

Kenya: Cultural and Political Opinions from a National Survey

by Dameka Williams and Amanda Bajkowski

ABSTRACT In October 2011, D3 Systems Inc. conducted a national survey to gauge the beliefs and opinions of Kenyans. The survey was conducted face-to-face and inquired about respondents' opinions and behaviors regarding media usage, domestic and international issues, their national and local governments, security, and health issues. Respondents were asked specifically about the effects of drought conditions, religious extremism, HIV/AIDS, the economy and ethnic / tribal relations. Kenyans are very pessimistic about the direction their country is headed. The main concern for Kenyans is the economy, more specifically unemployment and inflation; and they have little confidence that their leaders can fix the problem. Respondents are looking to the US for aid and assistance in security, and they see Somalia as the biggest threat to their borders. The news is not all bad for the Kenyan government; Kenyans have a positive outlook on the government's handling of health services, especially involving AIDS/HIV care.

INTRODUCTION The Republic of Kenya has endured violent unrest and civil uprising while struggling to achieve a democratic nation. Kenya was able to maintain a relatively stable system of government until the elections of December, 2007. Serious irregularities in this election gave way to violent uprisings all across Kenya. This was the beginning of major political instability that has had far-reaching consequences. Since then, Kenya has been plagued by economic, political, and health problems. Despite these trials, Kenya is a thriving population of nearly 39 million people, and is one of the most modern and industrialized nations in East Africa. This paper reports the findings of this national survey as it pertains to Kenyans' opinions on the aforementioned issues. Assuming a simple random sample, the margin of error for a study of this size is +/- 3% at the 95% confidence interval level. The data reported is weighted to adjust the sample to key Census demographics in Kenya (age, gender, urban/rural geography and region) through post-stratification rim weights. This survey was sponsored by D3 Systems, in cooperation with its African partner – Infinite Insight (Nairobi).

MEDIA Nearly 9 in 10 Kenyans (89%) believe the media is either 'very trustworthy' or 'somewhat trustworthy'; a majority of Kenyans (56%) say the media is very trustworthy. Radio is the dominant source of information: 78% report listening to the radio daily and 55% say the radio is their main source for news and information. Television is second with 38% reporting

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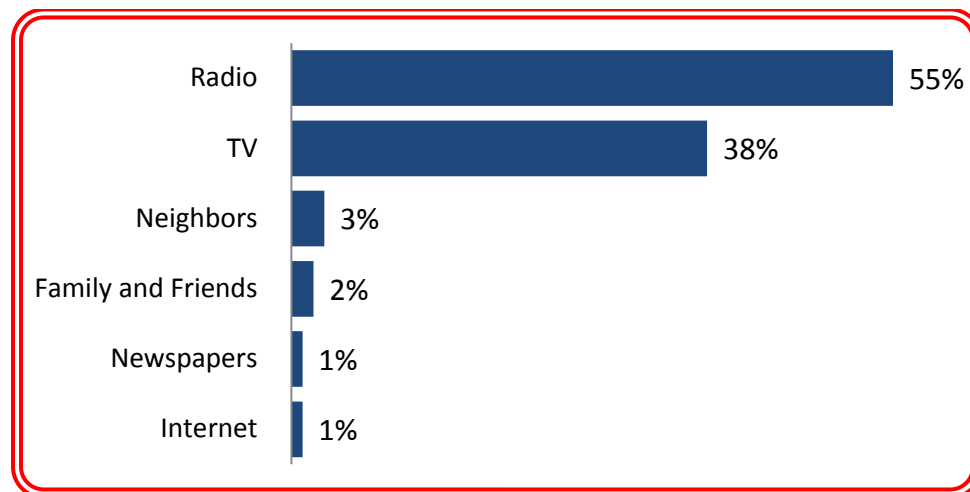
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that TV is their main source for news and information and half of Kenyans (50%) saying they watch television daily. Not surprisingly, 85% of respondents say they own a radio and 53% own a color TV.

