.4% | 6.1% |
| **MP** | 24.9% | 18.8% | 19.1% | 28.3% | 8.9% |
| **Woman Representative** | 49.3% | 22.7% | 15.6% | 9.7% | 2.6% |

*Table 3.10: Likelihood of leaders' reelection*

There was strong likelihood of electing a woman d in each of the elective positions. For the position of Governor, 47% of the respondents reported that they are either likely or very likely to vote for a female candidate. An almost similar proportion (45%) expressed the same preferences for the position of a Senator. The position of MCA was perceived to have the highest likelihood of electing a female candidate with 51% of the respondents reporting that they are likely or very likely to support a female candidate.

However, compared to the 2019 survey, support for the female candidates has notably declined across all the elective positions. In 2029, 65% favoured a female candidate for the position of a Governor and 68% supported a female MCA, whereas these figures have dropped to 47% and 51% respectively in 2025.

Despite the intent to vote for female candidates it must be noted that the actual election results reflect a different reality. In the 2022 elections, only seven female Governors were elected, (14%) an improvement from three in 2017. Unfortunately, the situation for female senators was even worse with only 3 out of 47 elected (6.3%).
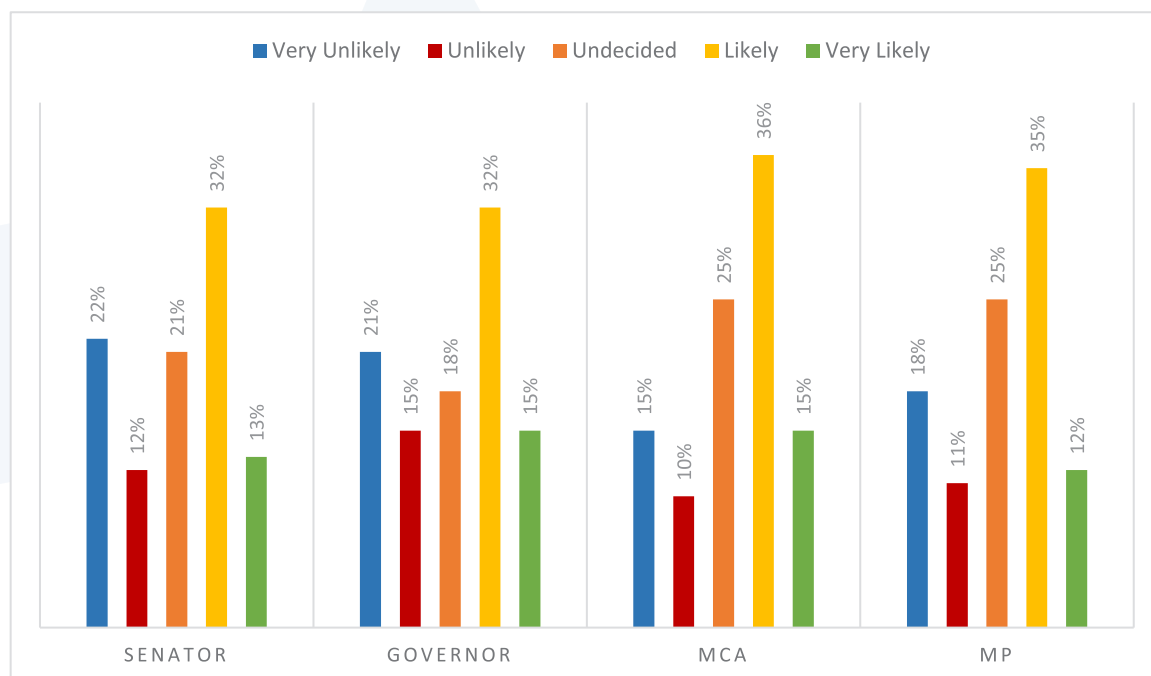


*Figure 3.9: Likelihoods of electing a woman leader.*

## 3.3 Transparency

### Receiving information from the County

Majority of the respondents (56.8%) reported that they had either received seen or heard news/communication/information from the County government regarding any of their services or development projects with 43.2% of them saying that they had not. This is a reversal of the results in the 2019 survey where 56% had reported not having received or accessed any such information.
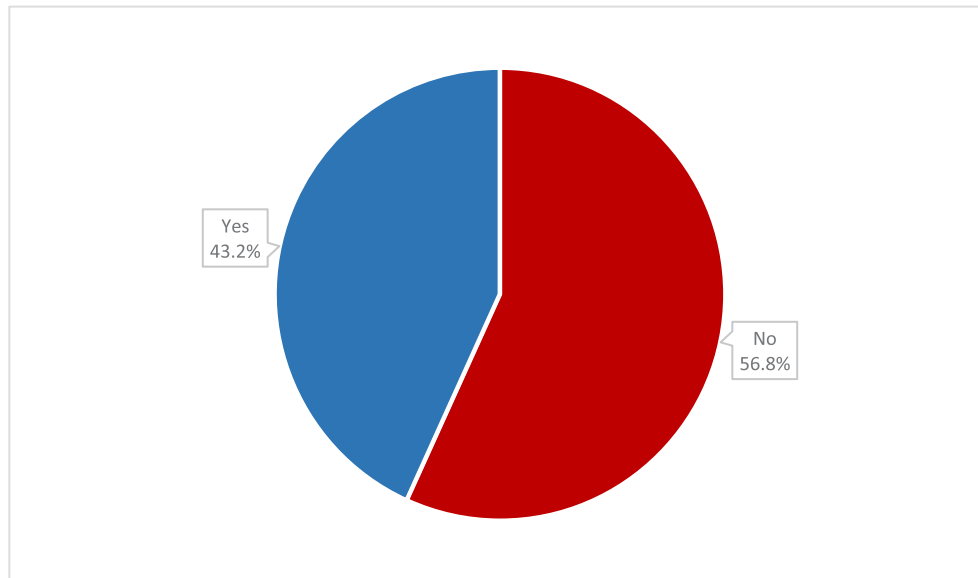
*Figure 3.10: Information sharing*

## The preferred source/ channel of information

The study aimed to determine the preferred channel through which the respondents would choose for communication from the County. It was reported that radio was the most preferred source of information at 52%. Physical visits to the County offices also ranked high at 22%.
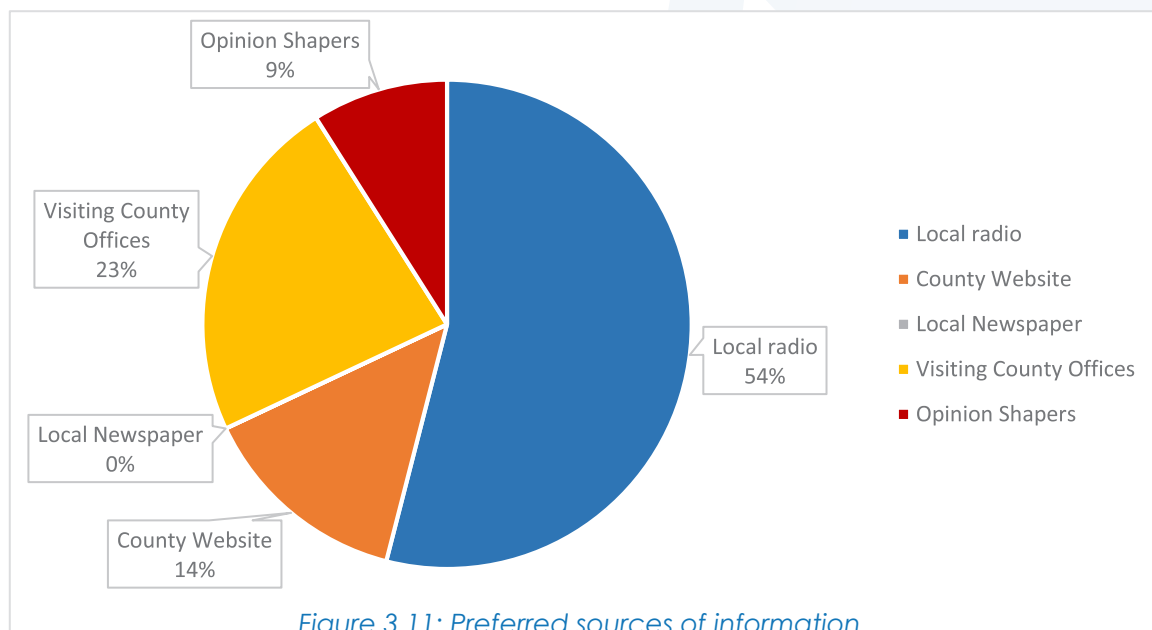


