

2016 KENYA DIASPORA SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

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Beth Elise Whitaker, PhD
Associate Professor of Political Science
University of North Carolina at Charlotte (USA)
bwhitaker@uncc.edu

Shem J. Ochuodho, PhD, LLD (Hon)
Global Chairperson
Kenya Diaspora Alliance (KDA)
shemochuodho@yahoo.com

Key Findings

An online survey of the Kenyan diaspora was conducted from March to November, 2016, as outlined in this report. Several of the key findings are as follows:

- Respondents live in 67 countries around the world, with concentrations especially in the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Uganda, China, and Canada.
- Most respondents send money to family, friends, and associates in Kenya at least once per month and travel there at least once per year.
- Respondents have a very high level of interest in public affairs, politics, and government.
- Respondents strongly support diaspora voting, and particularly want the opportunity to vote for the offices of president, governor, senator, and member of parliament.
- Respondents express high levels of support for electronic voting technologies, which they appear to trust more than the current electoral system.

Survey Logistics

Upon approval by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, an online survey of diaspora Kenyans was launched on March 25, 2016, and closed on December 5, 2016. The link to the online survey was distributed to many Kenyan diaspora organizations, the Diaspora Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Government of Kenya, the diaspora units of several financial institutions, and individual Kenyans. In August 2016, the Kenya Diaspora Alliance placed a banner advertisement with a link to the survey on the Nation Media Group's website for anyone accessing the site from outside of Kenya. The authors are grateful for the assistance of these organizations in circulating the survey link.

By the time it closed, 777 people started the survey and 441 completed through the final question. Even with extensive recruitment efforts to reach as many diaspora Kenyans as possible, it is impossible to know whether the survey sample is representative of the Kenyan diaspora as a whole without more detailed data about that broader population. Given the fact that the survey

was conducted online, in English, and circulated through social media and Internet sources, it is possible that the respondents to the survey are wealthier and more educated than the average diaspora Kenyan. In addition, because of the survey’s focus on diaspora voting, there is probably a selection bias with people who are especially interested in Kenyan politics having been more likely to respond. Moreover, the reliance on Kenyan diaspora organizations to circulate the survey link means that respondents may be more engaged in diaspora affairs than the average Kenyan living abroad. Even without a fully representative sample, however, the survey responses provide a reasonably broad picture of attitudes within the Kenyan diaspora toward diaspora voting and participation in Kenyan politics.