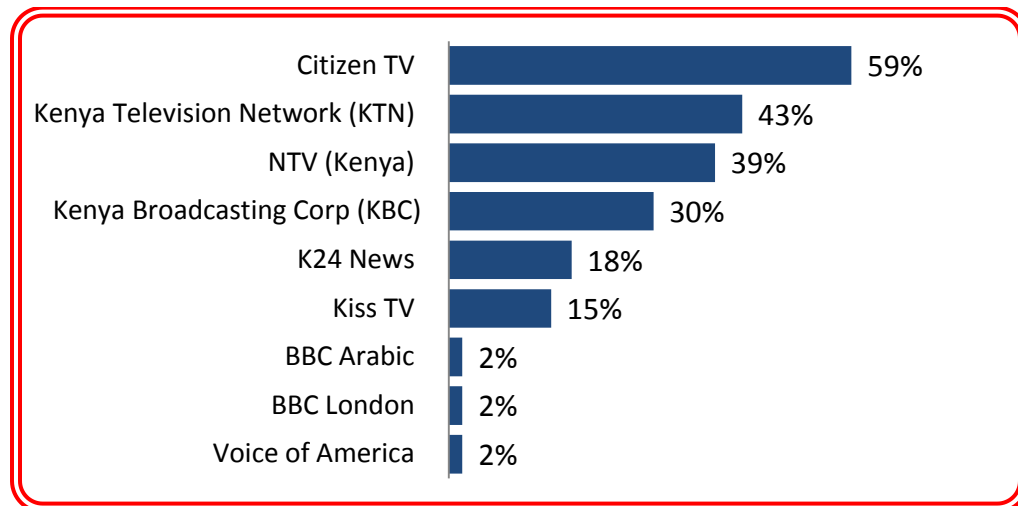
Geographically, the primary source of information source is reversed. In the large urban areas, nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents say television is their main source of news and information and it is closer to an even split in the Rift Valley region (54% radio/ 44% TV).

Chart 1. Source Used Most Often for News and Information by Region



Citizen TV tops the list of television stations Kenyans use to receive news and information, with 59% saying they watch Citizen TV either 'every day' or 'several days a week'; followed by KTN with 43% and NTV with 39% watching every day or several days a week.

Chart 2. Frequency of Watching Television by TV Station by every day or several days a week

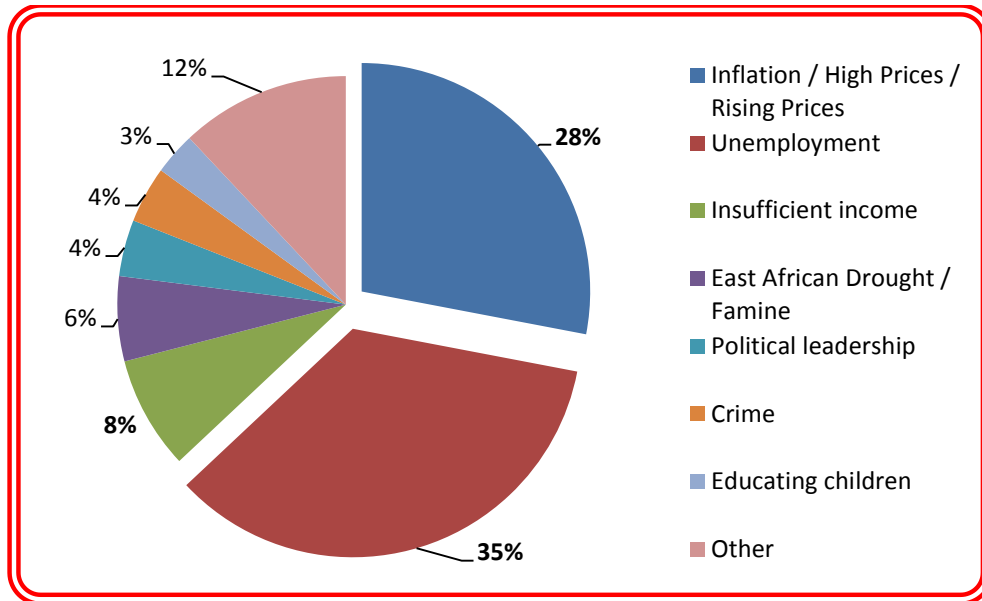


ECONOMY The majority of respondents (80%) believe things in Kenya are headed in the wrong direction. Overall, more than 8 in 10 Kenyans (81%) believe Kenya’s national economy is getting worse compared to 12 months ago. However, those in the North Eastern region are more likely to say the national economy is getting better (74%). When asked about the most important problems in Kenya, respondents most often mention issues that are economic in nature. These problems include inflation / high prices (35%) and unemployment (28%). Other problems include insufficient income (8%), East African drought / famine (6%), political leadership (4%), crime (4%), and educating children (3%)¹. In addition, the vast majority of respondents perceive that unemployment (97%) and the East African drought (74%) are big problems for Kenya.

¹ Data reported here reflect the combined total of two mentions.

