

Toxic Talk: *Online harms in Kenya*

*Mapping how trolls and extremists
systematically subvert public discourse.*

March 2025



Purpose

This report is a baseline Information Ecosystem Assessment of online communities in Kenya, mapping digital harms and malign actors, using the DISARM and D-RAIL frameworks for analysing weaponised hate speech, information manipulation and other forms of illicit influence operations.

The report provides a baseline for ongoing monthly PULSE report updates by the TrustLab, that spotlight emerging trends, using open source intelligence (OSINT) techniques.

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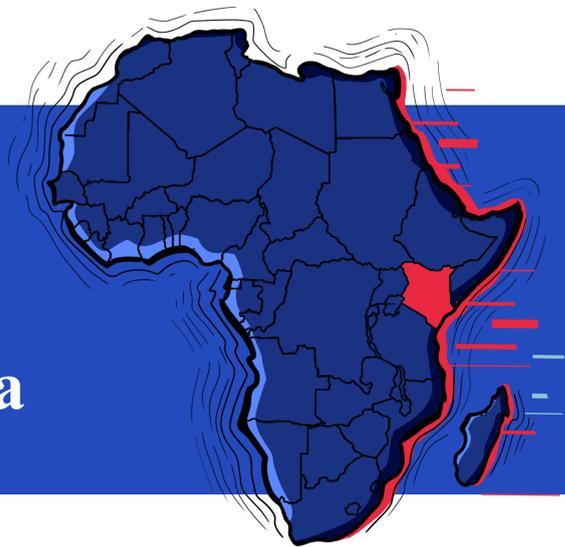
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Baseline Analysis

The landscape: Info manipulation & interference in Kenya



This synopsis is intended to offer an overview of information manipulation and interference in Kenya's digital ecosystem, identifying emerging narratives, key actors, tactics, or techniques used to subvert or polarise local audiences. This overview offers a baseline analysis of the local information ecosystem ahead of a planned series of biweekly analytical PULSE reports by the iLAB, supported by the African Digital Democracy Observatory (ADDO), which will seek to offer actionable insights for local watchdogs to strengthen information resilience in Kenya.

1. Executive summary

Kenya's information ecosystem and its key democratic processes are under systemic attack from 'keyboard warriors' who spearhead disinformation campaigns, and from profiteers who monetise the polarisation created by digital hate speech.

Disinformation, harassment, and hate speech, and have polluted digital spaces, distorting reality, manipulating public perception, and eroding trust in democratic institutions. From political smear campaigns to extremist propaganda, malicious actors are weaponising social media to serve their agendas which are unchecked by outdated policies and regulatory gaps. At the heart of this crisis is an evolving shadow economy of disinformation. Clickbait profiteers, extremists, and political operatives exploit platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, leveraging Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine intelligence to amplify falsehoods. Female politicians are disproportionately targeted, while marginalised communities and Kenya's youth remain prime targets for radicalisation and digital hate campaigns. Despite their crucial role as civic watchdogs, civil society organisations (CSOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and media outlets lack the technological resources and expertise to counter this digital onslaught effectively. Their advocacy efforts struggle to match the speed and reach of coordinated disinformation campaigns.

This baseline report, by a multinational consortium of nonprofit human rights defending organisations that form the *TrustLab Consortium* seeks to establish an initial overview of the current information environment in Kenya. The report is meant to help CSOs better understand and respond to threats shaping the country's digital landscape. The research uses the best available forensic open source intelligence (OSINT) resources and draws extensively on the insights of in-country experts, but should be viewed as an initial starting point for more substantive deep research into the fast-evolving regional digital ecosystem.

The preliminary research unpacks the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) used by bad actors to disrupt and exploit citizens, including ethnic and religious hate speech, extremism, and non-consensual distribution of intimate images (NCDII). This report has not attempted to analyse 'analogue' legacy

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media, such as offline print outlets or grassroots radio stations. Analysis of offline information sources will be the subject of future reports. The initial baseline report instead maps digital news and other opinion-forming content sources, both on the web and social media platforms. The report hones in on six counties: Busia, Homa Bay, Lamu, Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru, but many of the issues also appear on a national scale. Some examples reflected in this report were collected during direct engagement with affected communities through barazas (public forums), which provided first-hand perspectives on digital harms and the grassroots impact of online discourse. The analysis also maps key accounts on ‘dark social’ end-to-end encrypted messaging apps such as Telegram and WhatsApp, and maps a small number of affiliated key ‘dark web’ sources such as TOR-protected extremist forums and self-hosted ‘fediverse’ social media networks. The mapping has detected the following notable actors, insights, or trends:

- a. **Digital mercenaries fuel political disinformation:** A coordinated network of paid influencers and troll farms systematically target Kenya’s judiciary, media, and opposition figures, using fabricated hashtags and manipulated content to shape public opinion and undermine institutions.
- b. **Extremist groups exploit encrypted and dark platforms:** Extremist group Al-Shabaab uses Chirpwire, Telegram, and unmoderated dark web spaces to coordinate attacks, recruit members, and spread propaganda, leveraging Kenya’s growing digital ecosystem for covert operations.
- c. **Ethnic and religious hate speech escalates online:** Politicians and influencers weaponise the already existing tribal and religious divisions, with digital campaigns targeting Indian, Kikuyu, and Somali communities, fuelling real-world tensions and potential violence.

As the study reports, social media platforms such as Facebook remain the primary battlegrounds where coordinated disinformation campaigns thrive. Malign actors systematically deploy ‘keyboard warriors’ to smear opponents as seen in the country’s political space. Meanwhile, extremist rhetoric often disguised as religious discourse has radicalised the youth and marginalised communities, further fragmenting the country’s already polarised society.

Other ‘playbooks’ used by information manipulators to plan their campaigns, from beginning-to-end, are called TTPs or, tactics, techniques, and procedures. These specific TTPs are deployed on both open and ‘dark’ social platforms. Documenting the TTPs and enabling infrastructure helps CSOs to recognise and monitor patterns that threat actors use to subvert online discourse. This report identifies TTPs using the Detecting and Interrupting Disinformation Strategies, Tactics, and Repertoires of Manipulation (DISARM) Framework, which is a structured approach to understanding and countering disinformation campaigns by analysing the methods threat actors use.

Three distinctive TTPs observed in Kenya have been:

1. **Identify existing prejudices:** The DISARM framework’s ‘[identify existing prejudices](#)’ illustrates how influence operations exploit existing biases to deepen divisions. In July 2024, Kenyan Somali politician Aden Duale faced [online attacks](#) accusing him of [ties](#) to Al-Shabaab, leveraging existing narratives linking Somalis to the group. These accusations reinforced [negative stereotypes](#), discredited Duale, and intensified ethnic divisions.
2. **Enlist troll accounts to amplify narratives:** The DISARM framework identifies ‘[enlist troll accounts](#)’ as a tactic where trolls, either independent or organisation-backed, amplify polarising narratives to discredit opponents or push agendas. Rather than creating new content, they exploit divisive issues, particularly on platforms like X, to manipulate public discourse. For instance, accounts like [@mzclassyohgirl](#) spread sensational claims about Somali individuals in Kenya, while [@RevMasmassu](#) uses inflammatory rhetoric to target Kikuyu elites and support president William Ruto, fuelling identity-based and governance-related tensions.

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3. **Threaten to dox:** The DISARM framework’s ‘[threaten to dox](#)’ tactic involves using phrases or threats to target individuals and fuel harassment campaigns. In Kenya, the term ‘[salimia](#)’ was weaponised to incite doxxing and intimidation against those accused of complicity in leasing or selling national assets to Indian businessmen. This tactic aimed to amplify narratives, encourage public harassment of the targeted individuals, and silence opposition.

The above TTPs indicate a thriving disinformation economy, sustained by profit-driven operators who run the infrastructure that fuels toxic content in Kenya. Any intervention strategy, therefore, needs to explore how to demonetise, deplatform, expose, and quantify the profiteers.

In conclusion, the report notes that keeping pace with rapid digital advancements has been a challenge for legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks in Kenya and globally. As new technologies become more complex and harder for non-experts to navigate, malicious actors continue to exploit these gaps, weaponising social media for their own agendas. Our recommendations aim to counter this weaponisation, not by restricting free speech or media, but by enhancing market sustainability and promoting self-regulation within Kenya’s civil society ecosystem. While our full recommendations, including traditional measures, can be found at the end of this report, we would like to spotlight the following noteworthy suggestions:

1. Proactively bolster the custodians of accurate constructive information in indigenous languages, such as the peer-reviewed Wikipedia community, to create a shared foundation of commonly accepted facts.
2. Systematically share accurate information from trusted sources that refute claims designed to incite or polarise society, and collaborate with mythbusters and fact-checkers to amplify constructive peace-building narratives.
3. With expanding surveillance practices, including controversial technologies and collaborations, there is an urgent need for stricter oversight mechanisms to prevent abuse and safeguard privacy rights.

In addition, because CSOs and media currently lack the technical capacity to pre-emptively detect and neutralise malign actors, the TrustLab proposes to expand its rapid response helplines that safeguard frontline human rights defenders from targeted surveillance and intimidation.

2. Country context

This section provides an overview of internet and mobile access in Kenya, highlighting key digital trends, platform preferences, and documented instances of cyber threats, misinformation, and online manipulation.

Kenya, a country in East Africa, has a population of ~55 million people, and is the seventh most populous country in Africa. It is divided into 47 counties and shares borders with Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. These neighbouring countries play a significant role in shaping Kenya’s geopolitical dynamics, with key issues discussed in this report such as migration and extremism.

Kenya is a globally recognised innovation hub, and is dubbed ‘Silicon Savannah’. Its rapid technological advancement has made the digital landscape a crucial part of everyday life, shaping the creation, sharing, and consumption of information. The country has led [digital transformations](#), with advancements in e-commerce, digital government services, and fintech (notably M-Pesa).

In this section, the report explains how information flows from digital mainstream media to social media as well as how information is searched for online by audiences.

2.1. Mainstream media

This section examines Kenya's traditional or 'legacy' mainstream media sector and how it reports on topics or themes amplified by information manipulators.

As Kenya's digital infrastructure expands and social media usage grows, mainstream media remains a key part of the information ecosystem. It produces content that can inform public discussions across both traditional and digital platforms. However, this influence cuts both ways - while media can serve as a bulwark against information manipulation, coordinated networks can also weaponise selected materials for political and financial gain.

Traditional media

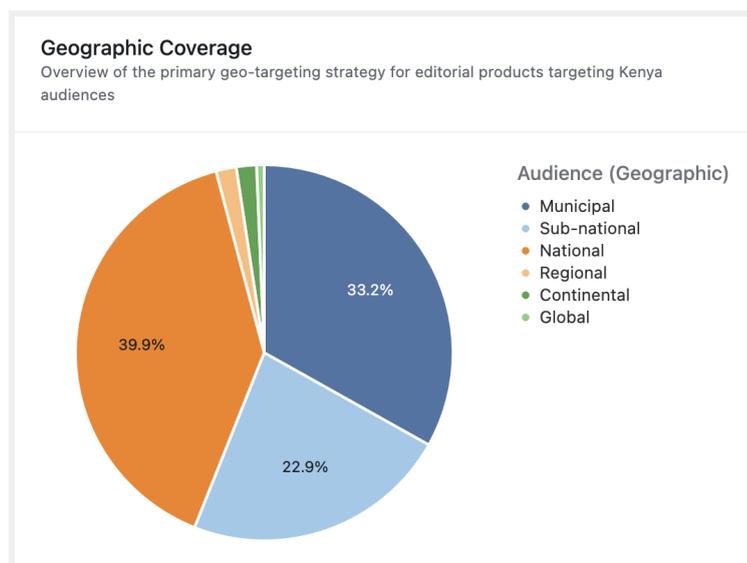
Kenyan media is diverse, serving both national and county-based audiences. Code for Africa (CfA)'s ongoing landscape mapping on CivicSignal's MediaData provides insights into Kenya's media sector. To date, **1,119** media outlets serving Kenya-based audiences, including **1,026** locally owned or operated media outlets. The project has documented **445** parent organisations that own various media outlets and brands. In addition, it has recorded **33** media industry associations, bodies, and regulators. The Media Council of Kenya (MCK) has accredited **4,694** journalists and editors in the [country](#).