Basic Information about Survey Respondents

Figure 1: Age

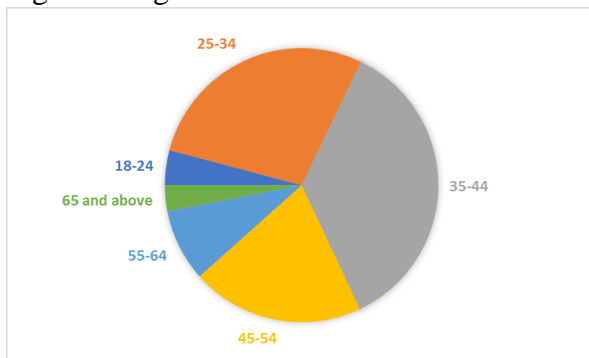


Figure 2: Education level

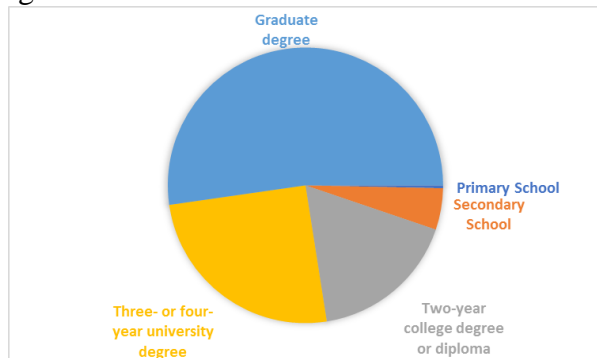


Figure 3: Level of interest in public affairs

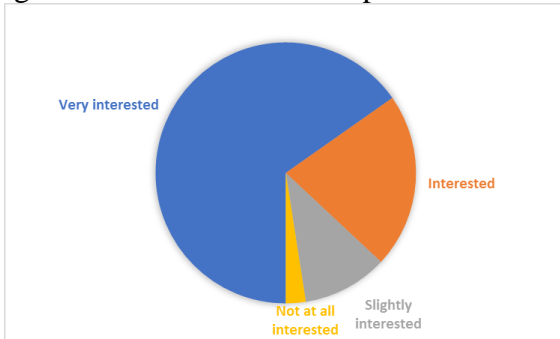
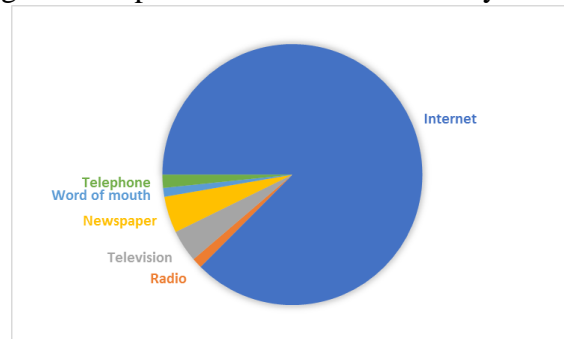


Figure 4: Top source of news from Kenya



Respondents to the Kenyan diaspora survey are highly educated and highly interested in political affairs. Figures 1-4 above provide some basic information about the survey respondents, all of whom are adult Kenyans living outside of Kenya. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) are between the ages of 25 and 44, with another 20% in the 45-54 category and 12% above age 55. Despite the high number of Kenyans attending university abroad, only about 4% of survey respondents were in the 18-24 age group.

Survey respondents are highly educated, with more than 52% having obtained a graduate degree and a further 25% having earned at least a three- or four-year university degree. This is consistent with data from the United States Census Bureau (discussed below) showing that Kenyans are among the most educated immigrant groups in the United States. It is not possible to determine the extent to which the survey sample is representative of the Kenyan diaspora

more broadly, but it is safe to assume that the average diaspora Kenyan is more educated than the average person within Kenya.

Almost two-thirds of survey respondents (65%) report that they are “very interested” in public affairs (including politics and government), and another 22% say that they are “interested.” Just 2.5% of diaspora Kenyans who responded to the survey said that they are “not at all interested” in public affairs. Perhaps not surprisingly given that the survey link was circulated primarily through online sources, the overwhelming majority (88%) said that their most important source of information and news from Kenya is the Internet. It is worth noting that Kenya is only occasionally covered by most media outlets in the countries where many diaspora Kenyans live, so the Internet is the most consistently available source of information.

Geographic Location of Survey Respondents

Estimates of the number of Kenyans living in the diaspora range to as many as 3 million people, but there is no accurate census and little information available about where they are located. Among survey respondents, only 56% report that they have registered with the Kenyan embassy, mission, or consulate nearest them. Most of those who have not registered say the embassy is too far away or they see no need to register, though a significant number said that the embassy is not friendly. The lack of reliable data about diaspora Kenyans and where they live poses a challenge when it comes to diaspora voting given the complicated logistics and costs of facilitating registration and voting in far-flung locations.

Survey respondents reside in 67 countries around the world, but the largest concentrations are in six (see Figure 5): the United States (33%), United Kingdom (8%), Japan (7%), Uganda (5%), China (5%), and Canada (5%). It is possible that the Kenyan diaspora populations in the United States and Japan are overrepresented in the survey sample due to the cooperation of individuals and diaspora groups based in those countries in circulating the survey link. Even if the specific percentages are not entirely representative of overall numbers, though, it seems likely that these countries host some of the largest Kenyan diaspora populations.

Kenyans reside in all fifty states of the United States, but there are concentrations in certain metropolitan areas. Among survey respondents, the largest numbers of Kenyans live in Washington DC, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Atlanta, Dallas, and Raleigh. Given the small sample size, however, it is helpful to supplement the survey findings with data from the American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the United States Census Bureau. According to ACS five-year estimates based on extrapolations from a representative sample, the total Kenya-born¹ population in the United States is 101,577. This is likely an underestimate given the number of Kenyans living in the U.S. without proper documentation who tend to avoid survey teams.

Table 1 lists the thirteen U.S. metropolitan areas with at least 2,000 Kenya-born residents each. For purposes of diaspora voting, if polling stations were set up only in these cities, they would be accessible to 53% (53,647) of the total estimated Kenya-born population in the United States.

¹ Kenya-born does not necessarily mean Kenyan citizen, and vice versa. It is reasonable to assume, however, that a significant number of Kenya-born people are Kenyan nationals.