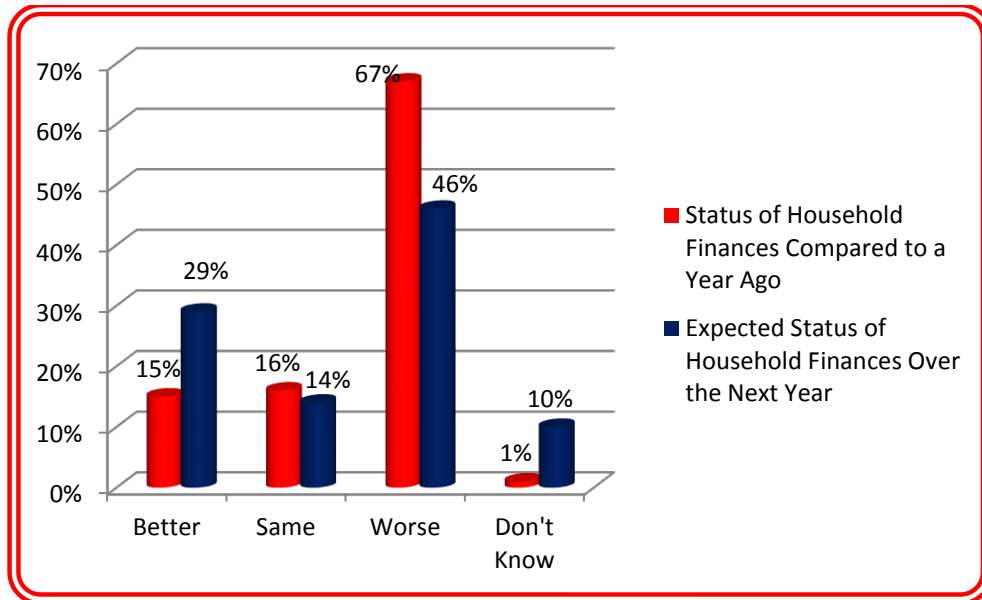


Chart 3. Most Important Problems in Kenya



Kenyan respondents paint a pretty bleak picture of their household finances. Compared to a year ago, two-thirds of Kenyans (67%) believe the financial status of their household has become worse. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of respondents in the North Eastern region (64%) believe their financial situation has gotten better. Sixteen percent of respondents believe their household finances have remained the same and 15% believe their financial situation has gotten better compared to a year ago. However, some respondents (nearly one in three) seem to be cautiously optimistic about the future of their household finances. Over the next year, while 46% of Kenyans believe the financial status of their household will get worse, 14% believe their household finances will remain the same and 29% believe their financial situation will get better over the next year.

Chart 4. Status of Household Finances



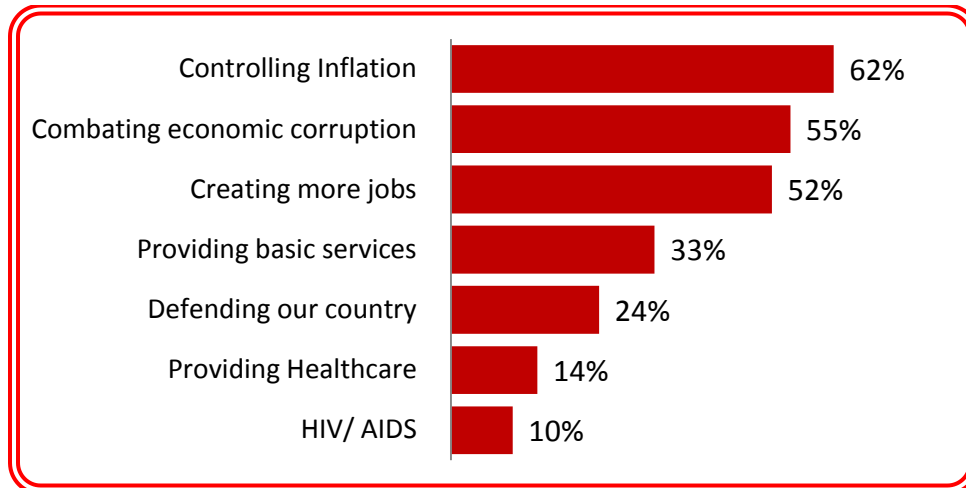
POLITICS An overwhelming 80% of Kenyans say that their country is headed in the wrong direction, and only 17% say it is headed in the right direction. When asked what is the most important problem facing Kenya today over two thirds named an economic problem - the two top answers were inflation (35%) and unemployment (28%). And the latest numbers from the *CIA World Factbook*² have Kenya's unemployment rate at 40%, giving it the 16th highest unemployment rate in the world. This negative outlook is reflected in their view of the government as 68% have an unfavorable opinion of the Kenyan Government (31% favorable). Fully, 82% of Kenyans believe that government officials do not care about people like them.