*Figure 3.11: Preferred sources of information*

## Information sharing by County Governments

The study then narrowed down to question whether the respondents had any news about three key issues: job adverts, tenders and bursaries. Bursaries seemed to be the most well-communicated issue, with 82.1% having heard about it. This can be seen in the context of the rising cost of education which has heightened interest in public bursaries. In another context, the Office of the Controller of Budget has issued a formal direction against Counties issuing bursaries to cover post primary education. The popularity of County bursaries is therefore a contentious issue being debated in court .[1]

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1. https://www.citizen.digital/news/controller-of-budget-moves-to-court-as-bursary-disbursements-stall-over-legal-confusion-n361936

| In the last 12 months have you heard any public information by the County government on County | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Jobs adverts | 49.2% | 50.8% |
| Tenders | 34.1% | 65.9% |
| Bursaries | 82.1% | 17.9% |

*Table 3.11: Information sharing by County governments*

**Information shared by County Governments**

The researchers flipped the question about information transparency and sought to establish what type of information the citizens seek for from the County government. The results showed that the majority of respondents were actually interested in seeking invitations to attend public participation (37.6%). Additionally, 27.8% seek information about job opportunities. The other category of information sought is on project progress.

Having this kind of knowledge, counties can determine the best ways to provide information, how to package it and how often to share it.
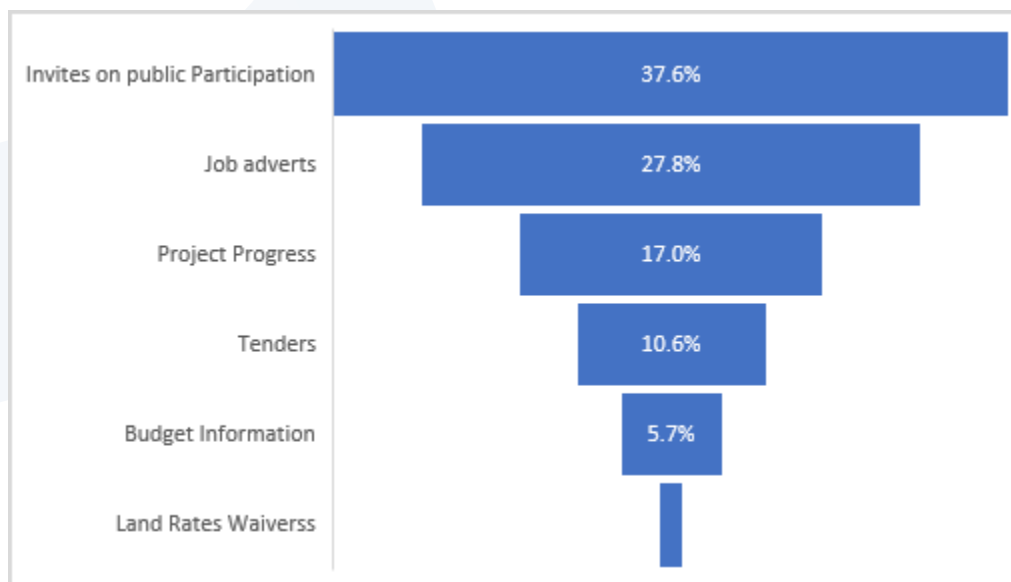


*Figure 3.12: Information citizens seek from the County regarding their services or projects*

**Awareness of critical documents**

A vast majority (94%) of citizens reported being aware of the Constitution of Kenya with only 6.0% having no awareness on it. However, even with this high level of awareness, only 52.2% of the respondents have actually read it. The level of awareness improved from 76% in the 2019 survey.

In the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), only 29.8% reported being aware of this important document. This leaves more than 70% clueless of this critical planning tool at the County level.  This was however, represents an improvement from the 20% awareness reported in the 2019 survey. Among those who are aware of the CIDP, only 20% have actually read the document for their County.

The low levels of awareness about the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) are a huge indictment of the public participation process. The process of CIDP formulation is supposed to be inclusive and participatory. However, when less than 30% of the respondents are not aware of the document, it can be reasonably concluded that the formulation process locked out the vast majority of the residents. Additionally, the civic education efforts in the counties have also not effectively popularized this critical document.

There is a possibility, however, that the residents were actually involved in the formulation of the CIDPs but lacked understanding of the actual technical term of the document. It is likely that citizens participated in local meetings to identify project priorities without realizing that this was part of the CIDP formulation process.

The awareness on the latest County annual budget stands at 45%. The implication is that more than half the residents have no idea of the County budget. It can be inferred that if this proportion is uninformed about the budget, they are likely unaware of the budgeting process and how they can have their priorities included in it.
Among the respondents who had heard of the County budget (2024/2025), only 27.6% reported to have read or seen it.

When asked i they had ever heard of the County Annual Development Plan (ADP), only 24.7% of the respondents said that they had heard with 71.4% reporting in the negative. Even among those who were aware of the annual plan, only about a third (36.2%) had read or seen it.

|  | Those who are Aware | Those who have read |
|---|---|---|
| Constitution of Kenya 2010 | 94% | 52.2% |
| County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) | 30% | 20% |
| County Budget (2024/2025) | 45% | 27.6% |
| County Annual Development Plan | 25% | 35.2% |

*Table 3.12: Awareness of critical documents*

**Simplification of vital governance documents**

It was observed that only 5 out of the 15 sampled counties had prepared a popular version of their 5-year County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). Since this is a very bulky document, failure to have an abridged copy may limit accessibility and utilization by the majority of the citizenry. This was a deterioration from 15 Counties that had simplified their 2018-2022 CIDP as reported in the 2019 survey.

The Counties performed better in simplifying the annual budgets. Out of the 15 sampled Counties, 10 had prepared a popular version of the annual budget. The reader-friendly versions known by various terms such as Mwananchi Budget, Popular Budget or Budget Yetu offered basic information on key spending plans for the year and the revenue projections. However, in comparison to 2019 when 13 Counties had prepared a popular version, there were 3 fewer counties providing this in 2025.

| 1 | County Integrated Development Plan | 5 |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Annual Budget | 10 |
| 3 | Annual development plan | 0 |

*Table 3.13: Documents simplification by county governments*

**Knowledge of projects in the county and their status**

When asked whether if they were aware of any County projects occurring in their locality, 60.2% of the citizens answered in the affirmative. On the flipside, this means close to 40% are not aware of any ongoing projects in their locality.

The level of awareness on County projects is a proxy for the level of involvement and participation of the community in both t project identification and implementation. The 40% who are unaware of such projects may find themselves unable to provide civic oversight on the projects. This would have an impact on answerability and accountability at the local level.