Figure 5: Countries of Residence of Survey Respondents

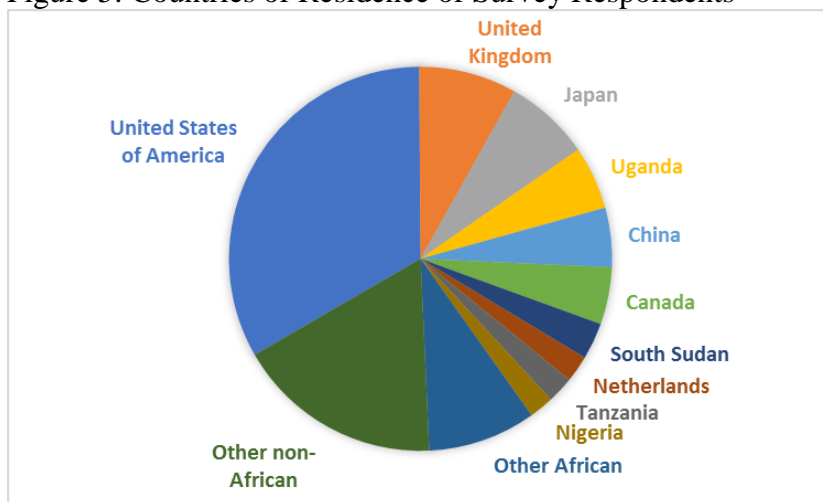


Table 1: U.S. metropolitan areas with 2,000 or more Kenyan-born residents

Metropolitan Statistical Area	Kenya born
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX Metro Area	8361
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area	6525
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Area	5953
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA Metro Area	4680
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA Metro Area	4600
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH Metro Area	4106
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area	3927
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA Metro Area	3110
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metro Area	2661
Kansas City, MO-KS Metro Area	2492
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX Metro Area	2442
Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD Metro Area	2426
Columbus, OH Metro Area	2364

Source: 2013 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau

Views about Diaspora Voting

Survey respondents report a strong desire for diaspora voting, which is perhaps not surprising given their high level of interest in public affairs. They are especially interested in voting for the highest offices in the Kenyan government, as shown in Figure 6, including president, governors, senators, and members of parliament. There is somewhat less interest in voting for women’s representatives, county assembly members, and political party officials.

An overwhelming majority (71%) of respondents would like diaspora voting to be conducted electronically, e.g. over the Internet, and a further 11% favor mobile phone voting, while just 14% prefer in-person voting at a polling station (see Figure 7). When asked how much they trust

electronic voting technologies, 27% of respondents said “a lot” and 34% said a “moderate” amount. Only 7% of respondents said they do not trust such technologies at all. In contrast, when asked how much they trust the current electoral system in Kenya, 38% of respondents said “not at all.” Thus, despite some security concerns about electronic voting, survey respondents appear to trust it more than the current electoral system.

A plurality (24%) of respondents would like to see diaspora voting managed by an independent body such as the United Nations, as compared to the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) (18%), independent IEBC appointees (16%), diaspora volunteers (14%), or host country electoral authorities (13%). Fewer than 12% of respondents would like to see the voting process managed by Kenyan embassies.

With respect to the reasons for voting, respondents were asked, “What would be the primary reason compelling you to vote in the next Kenyan election?” While many respondents focused on leadership change (28%) and selecting the leaders they want (16%), just as many were interested broadly in exercising their democratic right (28%), fulfilling a sense of civic responsibility (16%), and securing representation for the diaspora (11%).

Despite the high level of interest in politics among survey respondents, only 20% of the respondents traveled back to Kenya to vote in the last election. Sixty-three (63%) did not travel due to a variety of reasons, including cost and work schedules. Diaspora voting would thus effectively enfranchise a good number of Kenyan citizens who otherwise are not able to vote in democratic elections.

Figure 6: “If you were able to vote in Kenyan elections, which position(s) would you want to vote for?”