Kenyans have a pessimistic view on how successfully their government has handled problems that affect their country. Almost two thirds (62%) believe the government has been very unsuccessful in dealing with controlling inflation and over half (55%) stated that government was very unsuccessful at combating economic corruption.

²Source: *CIA - The World Factbook*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>

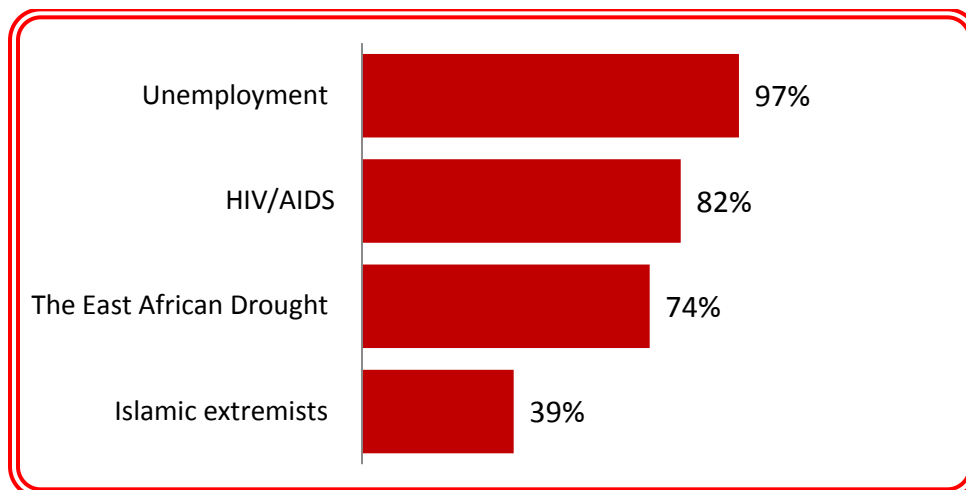


Chart 5. Percentage of Respondents who Believe Government has been “Very Unsuccessful” Dealing with Important Issues



When asked about how big of a problem issues dealing with security, unemployment and were in their country, it came as no surprise 97% said unemployment is a ‘big problem’.

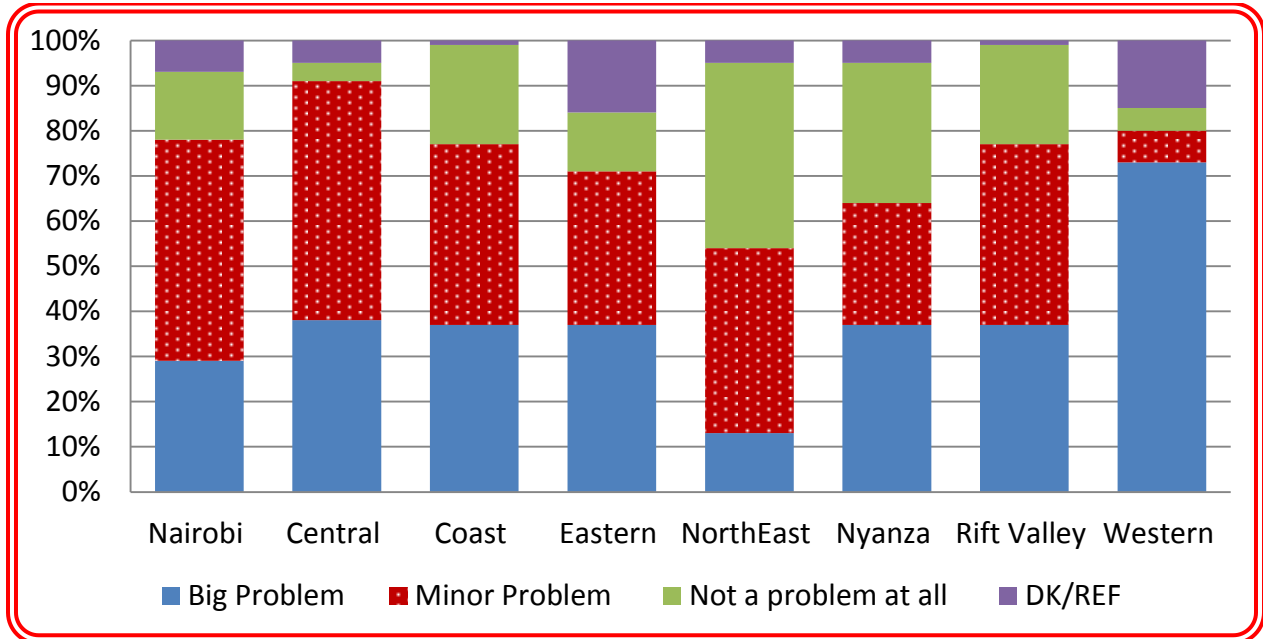
Chart 6. Percentage of Respondents who Believe Issues are a “Big Problem”