39.08%

60.02%

■ Aware of County projects in the locality    ■ Not Aware
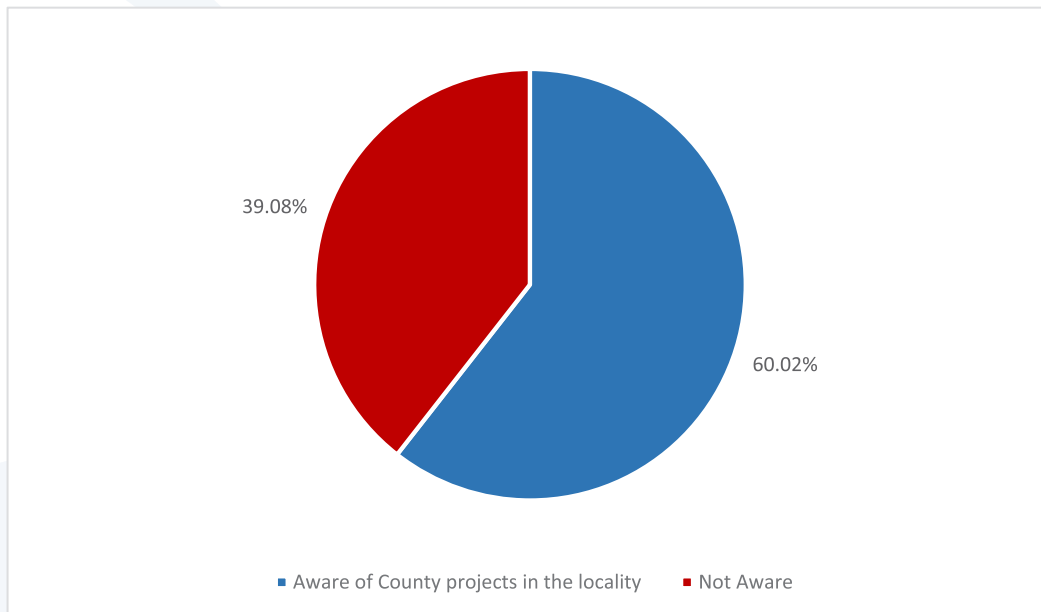
*Figure 3.13: Awareness of county projects*

To gauge the quality of monitoring, respondents were asked about their awareness of the project status, specifically whether the projects mentioned were completed or still ongoing. It was reported that 77.8% of the reported projects were ongoing while 22.2% having been completed.



Completed Projects    22.2%

On-going Projects    77.8%
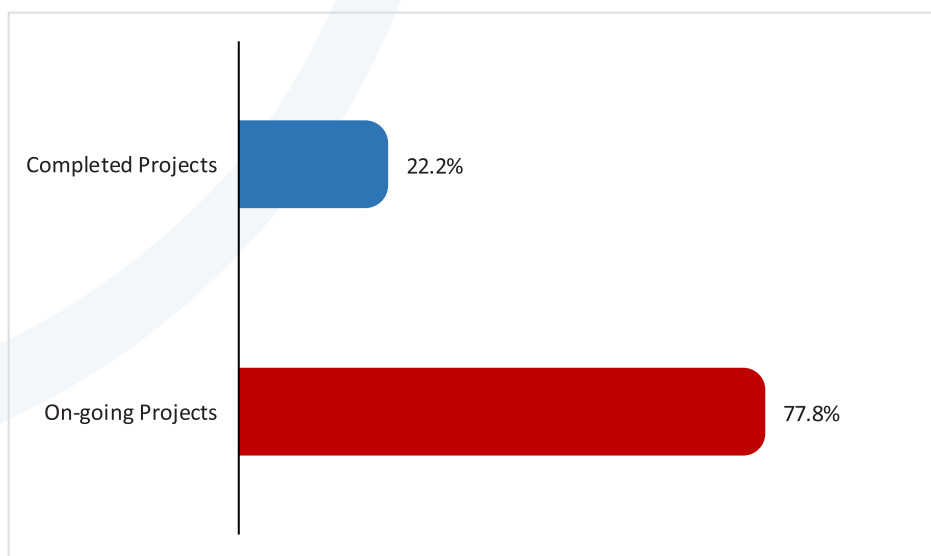
*Figure 3.14: Status of the projects carried out in the county*

## Awareness on the cost of projects in the locality

Among those who reported awareness of a project in their locality, researchers sought to establish if they were informed about the project's cost. A vast majority (93.5%) of these respondents indicated that they were not aware of the cost of the projects.

The low levels of awareness on project costs undermines residents' ability to provide civic oversight, as they lack the requisite information to hold the County or the contractors to account. Furthermore, these widespread ignorance could also be an indication of lack of transparency in project implementation at the County level.



6.05%

93.05%

■ Aware of County projects in the locality   ■ Not Aware
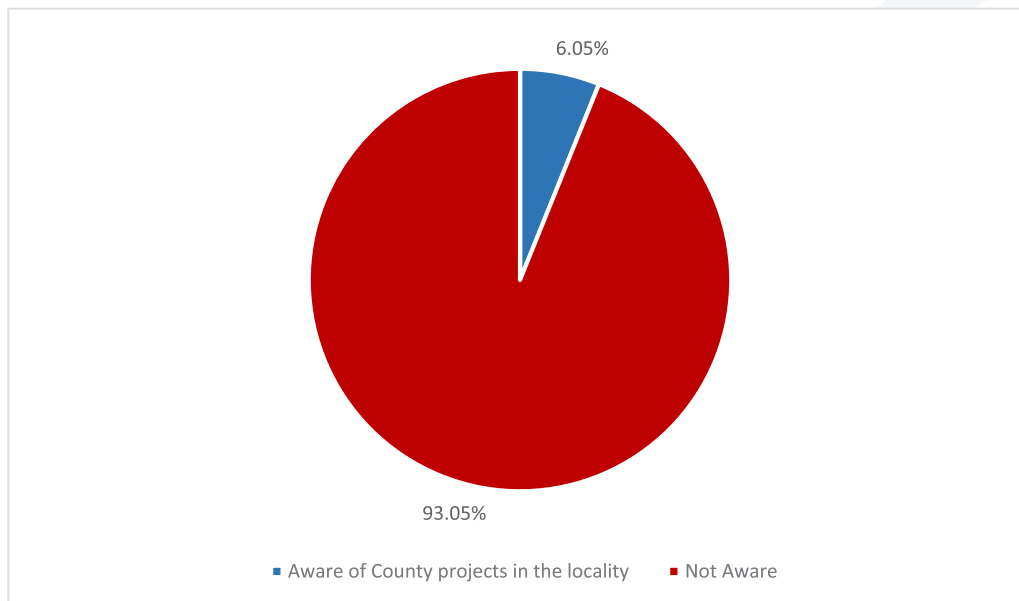
*Figure 3.15: Awareness on the cost of the project*

## Level of awareness on the expected completion of the project

The researchers were also interested in finding out whether the local residents were aware of the project duration and the expected date of completion. It was observed that only 22.7% of the respondents with knowledge about local projects had an idea of the completion date.

On the contrary, nearly 80% of them did not have this information. The implication is that even if they wish to enquire about and delays, lack of knowledge of when it ought to be done and within what time frame would limit their inquiry. Consequently, this undermines the accountability of both the contractors and the County government.
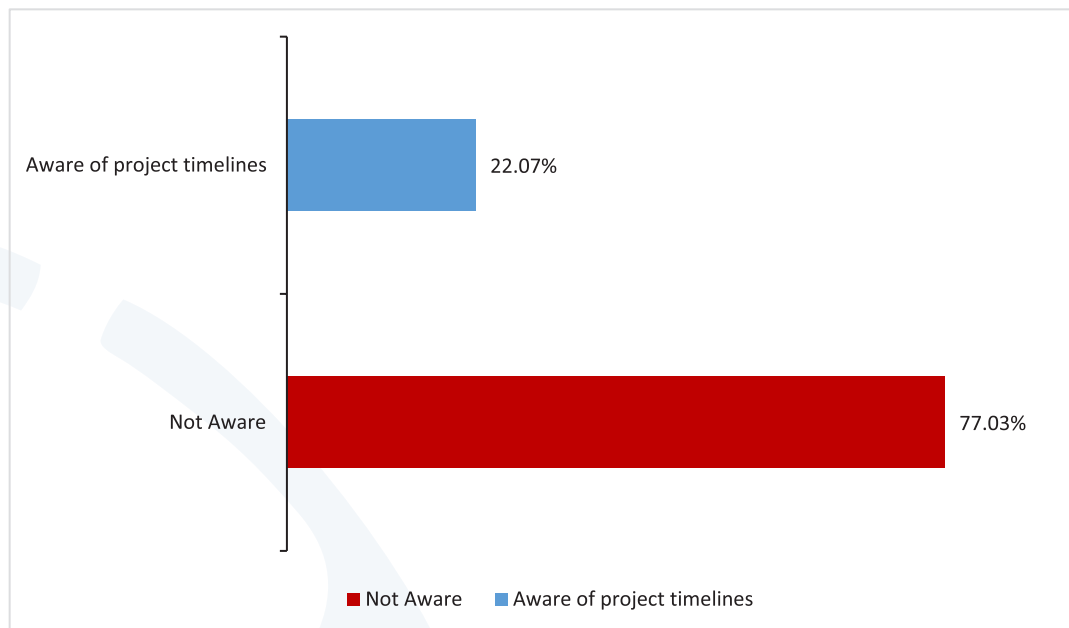
*Figure 3.16: Awareness of project contractors*

**Awareness of the project contractors**

Less than 5% of the respondents reported knowledge about the contractor implementing projects in their localities while 95% were not aware of the identity of the contractors. This makes it challenging to raise issues or concerns especially when basic information like the contractor's name is not available. This finding also raises questions on the extent to which the local community can truly take ownership of the projects when there's such a significant lack of transparency in the implementation.