*Screenshot of the summary dashboard on MediaData's mapping of media outlets in Kenya in Q4 2024
(Source: CivicSignal MediaData)*

According to CivicSignal's mapping, 39.9% of media outlets have national stories as their primary focus. Municipal or local news is the main focus for 33.2% of outlets, and sub-national stories are the primary focus of 22.9% of [media companies](#).

The coverage of national stories is in line with the valence that politics holds with Kenyan audiences, with political developments and debates attracting much [news and online attention](#).



Screenshot of the geographical coverage of Kenyan media (Source: CivicSignal MediaData)

In terms of language, English and Kiswahili dominate media content. English leads, with 48% of mapped organisations using it as their primary language, while Kiswahili follows at 21%. Vernacular languages also feature, with Kikuyu having the largest share (5%), followed by Dholuo and Kalenjin. Some media outlets use secondary languages in addition to their main language.

Radio is both widespread and popular. The Communications Authority (CA) of Kenya has licensed over **300** radio stations, according to its 2023 register.¹ Most radio stations in Kenya run as commercial companies, with 197 licensed commercial radio stations and 74 community radio stations. Public radio programming is available in all regions of Kenya, broadcasting in English, Kiswahili and local languages. Radio remains the most popular medium in Kenya, but is more popular in rural areas, with 82% of rural residents tuning in, compared with 67% of urbanites.²

Two popular radio stations capture over a third of the listening audience. Radio Citizen and Radio Jambo, owned by Radio Africa Group (RAG), are the most popular radio stations.³ Both stations also maintain a strong social media presence, Radio Citizen has 1.1 million⁴ Facebook followers and Radio Jambo has 1.5 million.⁵

In terms of **television**, the CA has licensed 354 TV stations. Digital terrestrial television (DTT) dominates the market, with infrastructure covering more than 90% of the population.⁶ The majority of licenced television channels (328) are commercial free-to-air stations, while eight operate as nonprofit community channels.⁷ More urban residents report watching television than their rural counterparts – 81% compared to 70%.⁸

As with radio, television audiences are concentrated around popular brands. Citizen TV, owned by private media holding company Royal Media Services (RMS), is the most popular channel, with the MCK State of the Media report finding that 36% of the population tuned into the channel in 2022.⁹ This popularity extends to social media, particularly Facebook, where Citizen TV has 7.6 million followers.¹⁰

¹ [Kenyan broadcaster licensees](#)

² [Kenya Media Landscape Report December 2023](#)

³ [Royal Media Services](#)

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/RadioCitizenFM/>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/RadioJamboKenya/>

⁶ [Digital Migration Process in Kenya](#)

⁷ [Kenyan broadcaster licensees](#)

⁸ [Kenya Media Landscape Report December 2023](#)

⁹ [State of the Media Report 2022](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/CitizenTVKe/>

Official figures for numbers of **print and online media** outlets are not available, but the Kenya Media Landscape Report of December 2023 noted that online media consumption more than doubled from 27% in 2013 to 57% in 2023.¹¹

The Nation Media Group (NMG) and the Standard Group (SG), dominate online and print publishing. NMG has a Facebook following of 3.9 million,¹² while Standard Digital has a following of 4 million.¹³

Outsized audiences patterns parallel consolidated brand ownership. Concentrated patterns of ownership is one of two key factors that make Kenya's media landscape susceptible to exploitation by those seeking to manipulate information.

Across all forms of media, ownership is concentrated in the hands of politically connected individuals, either in government or close to government officials, which also undermines its role as a watchdog.¹⁴ The concentration of ownership among a small political elite also acts against public interests, because the dominant players in Kenya use the media to buoy up themselves and their cronies.¹⁵ In particular, the concentration of ownership in Kenyan media means that the Genesis Media Emerging Markets (owner of tuko.co.ke), NMG, RMS, and SG have outsized influence on the print and digital news available to Kenyans. When media outlets align with different political interests, the resulting partisan coverage – though not necessarily false – can be selectively amplified by information manipulation actors for their own interests.

A second key factor that increases the space for information manipulation and prevents detection and contradiction is the systematic weakening of newsrooms through journalist layoffs.

Kenyan media has faced significant economic challenges in recent years, particularly affecting its workforce. During the Covid-19 pandemic, media companies laid off more than 300 journalists as they experienced lower incomes.¹⁶ In July 2020, The Nation Media Group (NMG) laid off 40 journalists¹⁷ and multiple rounds of retrenchments have taken place since then, with the announcement of 180 jobs lost in June 2024. In June 2020, Mediamax retrenched 100 of its staff members across various departments.¹⁸ The Standard Group (SG) cut 170 jobs across all departments in March 2020¹⁹ and more in September 2023.²⁰ In August 2024, the media house laid off about 300 staff members.²¹ The lack of journalists in a news media environment means information manipulation networks can more easily insert content into news cycles. Propagandists are able to do this by providing free or cheap news agency content that incorporates their views, and reporting on opinion pieces published elsewhere as if they were independent news, concealing the paid nature of the original content. Additionally, reduced newsroom capacity and short timelines associated with digital media can lead outlets to publish unverified information.

A digital information ecosystem assessment by Internews, based on extensive stakeholder interviews and focus groups, observed that mainstream media organisations are ideally positioned to take a central role in protecting citizens from cyberattacks to disinformation campaigns.²²

¹¹ Kenya Media Landscape Report December 2023

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/nation/>

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/standardkenya/>

¹⁴ [Factually True, Legally Untrue: Political Media Ownership in Kenya](#)

¹⁵ [The Politics of Impunity and the Shifting Media Landscape in Kenya](#)

¹⁶ [Kenya Editors Guild says some media houses using Covid-19 pandemic as a pretext to enforce staff layoffs & salary cuts](#)

¹⁷ [NMG Kicks Out Senior Editors and Managers as it Shifts Gears - Business Today Kenya](#)

¹⁸ [Broke Mediamax Offers Sacked Employees Outrageous Payment Plan - Business Today Kenya](#)

¹⁹ [Stiff competition triggers layoffs at Standard Group](#)

²⁰ [Struggling Standard Media Announces Fresh Round of Layoffs - Kenyans.co.ke](#)

²¹ [Stiff competition triggers layoffs at Standard Group](#)

²² [Navigating Kenya's Digital Information Ecosystem - Information Saves Lives | Internews](#)

MediaCloud analysis reveals key topics in Kenyan news coverage

CivicSignal's MediaCloud analysis of digital and online content published by 491 media outlets between 01 January 2023 and 31 July 2024 indicated that the following topics were prominent in news reportage:

i. Mounting foreign debt threatens economic stability

Kenya's external debt and the economic fallouts dominated coverage, with over 36,000 stories highlighting the external debt burden and its fallouts for the country's economic stability.^{23 24 25} The World Bank has identified Kenya as one of 10 countries facing significant financial strain as borrowing conditions had worsened, undermining the country's fiscal stability.²⁶ Kenya's debt to GDP ratio reached 73% in December 2023.²⁷

ii. Protests against increasing living costs

The impacts of worsening economic conditions in the country, felt through ways including higher inflation and taxes, attracted much coverage over the period with 30,000 stories. Protests due to high costs of living,^{28 29} delayed salaries in the public sector,³⁰ unfavourable working conditions,³¹ poor pay,³² grew through the period.

Growing discontent coalesced around a proposed tax bill, which started in 2023 and increased during June 2024.^{33 34 35} Parliament rejected the bill on 25 July 2024, following mounting public pressure.³⁶

iii. Violent crimes and the murder of a prominent activist

Violent crime featured in 24,478 stories over the period. Coverage about violent crime peaked in April 2023, with a number of stories about 600 criminals on death row. March 2023 saw a spike in coverage about banditry in the northern counties, leading to the evacuation of rural residents. The murder during the period was that of prominent LGBTQ+ activist and fashion designer Edwin Kiprotich Kiptoo, alias Chiloba. Over the analysis period, 501 stories mentioned the discovery of Chiloba's body,³⁷ his burial,³⁸ together with the police investigation and subsequent legal case.³⁹ Chiloba was murdered in January 2023.

iv. Terrorism and radicalisation

Concerns about **terrorism** and **radicalisation** were prominent during the period, with more than 5,000 stories. Some of these were about international terrorism, particularly the activities related to Al-Shabaab in neighbouring Somalia.⁴⁰ Others focused on terrorism in Kenya. Big stories during the period were the police investigations, legal procedures, and the media's suit to cover a foiled Mombasa-based attack on 31 December 2022,^{41 42} a potential incursion by Al-Shabaab leading to the deaths of three people in Garissa,⁴³ and the offer of a US\$10 million reward for information related to a 2020 attack on an airfield by the US government.⁴⁴ The December launch of a training curriculum for border officials attracted attention. The curriculum follows an assessment of the vulnerabilities at the

²³ [Kenya's external debt rises to Sh4.7 trillion](#)

²⁴ [Domestic borrowing hits 50pc of Kenya debt on foreign loans plunge - Business Daily](#)

²⁵ [Ruto says tax waivers 'frozen' as govt moves to avert debt distress » Capital News](#)

²⁶ [World Bank Names Kenya Among Countries Facing Immense Financial Pressure - Kenyans.co.ke](#)

²⁷ [Kenya Government Debt: % of GDP, 2009 – 2025 | CEIC Data](#)

²⁸ [Man sets himself ablaze to protest high cost of living | Nation](#)

²⁹ [Salaries plunge in real terms for three consecutive years - Business Daily](#)

³⁰ [David Ndii Reveals Ruto Dilemma In Salary Delay Crisis - Viral Tea Ke](#)

³¹ [Malindi Water employees protest over poor working conditions](#)

³² [Ruto Promises MCAs Hefty Perks - Kenyans.co.ke](#)

³³ [Violent protests erupt in Kenya over controversial tax bill](#)

³⁴ [Why landowners are unhappy with Ruto's tax bill | Nation](#)

³⁵ [\[PHOTOS\] Tear gas as anti-tax bill demos start in Nairobi](#)

³⁶ [Kenyan Parliament Officially Rejects Finance Bill 2024 Following Widespread Protests - Sauti TV Kenya](#)

³⁷ [NTV Kenya: Model Edwin Chiloba found murdered, body discovered in metal box](#)

³⁸ [Edwin Chiloba to be buried on Saturday, Family confirms](#)

³⁹ [Edwin Chiloba's Murder: Police Give Way Forward After Completing Investigations - Kenyans.co.ke](#)

⁴⁰ [Somalia seizes key port town from Al-Shabaab - The EastAfrican](#)

⁴¹ [Court orders detention of 3 suspects for 15 days over terror attacks in Mombasa](#)

⁴² [Suspects planned terror attacks on festivities – police](#)

⁴³ [KeNHA Issues Statement After 3 Die in Suspected Al-Shabaab Attack - Kenyans.co.ke](#)

⁴⁴ [10 million USD bounty announced for DusitD2 terror attack mastermind Mohamoud Abdi Aden » Capital News](#)

Lamu and Nadapal border points as well as the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.⁴⁵ Prominent opinion pieces advocated for multi-agency and multi-national action,⁴⁶ and a call to be vigilant as poverty and influence campaigns drive radicalisation, which could lead to terrorism.⁴⁷ Stories related to radicalisation in April 2023 surrounded the deaths of six congregants of Pastor Paul Mackensie,⁴⁸ after prolonged fasts and the subsequent discovery of mass graves.⁴⁹

2.2. County context: Media landscape

While national political developments attract significant public attention, understanding local media landscapes is crucial for several reasons. County-level media serves distinct community needs, broadcasts in local languages, and provides coverage of issues that directly impact residents' daily lives. This section examines the media landscape across the six focal counties – Busia, Homa Bay, Lamu, Mombasa, Nakuru, and Nairobi.

a. Busia County

The county is in western Kenya, bordering Uganda and Lake Victoria. In the 2019 census, the county had 893,681 residents, representing 1.9% of the Kenyan population. The MCK has accredited 23 journalists in the county.

