

Media influences Kenya's referendum poll

By [Carole Kimutai](#)

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With just hours before Kenya's constitution referendum to be held on 4 August 2010, research has cited the media as the main source of information about the contents of the proposed constitution.

Results of an opinion poll by research company TNS Research International released on Tuesday, 3 July 2010, shows that most Kenyans will vote for the proposed constitution - with 68% saying yes and 25% saying no. The objective of the research was to identify voting patterns on the proposed constitution and involved quantitative face-to-face interviews with 1,600 voters between 23 and 25 July 2010.

Media, main source of info

From the research findings, 52% of the respondents said the media was their main source of information on the content of the proposed constitution. 38% said they have read part of the draft, 36% heard about it from other people and 11% were taught by a civic educator.

In the last four weeks, the Kenyan media (television, newspapers and radio) have been running adverts from: groups supporting, groups opposing the draft constitution, peace organisations and the Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC) - the body overseeing election in Kenya. The IIEC has been running massive campaigns on voter education with the recent adverts telling voters how they will vote.

Following the violence that followed Kenya's general election in 2007/8, peace organisations including the international community have appealed for a peaceful referendum. These messages have been in form of adverts placed in the different media outlets.

Politics dominated reporting

The Kenyan media has been put on the spot on issues of objective coverage of draft constitution issues. Research by Synovate on agenda setting conducted on the first quarter of 2010 revealed that politics accounts for 38% of overall (print and electronic) media coverage in Kenya. Social issues and business issues accounted for 22% and 13% of media content respectively. The constitutional debate was the main issue leading in news coverage.

For television, politics and social issues accounted for 32% and 26% of the overall content respectively while in print media, politics was almost half of the content standing at 43% followed by business issues at 19%.

The proposed constitution, presented to the attorney general of Kenya on 7 April 2010 and officially published on 6 May 2010, will be subjected to a referendum on 4 August 2010.

ABOUT CAROLE KIMUTAI

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