**Awareness on project management committees**

Slightly more than 30% of the respondents indicated awareness of Project Management Committee. This is a community-based committee tasked to monitor implementation of various projects. It is formed in accordance with the principles of public participation outlined in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the Public Financial Management Act 2012.

Ideally, the Counties utilise these committees to ensure that the community has real time participation and oversight of projects. The committees are normally openly constituted with some Counties already having specific guidelines for their election or selection. However, if nearly 70% of the respondents are unaware of such committees, then the effectiveness of such a body as a means of civic oversight is highly questionable.
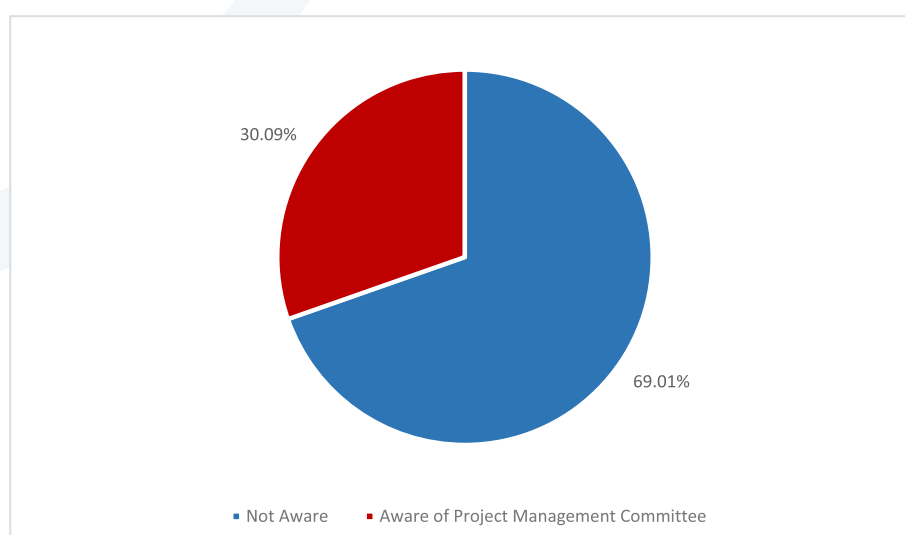


*Figure 3.17: Awareness of Project Management Committees*

**Mechanisms to Support Public Participation**

It is commendable that all the 15 sampled counties had implemented mechanisms to support public participation and access to information. Each county had designated a senior officer to lead this initiative highlighting the importance of incorporating public input in decision making. In select Counties like Kakamega, the role was under a Chief Officer in the Office of the Governor and in others such as Elgeyo Marakwet, Kiambu, Nairobi, Kilifi and Machakos, it was established as a full directorate.

However, the study revealed a declining emphasis on the importance of access to information. None of the Counties had an office for this purpose as required by Article 95 of the County Governments Act 2012. For example, in Kisumu County, where the role is mentioned, it was placed as a subsidiary responsibility under the office of public participation. This could limit the effectiveness since access to information encompasses more just participation. Further analysis indicates some sample counties have enacted specific local legislation to guide access to information and public participation. These counties include Nakuru, Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, Siaya and Mombasa, Nakuru, Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, Siaya and Mombasa.

**Awareness of meetings convened by County Governments**

It was reported that just under a third (32%) of the respondents were aware of meetings convened by the County governments in the 12 months prior to the survey. This represented a slight decline from 35% recorded in the 2019 survey. It is however encouraging that more than a half (56%) of those who learnt about such meetings attended. Additionally, the attendance rate of these meetings increased by 14 percentage points compared to the 2019 survey.

| | 2025 | | 2019 | | 2016 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Heard about the meeting | 32% | 68% | 27% | 73% | 35% | 65% |
| Attended the meeting | 56% | 42% | 42% | 58% | 51% | 49% |

*Table 3.14: Awareness of meetings convened*

**Public Engagements in the County Assembly**

All the Counties reported that there were opportunities for the general public to participate in the affairs of the County Assembly. It was mentioned that the public was free to attend County proceedings although the Speakers have the prerogative to close some sessions to the public. Another opportunity provided for the public was during the sittings of the various assembly committees. When deemed appropriate, committee chairs invite specific members of the public to make presentations during these sessions.

**Challenges to access to information and public participation**

The survey also sought to identify the obstacles government officials face in facilitating access to information and public participation for the citizens. From the perspective of the MCAs, a significant majority (95.2%) identified limited funding as the greatest hurdle. This hampers the dissemination of critical documents like draft laws and budgets to the broader audience of citizens. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the MCAs also observed that there is limited awareness among citizens regarding their right to information which reduces the likelihood that citizens will come forward and proactively demand for information.

| | Challenges to access to information and public participation as viewed by MCAs | Frequency | Proportion |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Limited public awareness on their right to information | 17 | 80.9% |
| 2 | Resistance by the executive to release information to the MCAs | 15 | 71.4% |
| 3 | Insufficient funds for public dissemination of such documents like draft laws and annual budget | 20 | 95.2% |
| 4 | Technical information often difficult to share with ordinary citizens | 9 | 42.8% |

*Table 3.15: Challenges to access information and public participation by MCA's*

When the same question was presented to the members of executive, the issue of limited financing also came up with 82.3% citing it. They mentioned that the cost of developing abridged versions of key documents is considered a non-priority across most departments. Additionally, the expenses associated with public dissemination can also be significant and often compete with funding for actual service delivery.

Furthermore, a similar percentage (82.3%) of the executive reported high level of apathy from the citizenry regarding the effectiveness of public participation Citizens expressed that they do not feel that their input can lead to meaningful change. This sense of apathy discourages many from taking advantage of public participation opportunities made available for them.

| | Challenges to access information and public participation as viewed by the executive | Frequency | Proportion |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Financial constraints | 28 | 82.3% |
| 2 | Time constraints based on constitutional and PFM Act timelines | 22 | 64.7% |
| 3 | Illiteracy and low awareness on County operations | 26 | 76.4% |
| 4 | Apathy and perceived infectiveness on the participation process | 28 | 82.3% |
| 5 | Political interferences by actors within or outside government | 11 | 32.3% |

*Table 3.16: Challenges to access of information and public participation by the executive*

## 3.4 Service Delivery

This section of the survey focused on the experiences of the respondents with County level service delivery institutions. The respondents were asked to rate the quality and reliability of services provided by the County governments. The purpose of this section is to establish trends in the overtime quality-of-service delivery.

**Most pressing services in the county as seen by the respondents**

The respondents emphasized the importance of prioritization of health needs with 44%. Roads followed as second priority at 21%. This ranking is understandable given the rising cost of living in recent years which has made access to these essential services somehow challenging.