According to the 2023 [MCK report](#), the county’s media consumption is largely dominated by mainstream media, specifically TV and radio stations.

The county population consumes news from diverse sources: 60.0% from TV, 23.08% from radio, 13.85% from social media, 1.54% from family and friends, and 1.54% from newspapers.

Table one below shows the breakdown of online media with a high social following in Busia:

Media outlet	Primary language	Facebook followers	Category
Emuria Fm 101.3 – Sauti Ya Border	Teso	52,000	Facebook page
Mulembe FM	Abaluhya	167,000	Facebook page
Western Nyota TV	Abaluhya	13,000	Facebook page

b. Homa Bay County

Homa Bay County, located along Lake Victoria, has 1,131,950 inhabitants, representing 2.38% of Kenya's population. The MCK has accredited 20 journalists in the county.

The MCK’s 2023 media status report shows that popular TV stations include Citizen TV, K24, KTN, NTV, and Ramogi TV, with 48.61% accessing TV via free-to-air or set-top boxes, 26.39% via digital TV, and 12.5% via online streaming.

Table two below shows the breakdown of online media with a sizeable social following in Homa Bay:

⁴⁵ [Kenya unveils border security training curriculum](#)

⁴⁶ [Multi-agency approach is best bet in war on terror | Nation](#)

⁴⁷ [Let's be strategic and not fiddle again on terror war | Nation](#)

⁴⁸ [In courts today: Controversial preacher MacKenzie to be arraigned](#)

⁴⁹ [Kenya: Mackenzie Likely to Face Genocide Over Shakahola Massacre - allAfrica.com](#)

Media outlet	Primary language	Facebook followers	Category
Gulf Radio	Dholuo	5,800	Facebook page
Nam Lolwe FM	Dholuo	47,000	Facebook page
Ramogi FM	Dholuo	442,000	Facebook page
Radio Mikayi	Dholuo	71,140	Facebook page
Sunset Radio 98.1 FM	Dholuo	427	Facebook group

c. Lamu County

Lamu County, located on Kenya's northern coast, has a population of 143,920. The MCK has accredited 10 journalists who form the Lamu Press Club, reporting news across the county.

According to the MCK's 2023 media report, 56.67% of residents watch TV via set-top boxes and 20% through online streaming. Citizen TV and KBC are the most popular stations. Kiswahili radio dominates, with Bahari FM, Radio Citizen, and Radio Jambo among the most listened-to. Newspapers face distribution challenges, with readership at 12%. The Daily Nation and The Standard each account for 40% of the readership, while Taifa Leo holds 20%. Despite increased network coverage and social media use, remote areas like Madina and Mkokoni still face access issues. Local radio stations have a strong social media presence, enhancing their role in Lamu's media landscape.

Table three below shows the breakdown of online media with a high social following in Lamu County:

Media outlet	Primary language	Facebook followers	Category
Lulu FM Radio	Kiswahili	54,000	Facebook page
Radio Kaya	Kiswahili	305,000	Facebook page
Radio Rahma	Kiswahili	101,000	Facebook page
Sauti Ya Pwani FM	Kiswahili	41,000	Facebook page
Sifa 101.1 FM Lamu	Kiswahili	1,000	Facebook page

d. Mombasa

Mombasa county, Kenya's second-largest city with a population of 1,208,333 (2.54% of the national total) and an 83% literacy rate, primarily speaks Kiswahili. It hosts 251 MCK-accredited journalists, some working for the state-owned Kenya News Agency and major regional outlets.

According to the MCK 2023 media report, Citizen TV, KBC, and NTV are the most popular stations, accessed via set-top boxes (56.98%), digital TV (20.93%), and online streaming (15.12%). Radio is

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dominated by Bahari FM, Radio Citizen, and Radio Jambo, alongside local stations like Mo Radio and Radio Rahma. Newspapers such as Daily Nation (50%), Taifa Leo (20.59%), and The Standard (11.76%) lead readership, with local publications like Coastweek and Madafu adding to the mix. The county's vibrant online media scene, driven by Kiswahili outlets and Facebook pages, plays a key role in information dissemination.

Table four below shows the breakdown of online media with a high digital following in Mombasa:

Media outlet	Primary language	Facebook followers	Category
Baraka FM	Kiswahili	101,000	Facebook page
Msenangu FM	Kiswahili	106,000	Facebook page
Mo Radio 88.2 FM	Kiswahili	58,000	Facebook page
001 FM	Kiswahili	10,000	Facebook page
Blue Radio Kenya	English	831	Facebook page
Mvita FM	Kiswahili	2,100	Facebook page

e. Nakuru

Nakuru, located in Kenya's Central Rift Valley, has over two million residents (4.2% of the national population) and serves as a hub for regional media bureaus like NMG and SG. The MCK has accredited 130 journalists in the county.

According to the 2023 MCK media report, Citizen TV (34.63%) leads TV viewership, followed by Inooro TV (15.86%), K24, KTN News, and NTV. Vernacular radio stations dominate, with Inooro FM (16.93%) and Kameme FM (14.57%) among the top. News is mostly consumed via TV at 53.13%, 32.5% via radio, and 11.88% through social media.

Table five below shows the breakdown of online media with a strong digital following in Nakuru:

Media outlet	Primary language	Facebook followers	Category
Flamingo Radio	English	14,000	Facebook page
Riri FM 93.7	Kikuyu	4,200	Facebook page
Hero Radio	English	88,000	Facebook page
Jesus Is Lord Radio	English	10,000	Facebook page
Egerton Radio	English	12,000	Facebook page

f. Nairobi

The county serves as Kenya's news and information capital, with several international media bureaus, including Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, Reuters, and the Associated Press. These outlets use Nairobi as a hub for covering news in East Africa and the wider African continent.

Table six below shows the breakdown of media with a strong digital following based in Nairobi:

Media outlet	Primary language	Facebook followers	Category
Citizen TV	English, Swahili	7.6 million	Facebook page
Standard Digital	English	4 million	Facebook page
Nation Media Group	English	3.9 million	Facebook page
Radio Jambo	Swahili	1.5 million	Facebook page
The Star, Kenya	English	1.4 million	Facebook page
Radio Maisha	Swahili	1.3 million	Facebook page
Milele FM	Swahili	1.2 million	Facebook page
Radio Citizen	Swahili	1.1 million	Facebook page

The Kenyan media landscape features a significant concentration of journalists in the capital city. According to the MCK register of journalists, 3,341 (59%) of Kenya's 5,723 accredited journalists are based in Nairobi.

2.3. Digital and social media landscape

This section offers a high-level overview of internet and mobile telephone access and use in Kenya, alongside insights into significant social media platform preferences among citizens who have either digital or mobile access.

The [National Information, Communications and Technology \(ICT\) Policy](#) shapes Kenya's digital landscape, setting out strategies and aspirations for advancing the country's information and communication technology sector.

The country's digital information ecosystem is dynamic and is driven by a range of stakeholders who contribute to the creation, distribution, and consumption of digital content. At its core are multiple sources of information, including traditional media outlets such as newspapers, radio, and television, many of which have adapted to the digital age by establishing an online presence. Alongside these legacy media platforms, digital-first sources such as blogs, online news portals, and social media have gained prominence.

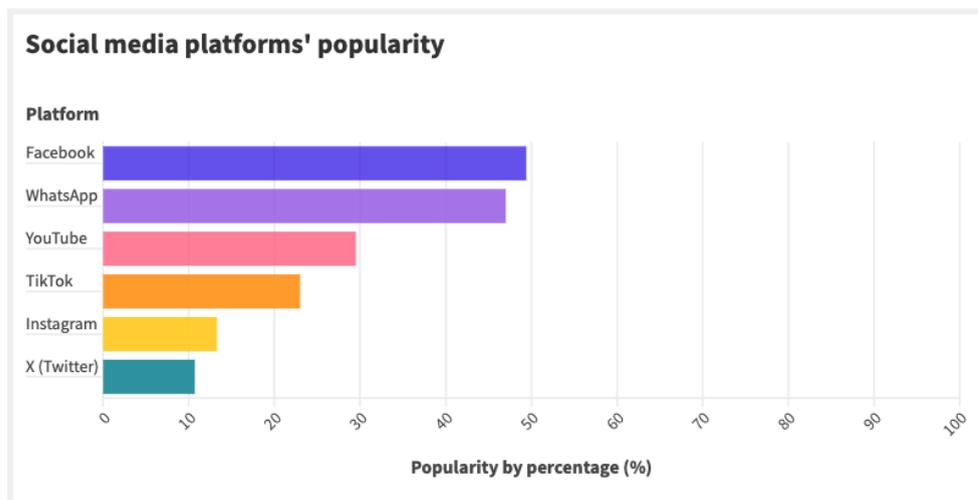
Kenya has a well-developed telecommunications infrastructure, with extensive mobile and fixed-line networks. Mobile penetration is particularly high, reaching 110% of the population, with major

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providers such as Airtel, Safaricom, and Telkom Kenya offering data, mobile money, and voice services. Internet access, [currently](#) at 22.17 million users (40.8% penetration), has also expanded significantly, largely driven by the widespread adoption of mobile technology. According to the [CA](#), smartphone adoption sits at ~35 million users (58% of the population) while broadband subscription rates sit at 73%. With a young population and high smartphone adoption, internet access has become widespread across both urban and rural areas.

The high availability of mobile internet, supported by affordable data plans and expanding 4G coverage, has transformed how Kenyans access information, communicate, and engage with digital services. Kenya's local internet demand [surged](#) by 19.6% in 2023, reaching 9.6 million gigabytes per second (Gbps) - up from 8.1 million Gbps in 2022.

High internet penetration, widespread smartphone usage, a youthful population, and growing demand for digital services has fueled the [rise of social media](#) as a primary source of information. The CA audience measurement [report](#) (January–March 2024) indicates that Facebook and WhatsApp are the top social media platforms, followed by YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter).