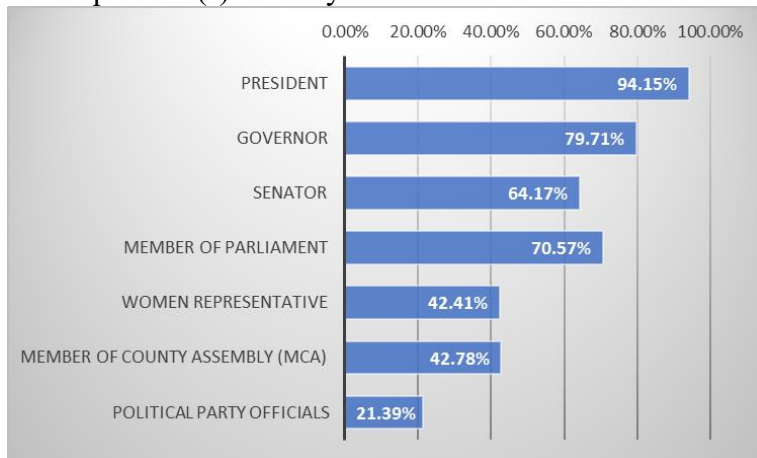
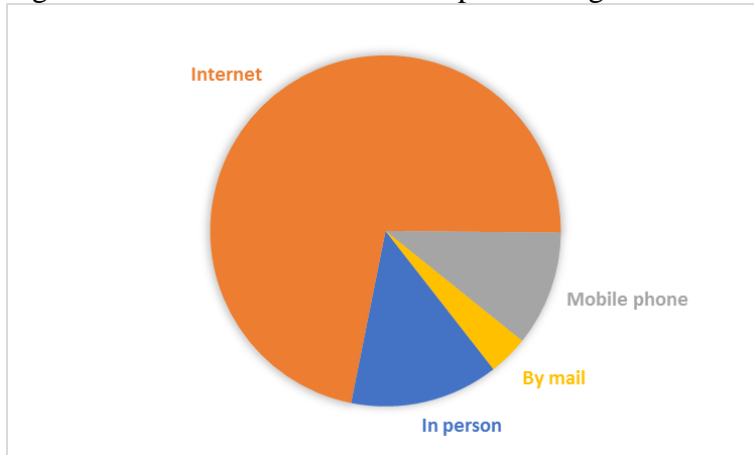


Figure 7: Preferred method for diaspora voting



Views on Kenya

The results of the online survey suggest that diaspora Kenyans remain strongly connected to their home country, and especially to family members and friends back home. Most survey respondents (65%) communicate with family and friends in Kenya on a daily basis, and a majority (58%) travels to Kenya at least once per year. In terms of remittances, 65% of respondents send money to family, friends, or associates in Kenya at least once each month. When asked about the single most important piece of information they would want from Kenya, a large plurality (46%) want information about investment opportunities. Lastly, and perhaps most important when it comes to discussions about exercising one’s democratic right to vote from abroad, most survey respondents “strongly agree” (54%) or “agree” (22%) with the following statement: “It makes me proud to be called a Kenyan.”

With respect to the main challenges facing Kenya, the most frequently cited by respondents were “corruption” (65%), “impunity and the lack of accountability” (43%), and “ukabila/ethnicity” (31%). Despite concerns about tribalism, only 3% of the respondents feel more part of their ethnic community than Kenyan, underscoring the diaspora’s attachment to their Kenyan identity. When voting for members of parliament, the most important considerations cited by respondents were development record (83%), grasp of the economy (47%), experience (30%), and campaign manifesto (19%). Few respondents claimed to give strong consideration to a candidate’s political party (4%), international reputation (3%), ethnicity (2%), wealth (1%), or gender (0.2%).

Other Findings

The survey unearthed other useful indicators that for brevity cannot all be reported here. For instance, according to the respondents, the three best ways to reach the diaspora are social media (68%), online (46%), and membership associations (35%). Others are embassies and conferences. It may be that diaspora in different host countries prefer different outreach channels, but that requires further analysis. Similar useful information was revealed in terms of media and online resources regularly accessed by the diaspora. Interestingly, only 21% of the respondents are aware of the IEBC’s Diaspora Portal, compared to 49% who are aware of the

Kenya Revenue Authority's Tax Registry and 45% who are aware of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Diaspora Portal. This could have implications for the diaspora voter registration process.

Survey respondents also identified the host country cities in which they would like polling centers to be located, though it is unclear how representative the survey sample is of the Kenyan diaspora population as a whole. If they were to vote for offices beyond the president, most respondents indicate counties and constituencies in Kenya for which they would like to play a role in selecting the member of parliament, senator, governor, and other local representatives.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, the 2016 Kenya Diaspora Survey was the most comprehensive and extensive effort to date to collect information from Kenyans living abroad about their political engagement. Despite the challenges of reaching a large diaspora population, the survey ultimately gathered information from more than 750 Kenyans in nearly 70 countries around the world. Their survey responses provide a useful snapshot of the views and opinions of the Kenyan diaspora, as summarized in this report, and we are extremely grateful for their participation.

There are additional data from the survey that still need to be analyzed, including the results of an experiment in which respondents were given choices between hypothetical political candidates whose background and qualifications were randomly generated. That portion of the study will reveal more information about the factors that motivate diaspora Kenyans in their selection of political candidates. Finally, it is our hope that this first Kenya Diaspora Survey will not be the last, and that a network will be developed to periodically poll Kenyans living abroad about their concerns, opinions, and preferences well into the future.