Over time, notable differences have emerged. In the two previous surveys, education was not viewed as a major priority. However, water was identified as a critical need by 17% and 14% of the respondents in 2019 and 2016 respectively.
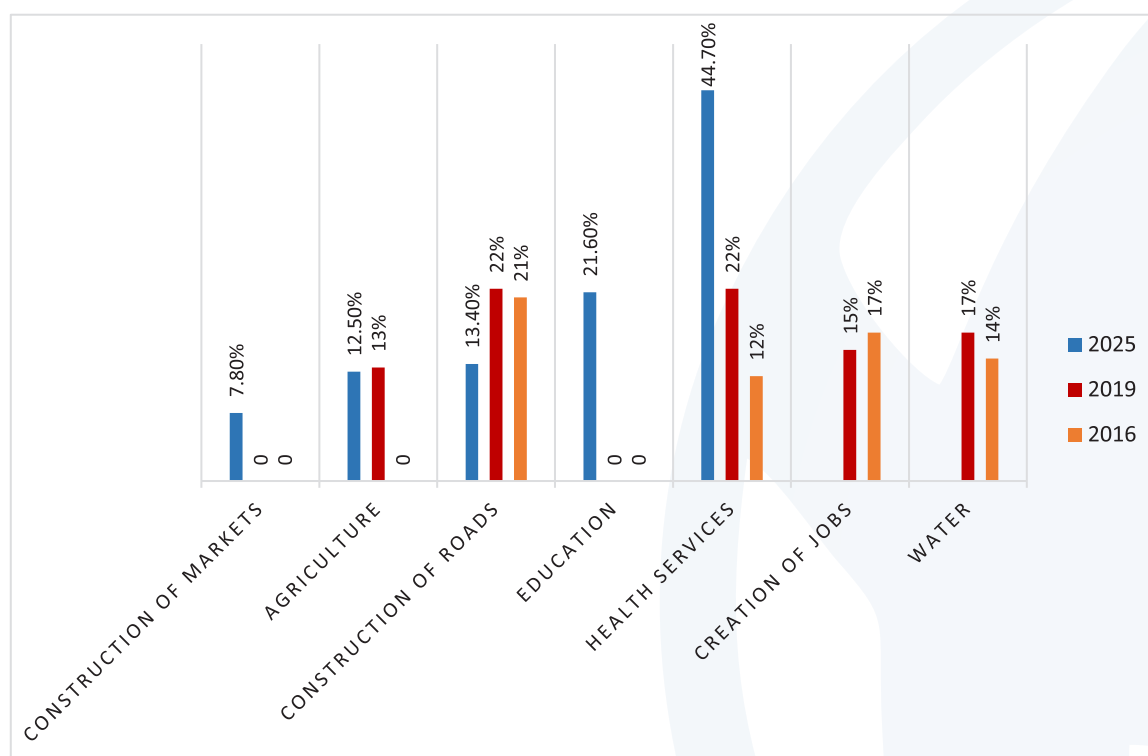


*Figure 3.18: Services most sought in the county*

|  | 2025 | 2019 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Construction of markets | 7.80% |  |  |
| Agriculture | 12.50% | 13% |  |
| Construction of roads | 13.40% | 22% | 21% |
| Education | 21.60% |  |  |
| Health services | 44.70% | 22% | 12% |
| Creation of jobs |  | 15% | 14% |
| Water |  | 17% | 14% |

*Table 3.17: Priority services*

**Rating the provision of services by the county government**

Overall, most respondents rated the level of service delivery by County Governments as average, with 51.7%. Additionally, 17% respondents considered the service provision to be generally good. However, nearly a third of the respondents described the quality of service provision as poor.
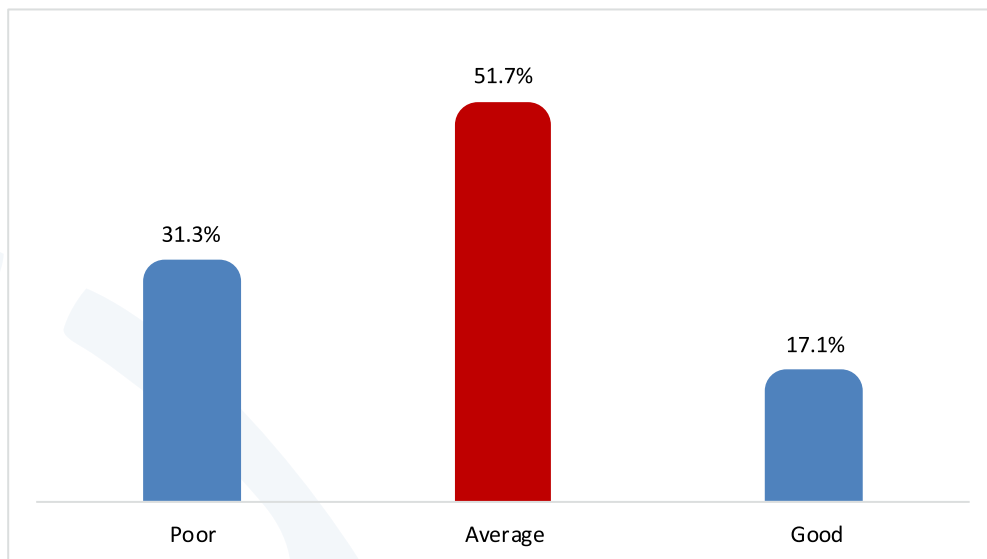
*Figure 3.19: Rating the provision of services by county government*

## Experience with actual service provision in different sectors

Agriculture services sought by the respondents:

The survey also sought to establish the extent to which the respondents either directly sought various services or witnessed the provision. In the agriculture sector, the most commonly requested service was the subsidized fertilizer at 46.4% followed by training on farming methods sought by 18% of the resppondents.

|  | Proportion |
|---|---|
| Training farmers on modern farming (Agriculture) | 18.0% |
| Provision of artificial insemination | 13.0% |
| Helping farmers market their products | 15.3% |
| Provision of subsidized fertilizers (Agriculture) | 46.3% |

*Table 3.18: Provision of agricultural services*

## Quality of service provision in the agricultural sector

The most positively noted change in the agricultural sector was the availability of subsidized fertilizer. Nearly a third of the respondents reported an improvement over the past 5 years. The lowest ranking service in the sector was the provision of artificial insemination.

| Agriculture | Got better | Remained the same | Got worse | No answer/ Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Training farmers on modern farming | 19.4% | 36.2% | 16.0% | 28.4% |
| Provision of artificial insemination | 10.9% | 38.4% | 15.6% | 35.1% |
| Helping farmers market their products | 15.5% | 38.5% | 16.2% | 29.7% |
| Provision of subsidized fertilizers (Agriculture) | 32.9% | 31.2% | 16.7% | 19.1% |

*Table 3.19: Quality of agricultural services*

**Health services sought by the respondents**

In the health sector, about 38% of respondents either benefited from or observed availability of medicines in County-run health institutions. Following this, about 34% experienced or noted the presence of medical staff. About a quarter of the respondents witnessed the construction of dispensaries or hospitals in their locality.

| County health services provision | Proportion |
|---|---|
| Construction of new dispensaries and hospitals | 23.2% |
| Availability of medical staff (County health services) | 33.8% |
| Availability of medicines (County health services) | 38.4% |
| Provision of refuse bins (County health services) | 23.6% |

*Table 3.20: Provision of health services*

**Changes in the quality of County health services provision**

The outlook for the sector was largely stagnated with 49% and 44% noting no significant improvement in the construction of hospitals or availability of medical staff in the past 5 years. Furthermore, almost half of the respondents (47.9%) observed a decline in the provision or availability of medicines in the County run hospitals.

| County health services | Got better | Remained the same | Got worse | No answer/ Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Construction of new dispensaries and hospitals | 24.1% | 49.3% | 18.4% | 8.1% |
| Availability of medical staff | 21.2% | 44.4% | 27.0% | 7.4% |
| Availability of medicines | 15.9% | 31.3% | 47.9% | 4.9% |

*Table 3.21: Quality of health services*

**Education services sought by the respondents**

In this sector, the most south after service was access to bursaries with about 55.7% reporting that they sought bursaries from the county. The survey, however, did not investigate if these individuals indeed received the bursaries they applied for, which could be quite unlikely. The popularity of bursaries and the high demand as a service may indicate financial barriers to affordable education.