Social media platforms' popularity in Kenya as of March 2024 (Source: CfA using [Flourish](#))

The digital advances also have negative effects as citizens face increased cyber threats, digital rights violations, and misinformation. Recent data from the CA which recorded 1.3 billion cyber threats and 8.1 million cyber threat advisories in the [second quarter](#) of the 2023/2024 fiscal year. This also reflects in Siasa Place's focus group discussions, known as barazas, held across the project's focus counties.

a. Cybercrime

Cybercrime involves illegal activities carried out through computers or the internet, often targeting data, networks, and systems for disruption, financial gain, or theft. These crimes exploit digital vulnerabilities, threatening individuals' privacy, security, and financial stability.

According to the [CA](#), Kenya recorded over 855 million cyber incidents between July 2022 and June 2023, making it one of the top three most targeted countries in Africa, alongside Nigeria and South Africa. The growing wave of cyber threats in the country includes:

- i. [Cyberbullying](#), includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else.
- ii. [Phishing](#), where criminals steal personal data using fake emails, messages, and websites.

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- iii. [Identity theft](#) remains a significant risk, as fraudsters exploit stolen identities for financial crimes like unauthorised bank access. Additionally, the rapid growth of e-commerce has attracted
- iv. [Online harassment](#), which is defined as the use of information and communication technologies, by an individual group, to repeatedly cause harm to another person, poses a significant threat to female politicians in Kenya.
- v. [Mobile money fraud](#), a prevalent digital threat in Kenya, is a type of financial crime that involves the theft of money from mobile money accounts.

b. Surveillance and privacy intrusions

Kenya's increasing reliance on surveillance technology has raised concerns about privacy and oversight. The government has partnered with international and local firms to enhance its capabilities, such as the collaboration between Chinese technology company Huawei and the partly state-owned telecom company [Safaricom to implement the integrated urban surveillance system](#) in Nairobi. This system connects hundreds of CCTV cameras to the national police headquarters, enabling real-time monitoring but raising concerns over possible mass surveillance. Moreover, according to a report by [Daily Nation](#), Safaricom has also faced allegations of complicity in state surveillance, with reports of a British firm, Neural Technologies, creating a [backdoor](#) into its systems to grant law enforcement real-time access to user data, raising ethical questions about privacy and corporate responsibility.

Further, reports suggest that the Kenyan government has contracted a [US-based organisation to develop an AI-powered social media monitoring tool](#). This software reportedly aims to identify online 'threats', but critics fear it may be used to suppress dissent and target activists. As per a [Quartz report](#), past revelations compound such concerns that the government has used tools from companies like Circles, an Israeli firm, to intercept calls and track individuals' locations. While the use of [Pegasus spyware](#) has not been definitively confirmed in Kenya, the global presence of such tools signals potential risks. Consequently, the surveillance-for-hire industry has been thriving with local and international networks of digital mercenaries not only conducting targeted surveillance, but also leveraging the collected data with third parties like [Cambridge Analytica](#) to orchestrate disinformation campaigns and manipulate social media narratives. These operations often involve profiling individuals, tracking their activities, and using insights gained from surveillance to craft and spread misleading information that influences public opinion or discredits specific targets.. These groups often undermine civil society organisations, independent media, and the judiciary. For instance, [coordinated campaigns against media houses and judicial institutions](#) have been documented, with influencers hired to spread disinformation and attack dissenting voices.

Kenya's legal framework, including the [2019 Data Protection Act](#), aims to protect individual privacy, but weak enforcement and limited transparency, both from government agencies regarding surveillance activities and from private entities handling personal data, hinder its effectiveness.

c. Information manipulation

Information manipulation involves the intentional creation or distortion of content to mislead the public. This practice can create confusion, widen social divisions, and cause significant harm by spreading deceptive narratives, inciting fear, and undermining trust in institutions and reliable sources of information.

In a GeoPoll [survey](#) conducted between October and November 2023, 95% of participants said they actively follow social media influencers, with 45.29% following more than 10 influencers. Influencers, with their large and engaged audiences, are leveraged across various platforms – including Facebook,

TikTok, WhatsApp, and X – to amplify factual or misleading narratives. Their ability to shape public discourse makes them key players in marketing campaigns and coordinated disinformation efforts.

Election periods have been particularly susceptible to [disinformation campaigns](#) to sway voter behaviour. [Health-related misinformation](#), especially concerning vaccines and public health policies, has also proliferated, leading to confusion and eroding public trust. The emergence of [deepfakes and synthetic media](#) further complicates the information landscape, as these tools are increasingly used to disseminate deceptive content and tarnish individual reputations.

d. Violent extremism

Extremist groups have been early adopters of new technologies, lured both by the anonymity and the relatively low costs to set up their own encrypted chat apps on self-hosted servers such as [RocketChat](#), [Matrix.to](#) and [Element.io](#). These platforms all prioritise users' anonymity and reduce or do not collect metadata, which makes it difficult to monitor and track groups' activities. These groups use their online [platforms](#) to spread propaganda, coordinate information campaigns, recruit new members, and raise funds for specific campaigns, posing a significant digital threat in the country. Groups, such as Al-Shabaab, exploit Kenya's [socio-political](#) vulnerabilities, [historical grievances](#), and technological growth to further their agenda.

e. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence

Kenya's digital space has become a hotspot for gendered harassment and abuse, disproportionately affecting [women and marginalised groups](#). The [non-consensual sharing of intimate images](#) has also become a serious concern on Telegram and X, as perpetrators post explicit content without consent, causing reputational and psychological harm.

2.4. Online search trends

This section examines how ordinary internet users in Kenya use online search tools such as Google to research topics they have encountered either in the mainstream media or on social media, to either validate or get more information on these topics. The consortium uses the insights as an indicator for how combined media and social media content exposure may be shaping 'average person' perceptions.

Google Trends is an analytical tool that provides insights into what content internet users in specific regions are searching. The tool allows users to analyse specific countries, compare certain countries with others elsewhere, or alternatively narrow down to a sub-national level. It aggregates data from Google Search to show the specific keywords and terms that the public is searching, and then clusters these terms into baskets or categories for thematic analysis. The search data is weighted against the total search volume in a region, so users can understand both emerging trends and spikes of public interest in a specific topic over time. The tool has been used to [detect](#) public health crises before emerging disease outbreaks (due to people searching for disease symptoms and possible treatments) were detected from medical records, and is regularly used by fact-checkers and conspiracy researchers, as well as consumer strategists, to identify public interests as they emerge.

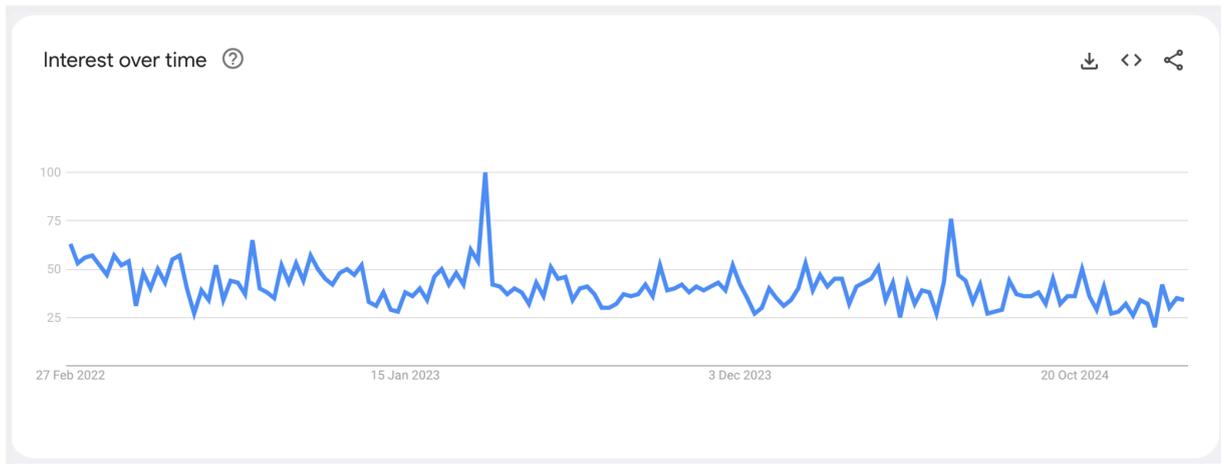
Google data collections for Africa are, unfortunately, not as comprehensive as in the Minority World in Europe and North America but the tool remains an important early warning mechanism for African disinformation researchers, watchdogs and CSOs.

The topic categories pre-defined by Google Trends include thematic categories directly relevant to monitoring public discourse in Kenya, including: 'news'; 'people and society'; 'internet and telecom';

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and many more. The ‘news’ category includes a variety of subcategories that can be selected for more refined analysis, including ‘health news’, ‘politics’ and ‘newspapers’.

An analysis of Google Search trends in Kenya in the ‘news’ category between December 2022 and February 2025 shows multiple peaks for searches in the ‘media critics and watchdogs’ and ‘campaign and elections’ sub-categories.

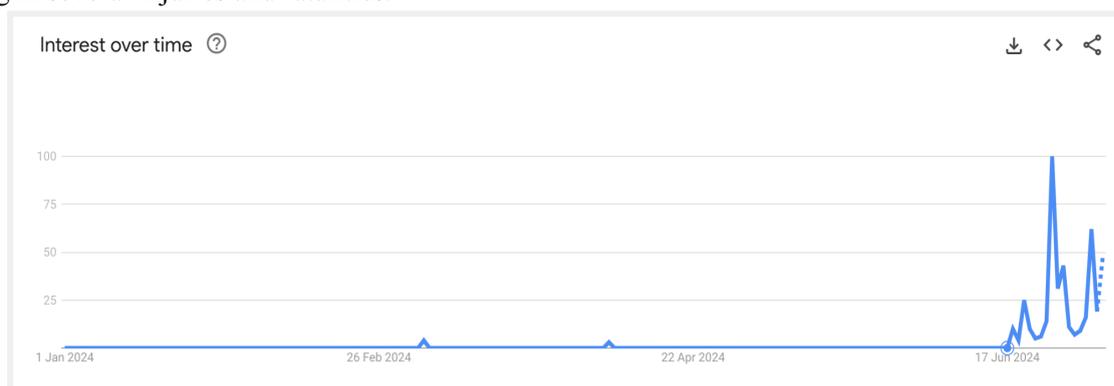


*Search trend in the ‘media critics and watchdogs’ category in Kenya between 01 January 2022 and 30 Feb 2025
(Source: CfA using [Google Trends](#))*

a. Politics: ‘Maandamano’ and ‘Kenya protests’

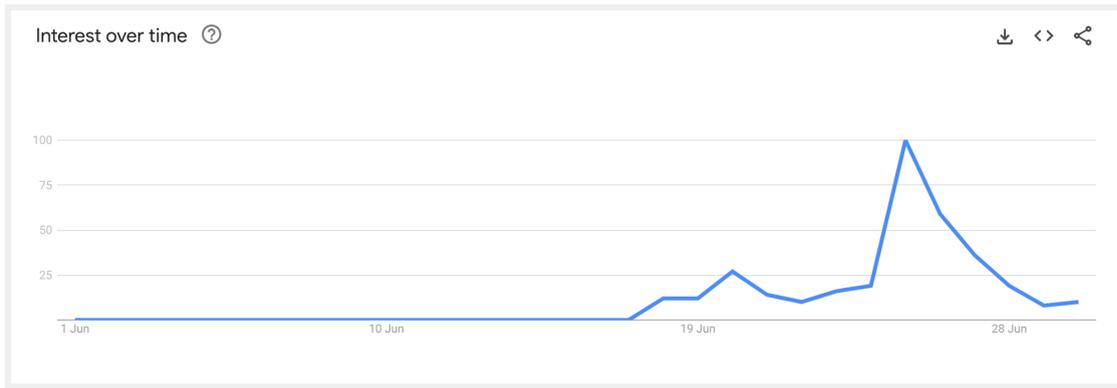
An analysis of Google Search trends between 01 January and 04 July 2024 shows a significant and continuous increase in searches for the term ‘maandamano’ in Kenya, starting from 18 June 2024. Searches for the term, which translates to ‘protest’ in English, rose with the onset of the Occupy Parliament demonstrations on 18 June 2024 – the same day that the controversial finance bill 2024 was tabled in parliament.