Over one-third of Kenyans believe that the issue of Islamic extremists is a ‘big problem’ in their country, 36% consider it a ‘minor problem’ and 19% said it was ‘not a problem at all’.

Regionally the numbers vary with almost a three quarters (73%) of those in the Western region stating that it is a big problem and only 13% in the Northeast region believe it is a big problem.

Chart 7. Percentage of Respondents who Believe Islamic Extremists are a Big, Minor or No Problem in Kenya by Region



Over three-fourths (77%) of Kenyans say the police are ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ trustworthy and 23% say the police are ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ trustworthy. The court system does not fare much better with 59% stating that it is ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ trustworthy and only 38% saying it is ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ trustworthy. Although the military has a positive rating with 71% saying the military is trustworthy the support is soft with 44% saying they are only ‘somewhat’ trustworthy.

When asked which country is the biggest threat to Kenya 68% named Somalia, with Uganda at a distance second with 8%. Across the regions Somalia was named the number one threat topping out at 81% in the East and whereas less than half (42%) in Nyanza see Somalia as a threat.

Table 1. Which country poses the greatest threat to the security of Kenya?

	By Region								
	Central	Coast	Eastern	Nairobi	Nyanza	North Eastern	Rift Valley	Western	Total
Somalia	71%	72%	81%	75%	42%	74%	63%	82%	68%
Uganda	5%	5%	5%	6%	18%	12%	6%	12%	8%
Ethiopia	4%	0%	1%	3%	11%	10%	5%	0%	4%
None/ DK/REF	16%	17%	10%	6%	26%	2%	14%	4%	13%

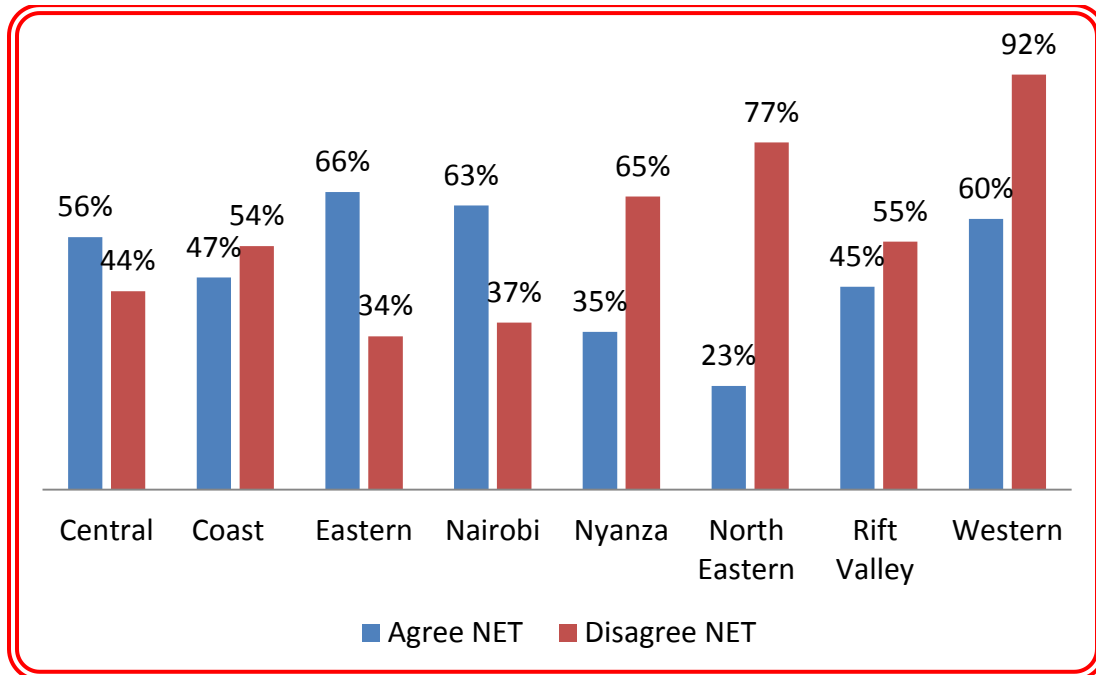
Half of the respondents selected the United States as the top choice of which country they would want international aid or help from to help fight against violence or instability in Kenya. The United Kingdom came in second with 11% and China with 8%. Regionally the US still held the top spot but varied in intensity. Only a little over a third (36%) of the Rift Valley region stated they wanted the US to help with aid and security.