The other most sought-after service was the early childhood development education (ECDE) with 32% of the respondents indicating this need. This trend is expected given the constitutional mandate of the Counties to provide these services as outlined in the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya 2010

| Education services | Yes |
|---|---|
| ECDE  (Pre Primary education) | 32.5% |
| School feeding programme | 26.2% |
| Village polytechnics | 18.2% |
| Bursaries | 55.7% |

*Table 3.22: Provision of education services*

The enhanced situation in this sector was reflected in the issuance of bursaries reported at 43.1%. Additionally, 34% of the respondents noted that the status of the bursaries remained stable. Furthermore, there was a marked improvement in the provision of ECDE services as observed by 33.6% of the respondents.

| Education Services | Got better | Remained the same | Got worse | No answer/ Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ECDE  (Pre Primary education) | 33.6% | 39.1% | 12.2% | 15.1% |
| School feeding programs | 28.2% | 36.5% | 15.0% | 20.3% |
| Village polytechnics | 23.8% | 40.9% | 12.2% | 23.0% |
| Bursaries | 43.1% | 34.2% | 14.0% | 8.7% |

*Table 3.23: Quality of education services*

## Services related to roads sought by respondents

Approximately  a third of the respondents reported witnessing construction of access roads in their area A similar portion observed the installation of street lighting with 16.5% either utilized or saw the implementation of traffic control or parking services.

| Road services | Proportion |
|---|---|
| Construction and repair of access roads | 30.8% |
| Street lighting | 31.0% |
| Traffic control | 16.5% |

*Table 3.24: Provision of road services*

## Changes observed in the roads services sector in the last 5 years

 A majority of the respondents reported a significant improvement in construction of new access roads with 42.4% indicating positive changes. However, about a quarter of the respondents (26.6%) noted that the situation had actually worsened. The variation here could perhaps be explained by the differences in geographical location.

| | Got better | Remained the same | Got worse | No answer/ Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Construction and repair of access roads | 42.4% | 21.2% | 26.6% | 9.8% |
| Street lighting | 16.1% | 33.7% | 19.0% | 31.1% |
| Traffic Control and parking | 20.1% | 24.6% | 21.9% | 33.4% |

*Table 3.25: Quality of road services*

## Trade facilitation services

Approximately 36.8% of the respondents obtained trade licenses in the 12 months preceding the survey. An almost equal proportion (38%) either benefited from or witnessed garbage collection.

| Trade services | Yes |
|---|---|
| Construction and repair of markets | 22.9% |
| Trade licenses | 36.8% |
| Garbage collection | 38.5% |

*Table 3.26: Provision of trade services*

**Changes observed in the quality-of-service delivery in trade facilitation the last 5 years**

There was no significant change observed in this sector with over 40% indicating that the situation remained the same across the three areas assessed. An average of about 25%, however, reported observed improvement.

| Trade | Got better | Remained the same | Got worse | No answer/ Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Construction and repair of markets | 27.6% | 46.6% | 16.6% | 9.2% |
| Trade licenses | 20.0% | 44.5% | 22.4% | 13.1% |
| Garbage collection | 31.0% | 40.7% | 21.9% | 6.4% |

*Table 3.27: Quality of trade services*

**Areas of service delivery the citizen respondents would wish to see the Counties improve on**

When asked to recommend areas where the county governments need to focus their efforts, the respondents highlighted six recurring issues or concerns. The issue of youth unemployment took most prominence which accounted for 23.2% of the respondents. This reflects to current high unemployment rate in the country and the expectation that the National and County governments should implement appropriate measures.

The need to address water and sanitation along with the fight against nepotism and corruption was mentioned by about 19% of the respondents. It is however important to note that the responses this question may not fully capture the extent to which corruption influences the severity and trends of the other issues identified. Youth unemployment, poor water and sanitation services or weak service provision in health and education may be symptoms of of corruption and waste.

| | Issue the County Governments should put more emphasis on | Proportion |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Youth unemployment | 23.2% |
| 2 | Water and sanitation | 19.8% |
| 3 | Nepotism and corruption | 19.1% |
| 4 | Renovation of schools especially ECDE classes | 16.6% |
| 5 | Delays in paying county staff | 14.0% |
| 6 | Medicine in hospitals and adequate staffing | 7.3% |

*Table 3.28: Areas that need improvement*

While respondents listed areas where they would like to see improvements from the County governments, there was a significant level of scepticism regarding the likelihood of getting done. About 66% of the respondents believed that is unlikely the governments will effectively address the issues While an additional 21.6% felt that it very unlikely that the issues will get resolved.
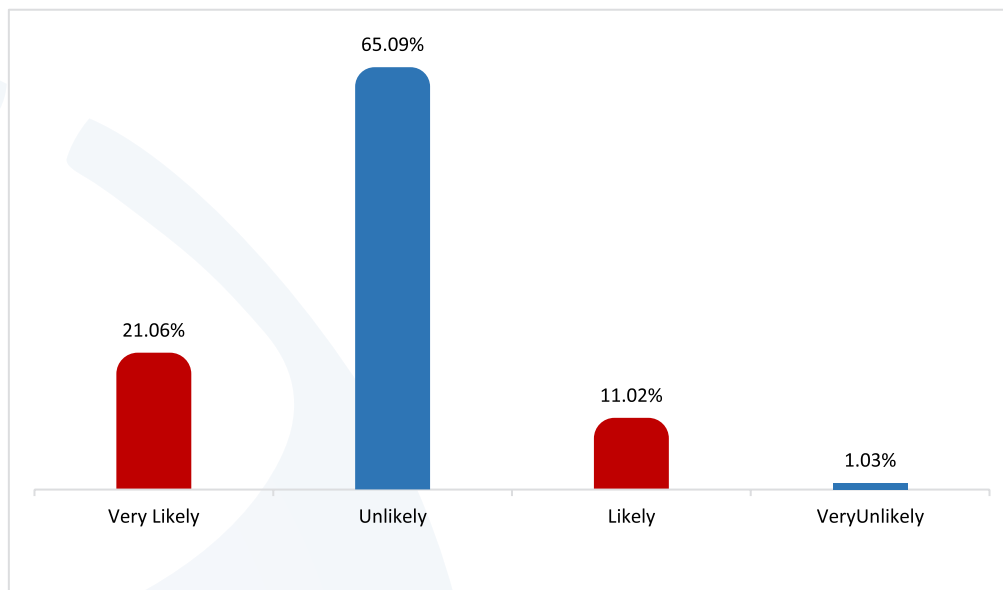


*Figure 3.20: Likelihoods of issue resolving*

**Obstacles in effective service delivery as seen by the executive**

Asked about the most significant obstacles to effective service delivery, limited finances was cited as the top concern by 29 out of the 34 (85.3%) Chief Officers interviewed. The service delivery demands in the counties were reported to exceed the available budget allocations.

Another related concern was the delays by the National Treasury to transfer financial allocations to the counties that often left the Counties struggling to meet the needs of the underserved citizens. Additionally, in the water department, there were recurring mentions of vandalism as a threat to reliable service delivery. The wilful destruction of water infrastructure by citizens to access water illegally was said to be a main cause of regular spills and high proportion on non-revenue water.

The most unique challenge relates to unanticipated demand for services from neighbouring counties. This was mentioned by 23.5% of the Chief Officers interviewed. It was mentioned that residents from neighbouring counties often form a significant proportion of service seekers. This demand is often not planned or budgeted for and serves to create undue pressure on social facilities. This was mentioned as a key concern in Nairobi, Kaka mega, Machakos and Kiambu counties.

| | Challenges to effective service delivery | Frequency | Proportion |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Funding constraints in terms of limited budgets | 29 | 85.3% |
| 2 | Delayed financial transfers from national government | 28 | 82.3% |
| 3 | Insecurity and banditry | 2 | 5.9% |
| 4 | Leakages and inefficiencies in revenue collection | 8 | 23.5% |
| 5 | Unanticipated demand for services from neighboring counties | 8 | 23.5% |
| 6 | Vandalism of key infrastructure | 5 | 14.7% |

*Table 3.29: Challenges to service delivery*

**Perceived biggest success of the devolution**

Majority of the respondents (32.4%) relate improved service delivery as one of the greatest successes of the devolved governance system. Additionally, 27.9% of the respondents believed closer proximity of services was the greatest success of devolution.

| | Perceived greatest success of devolution | Proportion |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Improved some services e.g. schools, hospitals, roads, markets | 32.4% |
| 2 | Accessible government services- physical proximity | 27.9% |
| 3 | Fairer allocation of national resources | 18.2% |
| 4 | Created jobs | 14.6% |
| 5 | Better opportunities for the citizens to participate | 6.19% |
| 6 | Growth of cities and towns | 5.7% |

*Table 3.30: Success of devolution*

**Biggest failure of the devolution**

When asked to identify key challenges or failures in the devolved governance, respondents highlighted five main issues. The most mentioned was the problem of incomplete or/ stalled projects cited by 29.8% of participants. There were concerns that counties initiate a large number of projects leaving many unfinished.