The highest spike occurred on 25 June 2024, when a protest saw demonstrators breach⁵⁰ parliament, resulting in several injuries and fatalities.



*Search trend for the topic ‘maandamano’ in Kenya between 01 January and 30 June 2024
(Source: CfA using [Google Trends](#))*

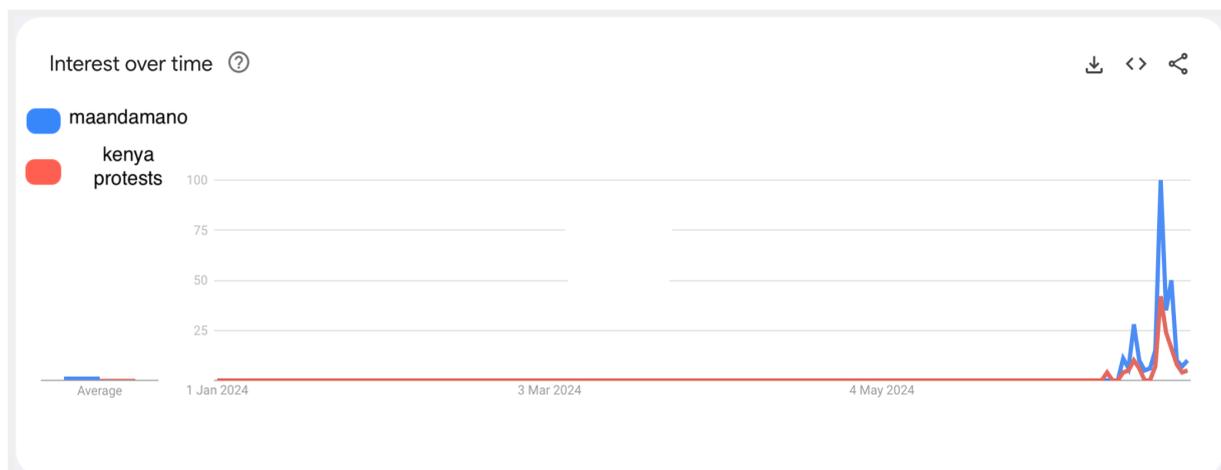
⁵⁰ [Several shot protesters storm Kenya’s parliament after lawmakers approve tax hikes](#)



Search trend for the topic 'Kenya protests' in Kenya between 01 and 30 June 2024
(Source: CfA using [Google Trends](#))

Politics: Comparison in search volume between 'maandamano' and 'Kenya protests'

The peak popularity of the search trends for the two phrases showed similar timing, with 'maandamano', meaning 'protests', having a higher search volume than 'Kenya protests'. This indicates that users requested more searches in Kiswahili than in English on this particular topic. This is because Swahili is Kenya's national language⁵¹, and is commonly used in protest references and search terms, resulting in more searches in Swahili than in English.



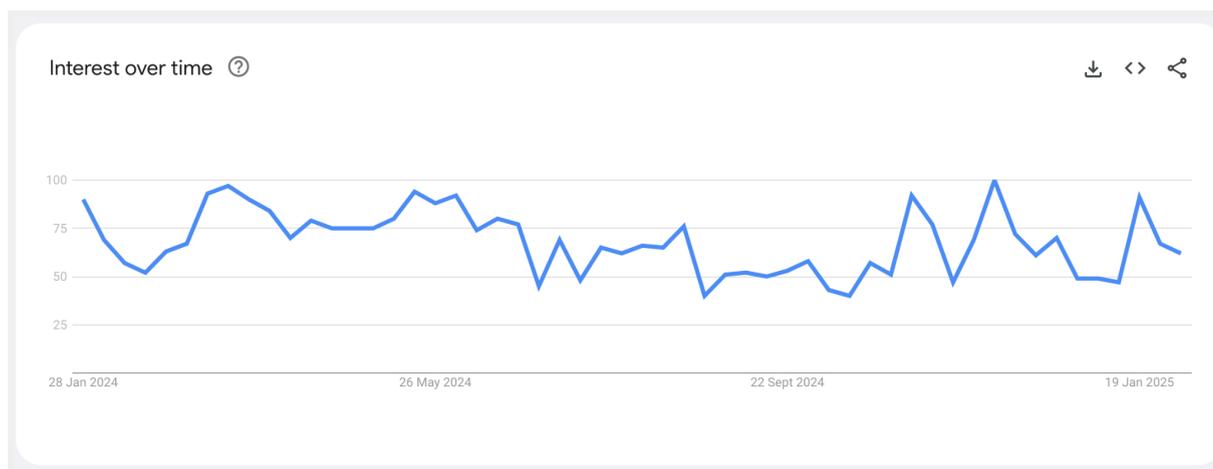
A comparison of search trends for the topics 'maandamano' and 'Kenya protests' in Kenya between 01 January and 30 June 2024 (Source: CfA using [Google Trends](#))

b. LGBTQ+

An analysis of Google Search trends between 28 January 2024 and 02 February 2025 shows a significant and continuous increase in searches for the term 'LGBTQ'.

Between 01 and 05 December 2024, the search volume spiked - driven by media coverage of the trial of the prime suspect in the murder of Chiloba.

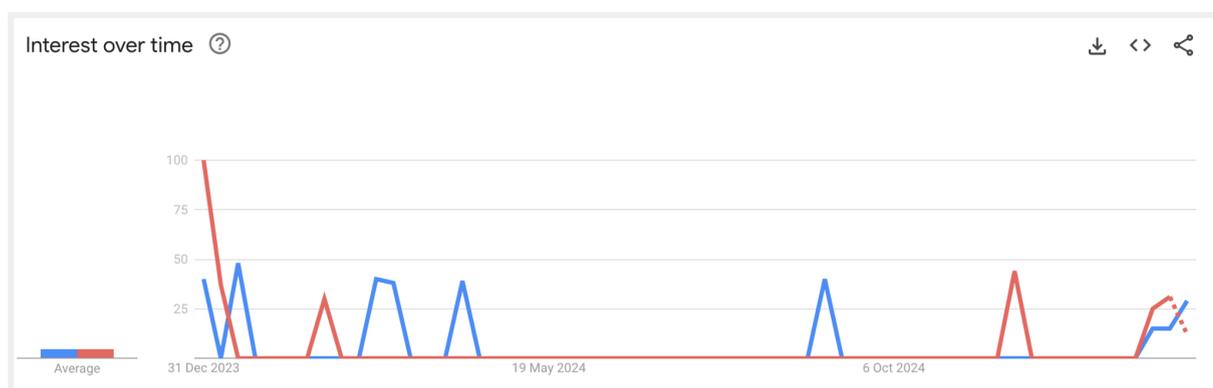
⁵¹ [Kenya's national language](#)



Search trend for the topic 'LGBTQ' in Kenya between 28 January 2024 and 02 Feb 2025
 (Source: CfA using [Google Trends](#))

c. Extremism

An analysis of Google Search trends between 01 January 2024 and 03 February 2025 reveals significant spikes in searches for the terms 'Al Shabaab' and 'Mungiki' during specific months, highlighting increased public interest in these prominent extremist groups in Kenya during those periods.



Search trend for the terms 'Al Shabaab', in blue, and 'Mungiki', in orange, in Kenya between 01 January 2024 and 03 February 2025
 (Source: CfA using [Google Trends](#))

The spike in searches for 'Al Shabaab' in March 2024 was driven by [increased attacks](#) by the extremist group in Mandera and Lamu counties, along with the anniversary of the [2015 Garissa University attack](#). Similarly, the rise in searches for 'Mungiki' towards the end of 2024 reflected a resurgence in the organisation's violent activities and criminal operations, particularly in Nairobi and central Kenya.

Fact-checking infrastructure

This section outlines Kenya's local fact-checking infrastructure and spotlights historic thematic trends in misleading claims debunked by local researchers.

Kenya's fact-checking ecosystem comprises dedicated organisations and newsroom-based desks, many of which are part of the African Fact-Checking Alliance (AFCA), supported by CfA and Deutsche Welle Akademie since 2019. Themes in fact-checking include political misinformation, financial scams,

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socio-political issues in Kenya and East Africa, and relations with global powers like China, the US, and the European Union.

Signatories verified by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) include Africa Check, Agence France-Presse (AFP), PesaCheck, and Piga Firimbi, which publish on their websites and share debunks on social media, WhatsApp, and other Meta platforms through third-party fact-checking (3PFC) partnerships. PesaCheck also fact-checks for TikTok and is the only organisation in Kenya with AFCA and IFCN memberships participating in Meta’s 3PFC network. Currently, 27 media organisations in Kenya are registered with AFCA.

The fact-checking organisations and newsrooms that have fact-checking desks in Kenya are listed in table seven below:

Organisation	Description	Average number of debunks per month	Industry affiliation	Publication language/s
AFP Fact Check – Kenya	AFP Fact Check, launched in 2017, is a global initiative by AFP, with over 100 journalists monitoring online content in 26 languages to combat misinformation.	6	IFCN	Arabic, English, and French
Africa Check	Africa Check, founded in 2012, is a non-profit dedicated to holding public figures accountable and debunking harmful falsehoods online.	30	IFCN	French and English
BBC FactFinder	This BBC UK product analyses misinformation and shows how journalists build investigations.	3		English
PesaCheck	CfA founded PesaCheck, Africa’s largest indigenous fact-checker, in 2016 and has researchers in 18 countries, including Kenya, with teams in Nairobi and Garissa.	75	AFCA IFCN	Afaan-Oromo, Amharic, English, French, Kiswahili, and Somali

Table seven shows the breakdown of newsrooms and their check or verification desks:

Organisation	Description	Average number of debunks per month	Industry affiliation	Publication language/s
Business Today	This is a Kenyan business news website with a section reserved for fact-checks.	7	AFCA	English
Citizen Digital	This Kenyan news platform occasionally publishes fact-checks.	1	AFCA	English

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Organisation	Description	Average number of debunks per month	Industry affiliation	Publication language/s
Ghetto Radio	This is a Kenyan radio station based in Nairobi. It covers fact-checks as part of its podcast content.	1	AFCA ▾	English
Media Observer	Media Observer, an MCK publication, debunks fake news, curbs hate speech, and promotes responsible journalism.	15	None ▾	English
Mtaani Radio	This is a Kenyan nonprofit, independent, community-based radio station with a section dedicated to fact-checks.	1	AFCA ▾	English
Piga Firimbi	Piga Firimbi is a product of Africa Uncensored, which focuses on verification and fact-checking. It was established in 2020.	7	AFCA ▾ IFCN ▾	English
Ruben FM	Ruben FM is a Kenyan-based radio station. It publishes fact-checks on topical issues on its website and broadcasts them on the radio.	5	AFCA ▾	English
The Standard	The Standard is Kenya's second-largest newspaper. It also operates an online platform called Standard Digital, with a dedicated section for fact-checks.	5	AFCA ▾	English
The Star	The Star, a Kenyan print and online publication, features a dedicated online section for debunking topical issues.	4	AFCA ▾	English
Sky FM	This is a Kenyan radio station that publishes fact-checks on its website.	9	AFCA ▾	English

Between January 2022 and June 2024, PesaCheck published more than 2,000 Kenya-specific fact-checks, focusing on elections, financial scams, government policies, international relations, politics, and the economy. These debunks led to over five million posts being flagged as misleading on Meta's platforms. In Kenya's diverse media ecosystem, fact-checks appear across digital, print, radio, social media, and TV.