Table 2. Which country would you want international aid or help from to help fight against violence or instability in your country? By Region

	By Region								
	Central	Coast	Eastern	Nairobi	Nyanza	North Eastern	Rift Valley	Western	Total
US	39%	60%	56%	52%	52%	42%	36%	75%	50%
UK	19%	7%	8%	10%	10%	14%	12%	8%	11%
China	11%	0%	6%	7%	6%	17%	14%	3%	8%
None/ DK/REF	12%	25%	18%	11%	27%	14%	27%	4%	19%

Respondents are divided when asked if they think violent actions are sometimes necessary to protect their interest; 44% agree with the statement and 56% disagree. The results are also mixed with two-thirds of those in the Eastern region agreeing (51% strongly agree) that violent actions are sometimes needed as opposed to those in the Western region where only 6% agree with that statement.

Chart 8. Respondents' Level of Disagreement with the Statement "Violent action is sometimes necessary to protect the interests of people like me." By Region



HEALTH Only 40% of respondents believe the Kenyan government has been successful at providing basic services. While 82% of respondents believe HIV/AIDS is a “big problems” as opposed to a “minor problem” (16%), nearly three-quarters of Kenyans (72%) believe the government has been successful at dealing with HIV/AIDS. Two-thirds of respondents (67%) say the Kenyan government has been successful at providing healthcare.

CONCLUSION Survey respondents in Kenya are in economic turmoil. The national economy is very agricultural in nature and is dependent upon the weather. Due to the drought in East Africa, this part of the economy has taken a major hit. Since the 2007 elections, Kenya has been plagued by political corruption as well. Respondents do not trust their national government and are critical of its policies and actions. However, they do have favorable opinions of the current Kenyan President and Prime Minister. Future research should probe the reasons for this seemingly conflicting opinion. Survey questions should seek to determine which people or entities the respondents believe are responsible for the current situation.

Future research should also seek to determine respondents' opinions on current or proposed economic policies.

While respondents say their household finances are worse now than they were a year ago, nearly 30% believe things will be better next year. Future research should continue to track the problems respondents deem most important and Kenyan's opinions on proposed solutions to those problems. Survey questions should assess respondents' opinions about who is currently responsible for solving Kenya's most important problems and who *should* be responsible.

Although Islamic extremists and Somalia, in particular, are seen as security threats, economic concerns are seen as the biggest problems and threats to Kenya. Respondents do not think that the government is capable of controlling the recession or handing corruption in the government. Kenyans across the country are concerned about the direction the country is moving in. Despite the economic and security concerns, a majority of Kenyans agree that violence action is not the answer.



METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW A national face-to-face sampling plan was designed to be representative population (age 15 and older) by district and urban/rural geography. This resulted in a total sample size of 1,010 respondents. After quality control measures were employed, 8 interviews were deleted from the final data set and the final sample size for the survey is now 1,002 respondents. The sample is stratified by the 8 provinces of Kenya. The sample is distributed proportional to the total population of each province. Each province is then further stratified by urban/rural delineations. Respondents were selected using a multi-stage random sample, from PSU selection (simple random sample of sampling points), to household selection (random route) and respondent selection (Kish grid).

The margin of sampling error was estimated assuming a simple random sample with $p=0.5$, $n=1,002$ and at the 95% confidence interval level. The Margin of Sampling Error calculation of ± 3.10 is included as a reference point with the understanding that it is an estimate with the aforementioned assumptions.

The data set was weighted via rim post-stratification weights using Census figures from 2009 as marginal targets for age, gender, urban/rural geography, and region. The population data were obtained from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2009 Population and Housing Census released in August 2010.

FOR MORE INFORMATION For additional information about this study, please contact Dameka Williams (Dameka.Williams@d3systems.com) or Amanda Bajkowski (Amanda.Bajkowski@d3systems.com). You may also contact the authors by phone at 703.388.2450.