The high incidence of incomplete projects was also attributed to leadership failing to adopt and complete the projects initiated by the previous administrations. The County executives pointed to delayed fiscal transfers from the national treasury as the reason for the incomplete works. Legal challenges, especially those related to procurement and cases in court were cited by the County Executives as the reason for stalled projects.

Slightly more than a fifth of the respondents (22%) identified excessive staffing as a significant failure. This could most likely imply that a large part of budgetary allocations is directed to staff costs rather than service delivery. Corruption and mismanagement were identified as an obstacle by 20.8%.

| | The biggest failure of devolution as seen by the citizens | Proportion |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Unfinished projects | 29.8% |
| 2 | Waste of public resources paying excess staff | 22.0% |
| 3 | Corruption and mismanagement of public money | 20.8% |
| 4 | Delays in paying county staff | 14.4% |
| 5 | Unequal sharing of county service and development between wards | 13% |

*Table 3.31: Failures of devolution*

**How the citizens would respond to the current challenges facing their counties**

The study sought to gauge the respondent awareness of how they would like to address the governance and service delivery issues facing their Counties. Most of the proposals cantered on corruption and management of public resources.

| | One issue that a respondent would change if they had a chance | Frequency | Proportion |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Deal with corruption at the County level | 29 | 31.8% |
| 2 | Allocate more funds to the health sector to provide enough medicine | 28 | 28.7% |
| 3 | Improve public participation in decision making | 2 | 17.6% |
| 4 | Reduce trade license fee | 8 | 12.0% |
| 5 | Digitize revenue collection to reduce theft | 8 | 5.3% |
| 6 | Fairness in employment to reduce nepotism | 5 | 4.6% |

*Table 3.32: Citizen's response to county challenges*

## 3.5 Integrity

**Perceived current Corruption levels**

The proportion of citizens who believe the level of corruption in Kenya rose compared to the past year was about 71%. Additionally, there were 12% who observed the levels of corruption remained at the same level. This means over 80% of the respondents believe the situation either remained the same or got worse.

When compared to the previous surveys, the proportion of those who believed the corruption levels got worse rose by six percentage points as compared to 2017. The key issue to note is that in the three surveys, about two thirds of the respondents perceive corruption levels as getting worse.

The proportion that believes the situation is getting better remains less than a fifth of the respondents across the three surveys.

**Projected Corruption levels**

Across time, there is consistently a high level of pessimism on the future of corruption levels. In 2017, 47% thought the situation would get worse. This proportion rose to 55% in 2019 before settling again at 47% in the current survey. Additionally, the proportion that thinks corruption levels will fall in the subsequent year remains roughly a quarter of the respondents with a measure of 25% in 2017 to 21% in 2019 and eventually settling at 25% in the current survey.
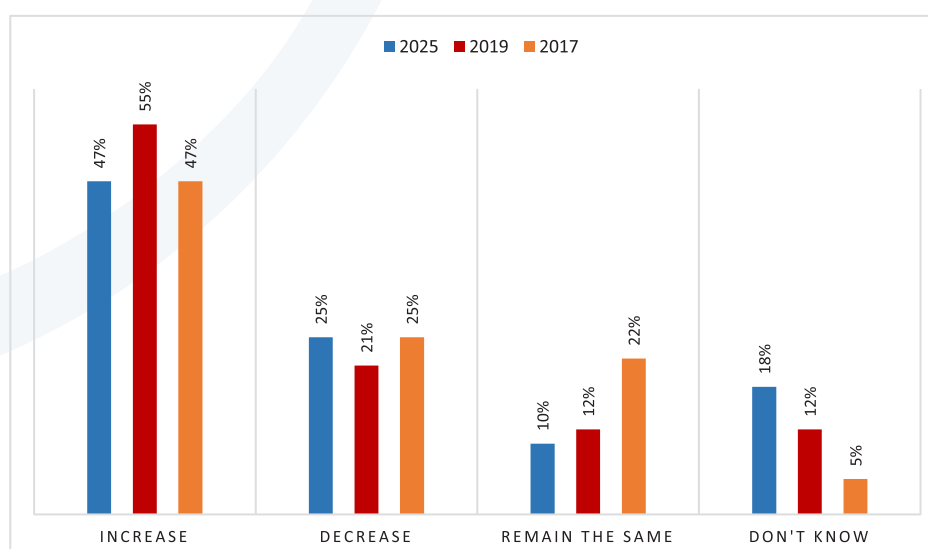


*Figure 3.21: Projected corruption levels*

**Integrity management channels established**

Most Counties have implemented requisite integrity management mechanisms. There were noticeable improvements in strengthening integrity in the financial management systems and practices. However, the actual implementation of the mechanisms vary from county to county. The functions were spread across different departments and sections while the integrity assurance role in most cases fell under the procurement role with the overall oversight responsibility under the County Secretary.

The survey also revealed that some of these integrity mechanisms are actually legally mandated For instance, the asset registers, audit and a list of prequalified vendors are required by law and all the 15 sampled counties had these mechanisms implemented. However, the actual functionality of such mechanisms is bound to vary across the counties.

The most noticeable weakness was the distribution of the integrity roles across so many departments. Assigning these responsibilities to procurement, finance or human resources department means that it becomes a secondary role within a broader department which will weaken the enforcement.

Additionally, Counties are still grappling with making some of these mechanisms available and accessible on their websites by the public. Among the 15 sampled Counties, only Homa Bay County provided a link on its website for reporting corruption. In terms of grievance reporting mechanism, only three Counties; Homa Bay, Machakos and Elgeyo Marakwet offered a link on the website for online reporting by citizens.

| Integrity mechanism | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Audit Committee | 10 |
| Corruption reporting mechanism | 12 |
| Service delivery charter (s) | 12 |
| Asset register | 14 |
| Conflict of interest register | 10 |
| List of prequalified vendors | 12 |
| Code of conduct (customize for the County) | 11 |
| Public complaints and redress mechanism | 10 |

*Table 3.33: Integrity management channels*

# CHAPTER 4

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
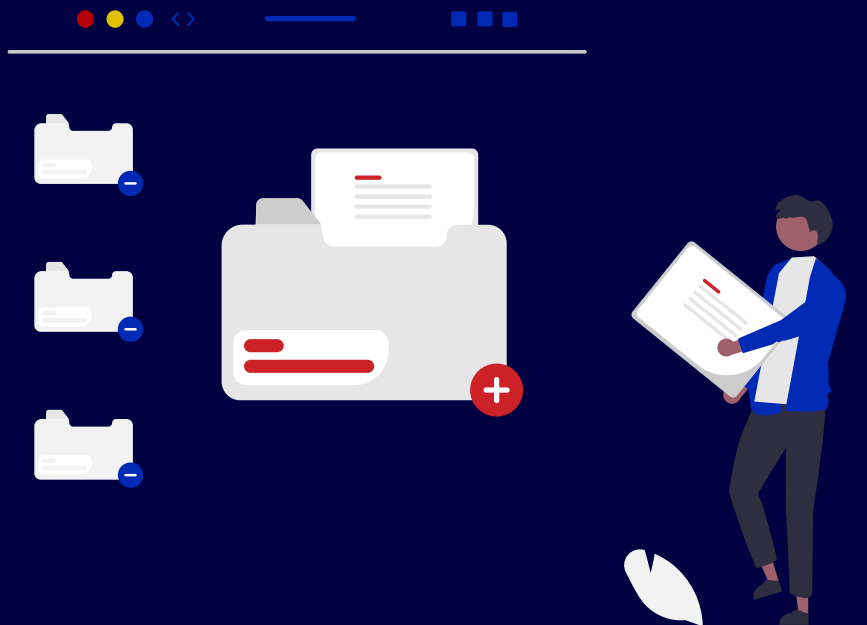
## 4.1 Conclusion

Devolution is a vital governance strategy aimed at improving service delivery, fair distribution of public resources and encouraging participation of citizens in local decision making.