Of the topics debunked by PesaCheck between January 2022 and June 2024, the discourse around the annual finance bill had the most impact. The finance bill has been a yearly recurring issue that has generated misinformation over the past two years. The debate around the finance bill 2024 morphed into mass protests across Kenya in the digital space and streets. This was further amplified by scrutiny around government spending and, in particular, the cost of Ruto's foreign trips to the economy.

The other key topic was the general elections held in August 2022. The presidential election results were disputed, and PesaCheck saw a rise in the misinformation about the tallying of the votes, the

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conduct of the judiciary, and the supreme court decision. The judiciary continues to be a target of misinformation, and bad actors are targeting the chief justice Martha Koome.

2024 kicked off with misinformation around the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), particularly with claims of xenophobic attacks between Nigeria and South Africa following the matches between the countries' national teams. There were also trends in the events surrounding the death of Kenyan marathoner Kelvin Kiptum and claims around Raila Odinga's African Union Commission (AUC) chairmanship bid.

Torrential rainfall in the country resulted in the displacement of people between March and May 2024. This, coupled with the scandal about the distribution of fake fertiliser in the country between April and May 2024, created the perfect cocktail for misinformation. The misinformation included climate-related claims and assertions about government efforts to mitigate this. There was also misinformation surrounding the tropical Cyclone Hidaya, which had been predicted to hit the Kenyan and Tanzanian coasts in May 2024.

Scams were also a recurring topic, with job and phishing scams circulating on various social media platforms. Most scams impersonate major brands to capture the attention of users.

Other than the aforementioned key news events, there were other sources of misinformation, such as altered newspaper covers, fake digital cards with the branding of different media houses, and fake cash giveaways. Altered front newspaper and magazine covers were used to push political propaganda, particularly on X. The local Citizen Digital, Kenyans.co.ke, Nation.Africa, and The Star platforms and the US magazine TIME have become popular targets for this imposter-driven misinformation.

3. Open Web

This section offers an overview of Kenya's open web regulatory and digital operating environment, along with insights into notable demographic trends.

Media freedom and digital rights regulation legal frameworks

The Kenyan media has been vulnerable to incursions on media freedom, with numerous laws that can be used to suppress critical journalism, together with political and economic factors. The country ranked 102 out of 180 countries in the 2024 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index, up from 116 in 2023.⁵² This makes Kenya the highest-ranked country among its neighbours, with Ethiopia at 141, Somalia at 145, Tanzania at 143 and Uganda at 128, but trails far behind the continent's leader – Namibia, at 34.

For the media to be able to report on and expose abuses by both state and non-state actors, there need to be protections available to journalists, including the right to investigate stories without interference. In particular, journalists should not be jailed or fined should there be allegations that they have defamed anyone or to force them to reveal sources.

The MCK, established by the Media Council act (2013) was set up as an [industry body](#). With the passing of the Kenya media law (2008), MCK became a [government regulator](#). The MCK accredits media institutions and journalists, advises the government on media issues, and facilitates dispute resolution between them. Media institutions and journalists are obliged to register with the MCK and renew their [registration annually](#). The Complaints Commission, which falls under the MCK, hears

⁵² [Kenya | RSF](#)

complaints [against the media](#). However, complainants often bypass the MCK and institute legal proceedings.

This complaints function is shared by the Communications and Multimedia Appeals Tribunal, established by the Kenya information and communications act (1998), as amended in 2013. Although it is supposed to promote non-interference with journalists' [freedom of expression](#), the tribunal has wide-ranging powers, including issuing public reprimands to journalists, directing editors to publish its decisions, imposing fines on journalists, and recommending the suspension or removal of journalists from the [professional register](#).

There is also a provision in the prevention of terrorism act (2012) which 'allows authorities to limit constitutional freedoms during investigations into [terrorism](#)'. The law further obstructs media freedom in section 19, which requires people who are aware of terrorist activities to disclose details or [face a prison sentence](#) of up to 20 years.

Courts can also dampen freedom of expression. The provision in the penal code criminalising defamation was successfully challenged in the high court in [Nairobi in 2017](#). However, the [computer misuse and cybercrimes act](#) (2018) was then signed into law. This act criminalises the publication of false information which is likely to harm a person's reputation, potentially silencing journalists and [activists](#), who face a potential sentence of 10 years' imprisonment. This means that public figures can use criminal proceedings to intimidate critics, rather than relying solely on civil punishments, such as fines, for redress. In this way, Kenyan courts have the ability to censor public commentators on behalf of government officials.

Beyond limiting free expression, this law also has serious [implications](#) for cybersecurity. The vague language in the act can be exploited to target security researchers, ethical hackers, and digital rights advocates under the guise of spreading misinformation or unauthorised access. It has been used to prosecute individuals in the guise of [misusing digital devices](#). Consequently, it has created a chilling effect, discouraging cybersecurity professionals from reporting vulnerabilities or exposing digital threats, for fear of legal repercussions. This can, in turn, weaken overall digital security by enabling government overreach while failing to differentiate between malicious cybercriminals and those working in the public interest to secure systems and expose abuses.

Made-for-advertising content aggregators

Kenya's news content aggregation is driven by Chinese-owned mobile phone and mobile phone browser applications Opera News and Phoenix Browser, which collate news from different sources for users.⁵³ These content aggregation websites are created to build large audiences who can be monetised for programmatic advertising, which is placed algorithmically by global marketing companies, as well as by advertising programmes run by technology platforms.

A May 2023 study by the Aga Khan Media Innovation Centre ranked Opera News and Phoenix as the leading digital news media sites consumed by millennials and Gen Zs.⁵⁴

Kenya also hosts a network of content aggregation websites that syndicate or republish third-party content from sources, including state-sponsored or propagandistic outlets, amplifying and resharing to the local media audiences..

They include Kenyanews.net and Kenyastar.com which are news aggregator websites owned by the Big News Network, which is incorporated in the United Arab Emirates, but has Australian ownership. This

⁵³ [Aggregators are enabling independent voices in Kenya's controlled news circuit | TechCabal](#)

⁵⁴ <https://mediainnovationnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/AKI-Youth-Survey-Kenya-Final-26052023-EMBARGOED.pdf>

aggregator network is emerging as a key amplifier of global content into the African media ecosystem by republishing and syndicating content from recognised propaganda or state news organisations.⁵⁵

Inclusion of underrepresented communities in media

MCK produces an annual status of the media report, which surveys Kenyans' trust in the media and identifies the primary sources of news for Kenyans, among other factors. The 2020 report was the latest one measuring communities' satisfaction with the way mainstream media reported on their issues. The following were some of the report's findings:

Inclusion of people living with disabilities in Kenyan media

According to the national survey on disability from 2008, about 4.6 % of Kenyans live with disabilities⁵⁶. They face several challenges, including violence, sexual assault, abandonment by family, and murder. The stigmatisation of people living with disabilities is a societal problem, which in some cases leads to infanticide.⁵⁷

A 2015 study into media coverage found that a majority of articles about people living with disabilities included negative news about them, including violence committed against them. However, these stories also proposed ways of addressing discrimination and exclusion.⁵⁸ The MCK has committed to increasing the visibility of people living with disabilities in Kenyan media, recognising the media's role in changing perceptions of the community.

The few stories that did cover disability were brief, rather than in-depth feature stories. Stories tended to portray disabled individuals as victims, rather than showcasing their excellence in their fields. The study reflected on how little media attention had been paid to the 2016 Paralympic Games, whereas the 2016 Olympic Games had been covered extensively.

A study by Jackline Lidubwi and George Gathigi published by The University Journal examined reporting in a KBC programme called 'Able Differently', which showed people living with disabilities in a more positive light.⁵⁹ The programme frequently interviewed community members, rather than officials, and featured many professionals with disabilities. The current state of disability representation in Kenyan media indicates a need for significant improvement. The study argued that a shift towards more balanced, in-depth and positive coverage of disability issues could play a crucial role in changing societal attitudes and promoting the rights and achievements of people living with disabilities in Kenya.

The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2003 requires TV stations to include sign language interpretation in news broadcasts, talk shows, documentaries and educational content. The implementation of this policy is actively monitored by the Communications Authority (CA) of Kenya. As of the second quarter of 2022, all major TV stations in the country had achieved over 90% compliance with this requirement.⁶⁰

Gender inclusion in Kenyan media

In March 2024, Aga Khan University launched a study titled '*The State of Women in the Media: Coverage and Framing of Women in East African Media*'.⁶¹ It sought to examine the representation of women in East African news media organisations and the coverage and framing of women in top East African newspapers, TV stations and digital platforms. The study focused on Kenya, Uganda and

⁵⁵ [Pro-Wagner sentiment remains strong in Africa | by ADDO | African Digital Democracy Observatory](#)

⁵⁶ [Disability Rights in Kenya](#)

⁵⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/nov/20/stigma-pushes-disabled-children-into-dangerous-kenyan-orphanages>

⁵⁸ <https://royalliteglobal.com/advanced-humanities/article/view/931/508>

⁵⁹ [Representation of Disability in Media: A Study of Able Differently Program](#)

⁶⁰ [A national survey of demographics composition of Kenyan journalists - Kioko Ireri, 2017](#)

⁶¹ [Coverage of Women in Media Study Launched | The Aga Khan University News](#)

Tanzania, analysing content from six newspapers, six TV stations and seven digital publishers across these countries. In addition, it surveyed 190 news media organisations: 54 from Kenya, 55 from Uganda and 81 from Tanzania. The findings showed that women constituted more than one-third of the media workforce in all three countries. In Kenya, specifically, women comprised 39.5% of the media workforce. However, the study highlighted a significant disparity in leadership roles, with women holding only 11% of editorial leadership positions in Kenyan media organisations. The proportion of women journalists to editors in Kenya was lower than in Uganda and Tanzania, indicating that Kenyan women journalists were less likely to become editors than in neighbouring countries.

The Aga Khan survey indicated that women journalists covered a range of news beats, such as politics (47%), business and economics (38%) and topics of the day (41%). About half of prime-time TV news bulletins were anchored or co-anchored by women. However, this level of participation had not been translated into equitable representation of women in media content. In newspapers, male journalists were more likely to cover stories about women than their female counterparts. Moreover, women featured in headlines in only 41% of stories. TV coverage painted a similar picture, with women appearing in news stories on just over half (52%) of the days in a year.