Over the last 12 years the process has registered tremendous progress across various governance aspects.

The survey demonstrates that the devolution process is still a work in progress with important lessons to consider.  Regarding accountability, it is evident that the t duty bearers recognize their legal expectation to deliver on their mandates and remain accountable to the public. However, there are gaps in understanding the roles particularly of the Senators and the Woman Representative which could hinder the extent to which citizenry can demand accountability from these offices.

The significant challenge is the difficulty citizens face in knowing how to contact their leaders in pursuit of accountability.  The study found out that aside from the MCAs, majority of citizens are unaware of how to contact their Women Representative (82.5%), Senator (82.3%), governor or his deputy (63.8%) and Member of Parliament (59.2%). This implies that even if citizens had grievances regarding the performance of these leaders, they would not have an avenue to express themselves.

In terms of access to information and transparency, the counties have implemented several measures to keep the citizenry informed. However, the awareness on critical documents like CIDP and the County budget remains low. Without access to such documents, it is challenging for the citizens to hold the elected leaders to account. There is need to explore creative approaches to engage the public. Developing more citizen reader-friendly versions of these documents could significantly enhance awareness and understanding.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### On accountability

i.   Parliament should explore modalities to enhance awareness on the roles and visibility of the offices of the Senator and the Woman Representative. The current lack of understanding among a majority of Kenyans about the functions of these two offices could hinder their effectiveness and reduce civic demand for accountability. In particular, the Senators' oversight role does not seem to be well recognized in their constituencies. Moreover, it is essential to be cautious about the push for these two offices to be allocated specific funds to perform executive functions. The various court rulings highlighting the illegality of legislature managing public funds should serve as a warning.

ii.  The elected leaders should diversify the media channels they use to communicate with the citizenry.  Increasing the use of social media is particularly crucial as the youth who make up over 70% of the population primarily rely on social media for communication. The overreliance on open air spaces and social events by the elected leaders may exclude this significant youth demographic   from governance discourse.

iii. County governments should also establish and fund civic education units to fully implement the requirements outlined in article 100 of the County Governments Act 2012. Through such a framework, civic education can become a vital part of public engagement at the county level fostering a citizenry that actively participates in local governance and demand quality service delivery.

### On Transparency and access to information

i.  County governments should take deliberate steps to ensure the citizens can access and understand important documents such as County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP), annual plans and budgets. The low level of understanding of these documents, as indicated in this survey, highlights weaknesses in public participation in their formulation and implementation. This could undermine the counties' vision of open and inclusive governance. In this regard, the Council of Governors should promote the Maarifa Centre, as a key resource on various County documents, policies, programmes and initiatives to keep the citizenry better informed.

ii.  Counties should increase their transparency and openness in project implementation. It reflects poorly on the counties where only a paltry minority has information about local contractors, the contract value or the duration of projects. Enhanced transparency on project implementation could significantly improve civic oversight thus raising effectiveness and efficiency in the utilisation of county funds.

iii.  There is a need for civil society actors to engage the various County governments to introduce and strengthen access to information mechanisms. The current efforts are focused on supporting public participation. However, this should be expanded to incorporate more proactive disclosure. Additionally, counties should establish the office of access to information as required under Article 93(2) of County Governments Act 2012.

iv.  Counties should consider increasing allocations for information dissemination and the related process of public participation. As the survey demonstrates, one of the most significant obstacles to access to information is budgetary constraints which inform the unavailability of information in easily accessible versions to the public and the use of diverse media. The current trade-off between enhancing access to information and service delivery is a false dichotomy as access to information is a prelude to enhanced service delivery.

### On service delivery

i.  The national government needs to enhance the reliability of fiscal transfers to the County governments. Delayed disbursement has been identified as a significant obstacle to smooth service delivery in the counties.

ii.  In relation to this, the counties should progressively work to strengthen local level revenue mobilisation. This approach could help reduce the overreliance on equitable share for funding service delivery. A key step towards this could be to fully digitize revenue collection to minimize leakages. Some counties like Nakuru and Machakos have made notable progress in this d and could offer valuable lessons.

iii.  County governments should explore modalities to complete unfinished projects by previous government administrations. As an entry point, they should conduct an assessment on all incomplete projects to establish their viability and eventual completion. Currently, there is a trend of numerous incomplete projects while County governments struggle to initiate new projects. This has resulted in public funds tied up in projects that cannot deliver the originally envisioned services.

### On integrity

i.  Counties should consider establishing a standalone office of the integrity officer. This office should serve as the central coordination for all anti-corruption interventions. It is paramount that the role should assume independence and authority. Currently, the integrity function is dispersed across such roles as administration, procurement and human resources which diminishes the prominence of anti-corruption efforts.

ii.  County governments should take deliberate steps to enhance the effectiveness of their in-house integrity and anti-corruption measures. While counties have implemented almost all integrity measures as it is required of them by law the functionality and effectiveness of such measures remain questionable given the persistent threat of corruption and waste.

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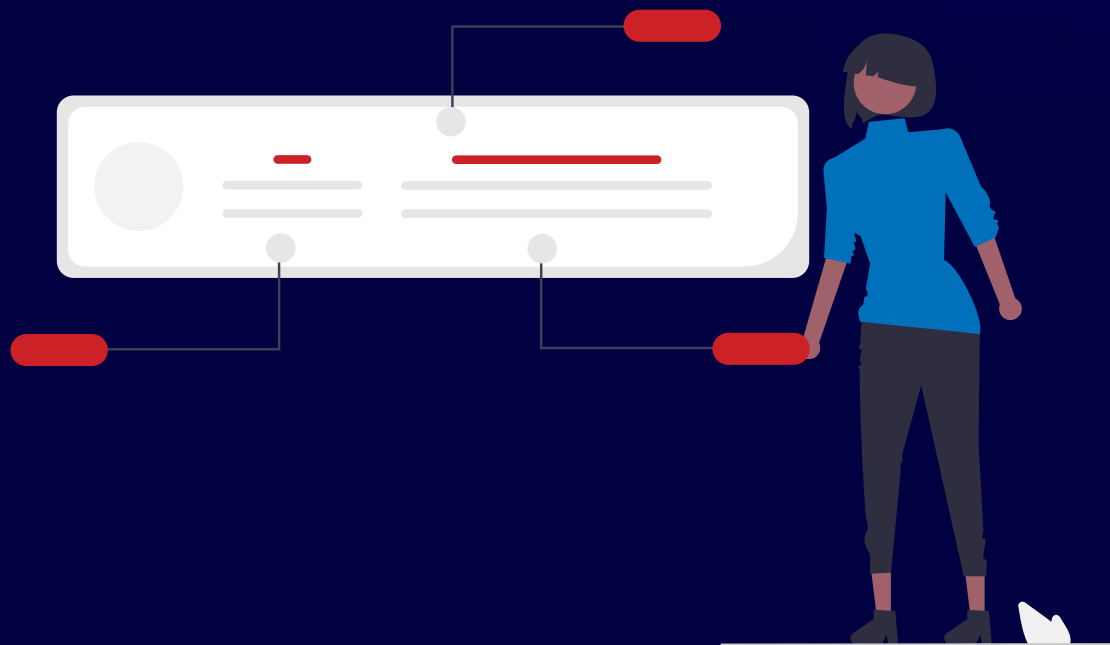
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