Where women did feature in news stories, these articles and segments tended to be very visible, on front pages or leading stories, across newspapers, TV and digital outlets. Women were framed as heroines, succeeding professionally and breaking glass ceilings; however, they were also presented as victims in one-fifth of the stories. Women were more likely to be framed as victims in Kenyan news stories than in those of their neighbouring countries (9%), but were also more likely to be featured as heroines (14% overall).

Inclusion of youth in Kenyan television channels

Youths and children (aged under 35)⁶² make up 75% of the Kenyan population. Some 52% of youth seek informational content from the media, with 60% of youth seeking news from legacy media. However, according to a wide-ranging survey of youth by Aga Khan, there are gaps between the content the youths want and that which is available.⁶³

The Kenyan media landscape includes media operated by youths, in addition to a variety of programming segments targeted at them. YOUNIB TV is a project of the Catholic Youth Network for Interreligious Brotherhood (YOUNIB), an interfaith peace movement focusing on positive coverage of youth.⁶⁴ The KUTV TV channel is owned and operated by Kenyatta University and is run by students, who also run its sister radio station KUFM 99.9.⁶⁵ Content is family-centred and intergenerational. Y254 is a KBC satellite TV channel hosted on DSTv, Startimes and the Signet Platform.⁶⁶ Children (under 18s) are further catered for in the Akili Network broadcast, called Akili Kids!, available on terrestrial TV. With high levels of blogging in Kenya, youths are also able to create their own online content.⁶⁷

Despite programming directed at, and run by, youths, a 2022 study by Aga Khan on millennials and Gen Z's consumption of media highlighted a gap between current media content and coverage of youths that was empowering. The study found that TV was the top platform relied on for general information (76% of millennials and Gen Zs), followed by social media (74%) and radio stations (55%). Newspapers (19%), websites of the news media organisations (18%) and digital native media houses were not as popular.

⁶² [Out of 47.6 million Kenyans, 35.7 million are under the age of 35](#)

⁶³ [millennials and digital natives' consumption habits and implications for legacy media in East Africa](#)

⁶⁴ <https://www.younibtv.com/about-us/>

⁶⁵ <http://kutv.co.ke/about-kutv/>

⁶⁶ [New youth-centered TV station Y254 is born | KBC TV](#)

⁶⁷ [Participatory Media Cultures: Virality, Humour, and Online Political Contestations in Kenya - Lynete Lusike Mukhongo, 2020](#)

Motivations for accessing news media differed. Most of the youth surveyed (52%) consumed media to gain awareness of current issues, become knowledgeable and achieve personal life goals. Some 60% of respondents sought news content from legacy media. When accessing information content, they preferred entertaining content, even for news and current affairs. Popular content included entertainment, celebrity news, general current affairs and political news.

The study found that youths preferred visual over text-based content. They valued content which they considered relevant, attractive and affordable. Almost half had paid for content. The findings showed that they consumed more digital news content, but trusted TV more. Overall, they relied mostly on TV and social media, with the latter often being the first point of contact.

A key concern of the youth population was becoming financially independent, even among those who were employed. However, youths felt that media outlets did not provide content addressing this concern.

4. Open Social

This section offers an overview of Kenya's regulatory and digital operating environment shaping social media use in the country, and what fact-checking suggests about information manipulation on open social platforms.

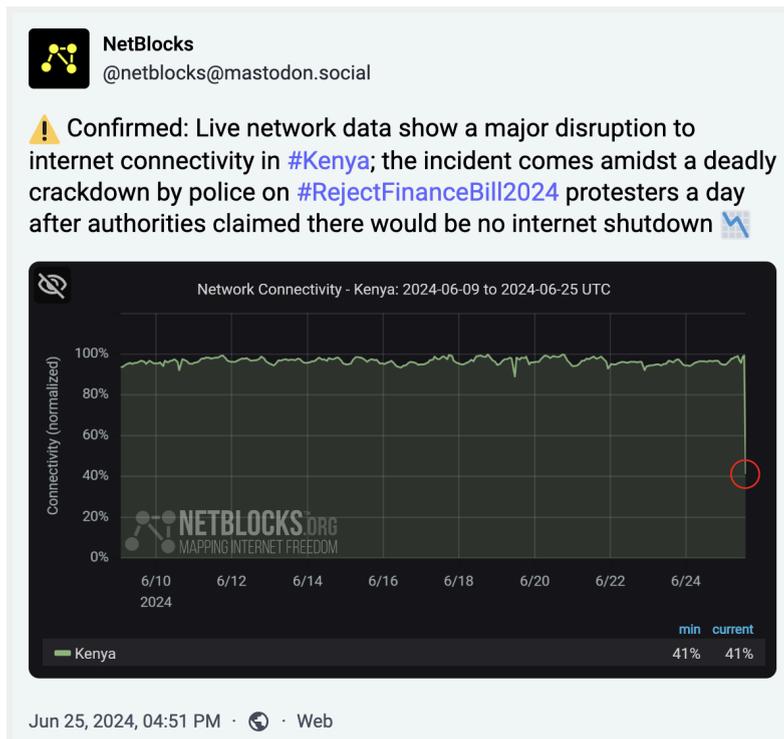
Legal frameworks affecting digital rights in Kenya

The same [constitutional provisions](#) which protect media rights also regulate access to the internet, as per the constitution of Kenya (2010). This includes Article 33, which guarantees freedom of expression; Article 35, which guarantees the right to access information; and Article 32, which guarantees the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

There are no clear legal provisions that can be used to shut down internet or platform access. Nevertheless, instances of blocking internet access have occurred. Despite government denials of a shutdown, during popular demonstrations against the 2024 finance bill (#RejectFinanceBill2024) on 25 June 2024, connectivity [drastically declined](#) countrywide and X users experienced [intermittent access](#) to the platform.

The slowdown followed a 24 June 2024 [statement](#) from the CA to the effect that an internet shutdown would be a violation of the Kenyan constitution. Some telecommunication companies blamed the service [interruption](#) on undersea cables delivering internet in and out of Kenya. However, global internet monitor [NetBlocks determined](#) and [confirmed](#) that there was no physical damage identified on any subsea cable. Civil society organisations have requested that the internet service providers involved disclose who requested the [shutdown](#).

The disruption impacted internet access in [neighbouring countries](#), such as Burundi and Uganda.



An illustration of the network connectivity disruption in Kenya on 25 June 2024 (Source: CfA using [NetBlocks](#))

During the same protests, the authorities [charged the person](#) with ‘[incitement](#) to violence and disobedience of the law’ under section 96 of the penal code for chanting and publishing the words ‘Ruto must go’. The charge sheet, which was posted on X, was filed on 03 July 2024. Although the charges were dropped the same day and 185 people who had been arrested were released, the use of the penal code’s provision to dampen free expression and suppress demonstrations is concerning.

Another increasing concern for freedom of expression is the development of AI and its potential use to [filter social media content](#) on upload. In 2018, the Kenyan government established the Distributed Ledgers Technology and AI Taskforce to explore AI’s potential to enhance the country’s global economic competitiveness and position Kenya as a leader in ICT. The taskforce published a [report](#) in July 2019 highlighting the benefits of AI. According to research by [Data Guidance](#), building on these findings, former ICT minister Joe Mucheru launched the [national digital master plan 2022-32](#) on 12 April 2022. This plan emphasised the task force's recommendations and encouraged the uptake of AI research and development, outlining strategies for deploying AI solutions across various sectors in Kenya.

In 2023, the Kenya Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Society proposed a [draft bill](#) to establish a governing body for robotics and AI, intending to license, oversee, and regulate the sector’s practice. However, the bill faced [opposition](#) from experts and IT professionals, who argued that such regulation could [stifle innovation](#) and hinder the growth of the AI industry. Additionally, in 2024, Kenya [collaborated](#) with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit to create a national AI strategy, leading to the Forward Artificial Intelligence for All initiative. Kenya's National Artificial Intelligence (AI) [Strategy 2025–2030](#) (Draft) outlines a comprehensive framework aimed at enhancing regulatory clarity and ethical AI practices. The strategy emphasizes establishing robust regulatory frameworks and ethical guidelines (Section 3.2) that have contributed to increased private sector investment and improved stakeholder engagement. Specifically, targeted public–private partnerships and innovation programs forecast a 20% rise in private investment and a 15% improvement in

stakeholder participation (Sections 4.1 and 5.3). These initiatives have boosted innovation and market confidence, underscoring the importance of transparent, impact-driven governance.

5. Dark Social

This section offers an overview of the local dark web versus the social space in Kenya, including spotlighting notable mis-, dis- and malinformation (MDM) trends.

The dark web is part of the internet which is not indexed by traditional search engines and requires specific software, configurations or authorisation to access. Some of the dark web provides legitimate services that allow users to protect their privacy and freedom of expression. Examples of legitimate use of the dark web include protecting the privacy of political dissidents, whistleblowers and journalists in repressive regimes, as well as limiting access to medical records, financial information, private forums, messaging apps and private groups.

In Kenya, the prevalent mode of internet access is smartphones. The dark web may be difficult for ordinary users to access because it requires special tools, methods or authorisation to access, such as TOR or Invisible Internet Project (I2P). Although the dark web is commonly associated with illegal activities because of the anonymity it provides, accessing it is not illegal in most countries.

The term ‘dark social’ refers to platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram which feature end-to-end encryption to safeguard user communications from external scrutiny. This layer of encryption on ‘dark social’ media poses a unique challenge because it enables malign actors to disseminate mis-/disinformation without scrutiny or monitoring. According to a report⁶⁸ by the CA released on 21 May 2024, covering January to March of that year, WhatsApp was the second-most popular social media platform in Kenya, with a usage rate of 45.9%, just behind Facebook. YouTube and TikTok also ranked high in popularity. The report⁶⁹ noted an increase in the use of dark social media platforms, attributing this rise to expanded broadband coverage, growth in mobile subscriptions, and various promotions for voice and data bundles by Kenyan telecom service providers.

In Kenya, Al-Shabaab has been using Chirpwire in a similar fashion to that of extremists in Mali, who use the platform to share their activities. Chirpwire offers features similar to X, but without content moderation. Al-Shabaab and its affiliates in Kenya and Somalia use their media arm, the Shahada News Agency⁷⁰, to share their activities. Shahada, which describes itself as an organisation ‘interested in East Africa and Somalia news’, shares updates about Al-Shabaab’s operations in Kenya and Somalia on its Chirpwire account. This creates an ecosystem of accounts which amplify content and draw followers deeper into platforms with minimal or limited regulation, facilitating recruitment and other forms of extremist activities. Al-Shabaab also has another media arm called Al-Kataib, which it uses to publish photos and videos of the organisation’s operations and operates primarily on Telegram.

6. Noteworthy TTPs

This section outlines the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used by information manipulation and interference actors in Kenya, focusing on their strategic dissemination of content and the coordination of their online presence.

[Disinformation Analysis and Risk Management](#) (DISARM) is a framework designed for describing and understanding the behavioural parts of FIMI/disinformation. It sets out best practices for fighting

⁶⁸ [Audience measurement and industry trend report](#)

⁶⁹ [The CA report](#)

⁷⁰ [Shahada News Agency](#)

disinformation through sharing data and analysis and can inform effective action. The Framework has been developed, drawing on global cybersecurity best practices. DISARM uses [two primary frameworks](#): DISARM Red, which focuses on outlining the behaviours of incident creators, and DISARM Blue, which addresses potential response actions.

Tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) refers to the behaviour and methods threat actors use to engage in cyber crimes or malicious online campaigns. Tactics are the objectives the attacker is trying to achieve, using specific approaches (techniques), which follow an application procedure. In the context of online disinformation, these tactics and techniques can be used to exploit social media safety features and manipulate search algorithms to avoid account suspension.

Using the DISARM framework, CfA identified six TTPs used by coordinated accounts and key actors on social media platforms to either evade detection or to amplify the above in a coordinated manner.

a. Create dedicated hashtags

The DISARM framework explains how [dedicated hashtags](#) consolidate and amplify discussions around specific narratives. A prime example is the wave of hashtags used to discredit Kenyan media, particularly NMG, amid growing calls for accountability over mismanagement in the Ruto administration. Between 01 and 09 February 2024, hashtags like [#DearAgaKhan](#), [#WhatIsNationHiding](#), and [#RIPNationMedia](#) trended on X, despite no clear offline trigger. These hashtags, propagated by a network of digital mercenaries, aimed to undermine the credibility of media outlets, labelling them as biased and corrupt. With more than 25,000 posts and a reach of over five million users on X, this campaign used historical revisionism and false narratives, including accusations of NMG favouring the opposition, to amplify mistrust and discredit independent journalism.

b. Enlist troll accounts to amplify narratives

Whether acting on their own (classic trolls) or on behalf of organisations (hybrid trolls), in this context, troll accounts engage in polarising discussions to discredit opponents or promote specific causes. Instead of creating new narratives, they amplify divisive content, making it easier to manipulate and spread. Operating across the political spectrum, they target socially divisive issues that can be politicised, especially on X. The DISARM framework groups the troll-related techniques under the ‘[enlist troll accounts](#)’ or ‘[trolls amplify and manipulate](#)’ categories. For example, X account [@mzclassyohgirl](#) posts sensational claims about Somali individuals in Kenya, whereas another X account [@RevMasmassu](#) advocates for the removal of Kikuyu oligarchs from government while supporting president Ruto and uses inflammatory rhetoric to stir discourse around identity and governance.

c. Leverage existing narratives

According to the [DISARM](#) framework, leveraging existing narratives is a tactic that uses or adapts existing narrative themes. A persistent [narrative](#) on X and Facebook claims that Indians are conduits for politicians to syphon national resources. The [current](#) version of this narrative alleges that Ruto is using Indians to steal public funds, similar to claims that were made about former president Daniel Moi, who was accused of [working](#) with figures like businessmen [Ketan Somaia](#) and [Naushad N. Merali](#) to loot public coffers.

d. Identify existing prejudices

The DISARM framework’s ‘[identify existing prejudices](#)’ shows how influence operations exploit existing prejudices to deepen divisions. In July 2024, Kenyan Somali politician Aden Duale faced [online attacks](#) accusing him of [ties](#) to Al-Shabaab, exploiting ethnic and [political](#) tensions. These narratives discredited Duale, fuelled negative stereotypes, and intensified ethnic divisions, using existing prejudices to polarise the public..

Cite this research as: Amanda Strydom, Dorcas Solonka, Doreen Wainainah, Jacktone Momanyi, Juliet Atellah, Michelle Awuor, Mwende Mukwanyaga, Nirali Patel, Sandra Roberts, and Justin Arenstein. ‘The landscape: Information manipulation and interference in Kenya’, Code for Africa (CfA), November 2024. www.disinfo.africa

e. Threaten to dox

The DISARM framework's '[threaten to dox](#)' highlights how certain phrases and threats can be used to target individuals and amplify harassment campaigns. A notable example is the use of a phrase '[salimia](#)' in Kenya which was used to incite doxxing and harassment, targeting individuals accused of complicity in selling national assets to Indian businessmen. By using this phrase, the campaign aimed to intimidate and silence opposition, amplifying the narrative and encouraging public harassment of the doxxed individuals.

f. Deceptive video editing

The DISARM framework's '[deceptively edit video \(cheap fakes\)](#)' tactic utilises less sophisticated measures of altering media to misrepresent facts or create a false context surrounding an image. This tactic is observed with the TikTok [user @dougner](#), who posted an AI-edited [video](#) of Kenyan senators Omtatah and Nyamu in a fabricated public display of affection from a [still picture](#).

7. Bad actors

This section highlights the key accounts, actors, or entities involved in amplifying toxic online content in Kenya and provides an in-depth assessment of their identities.

Kenya's information landscape is influenced by a number of actors, including extremist groups, coordinated networks, and politicians:

a. Extremist groups

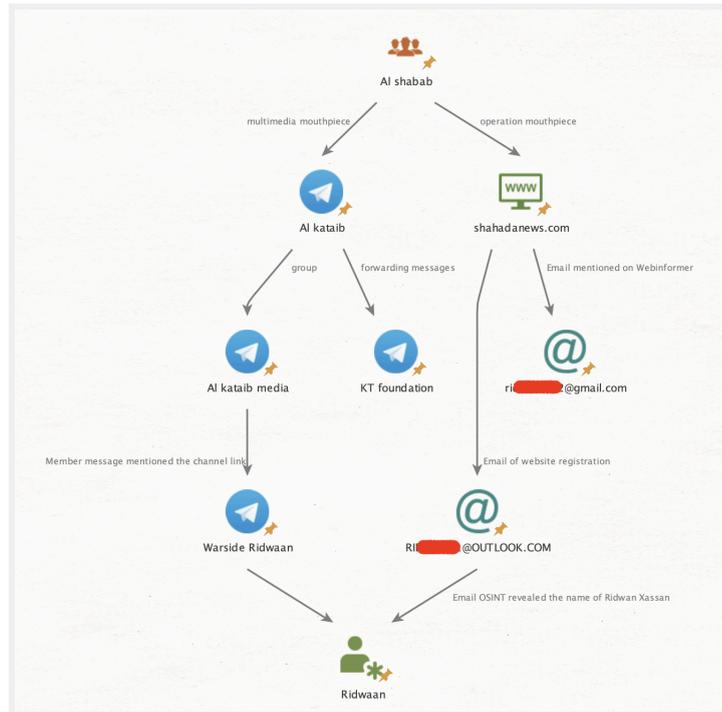
Al-Shabaab remains a dominant player, using platforms like Shahada News Agency and Al-Kataib to propagate divisive narratives. These entities exploit platforms such as [X](#), [Chirpwire](#), [Telegram](#) and [Facebook](#) to amplify their reach.

i. Shahada News Agency

[Shahada News Agency](#) is a propaganda outlet for Al-Shabaab and its affiliates in Kenya and Somalia. It uses platforms like Chirpwire to disseminate updates on operations by Al-Shabaab and other violent extremist groups. These groups exploit Chirpwire's lack of content moderation to publish their content freely without fear of their accounts being taken down. According to website registration information on [WhoisXML](#), the Shahada News Agency website was created on 22 December 2016.

ii. Al-Kataib

Al-Kataib, another arm of Al-Shabaab, operates primarily on Telegram, publishing photos and videos of its attacks, and coordinates with other extremist groups like ISIS. The group's media outlets are connected to entities registered under similar details, showing coordinated efforts in spreading propaganda.



A graph showing the OSINT investigation leading to a key person called 'Ridwaan' (Source: CfA using Maltego)

b. Political figures and digital influencers

Politicians and influencers exploit ethnic and religious tensions for political gain, often spreading disinformation. Figures like Nyali [MP Mohamed Ali](#) use their platforms to push controversial opinions, such as opposing LGBTQ+ rights, which sometimes leads to massive engagement on social media.



Ali's X post during the Mombasa protests (Source: CfA using X)

c. Coordinated networks: Digital mercenaries and troll farms systematically spread targeted narratives, amplifying distrust and misinformation

Coordinated networks of digital mercenaries and troll farms play a key role in spreading misinformation and manipulating public discourse. These groups create [pro-government](#) and [anti-opposition](#) narratives, often targeting the media, judiciary, and political figures, especially through the use of [hashtags](#). Seeder accounts, like [@richestorn](#) (now suspended) and [@mumbi001m](#), are identified as key players in orchestrating these campaigns, which frequently focus on government support and discrediting the opposition. These digital campaigns strategically use amplification techniques to sway public opinion.

8. Digital threats against vulnerable groups

The section examines how digital threats target vulnerable groups in Kenya, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnic minorities, the judiciary, and the media. It highlights instances of harassment, misinformation, and coordinated hate campaigns designed to silence, discredit, or endanger these groups.

Beyond systemic attacks, individuals and groups – particularly ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ persons, the judiciary, the media, and women – face targeted digital threats designed to discredit, intimidate, or silence them. These tactics range from gendered harassment and hate campaigns to the spread of manipulated content and misinformation. This section examines specific instances of these digital threats, illustrating how online manipulation fuels social divisions and undermines public trust.

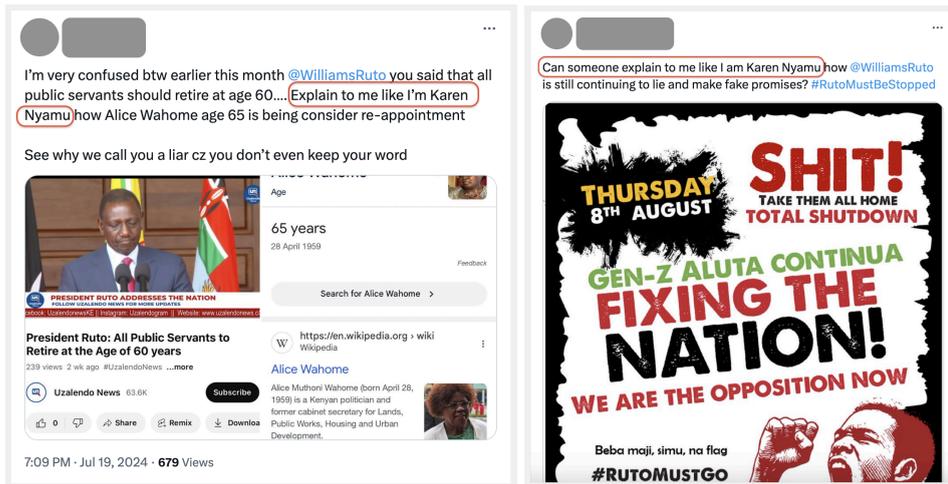
a. Women

Female politicians face gendered online harassment, often aimed at undermining their credibility.

A 2022 [analysis](#) by African Woman and Child Feature Service, in partnership with UN Women, revealed that female political leaders in Kenya face significant online harassment, leading some to abandon their careers or avoid digital platforms. The UN Women report titled [Pambana](#) highlighted that online harassment tactics in Kenya – which included name-calling and blackmail with negative imagery – were used to instil fear in women, diminish their political participation, and undermine their credibility in elections.

According to [research](#) by feminist think-tank Pollicy, during the 2022 Kenyan general elections, two out of five women candidates reported experiencing sexual harassment on X. In addition, 55.7% of Facebook accounts belonging to women candidates encountered online violence, compared with 35.4% for their male counterparts. This online violence included body-shaming, hate speech, mis-/disinformation, sexual harassment, and trolling.

- i. Nominated senator and member of the senate standing committee on national security, defence and foreign relations, Nyamu, has received online [harassment](#), with social media users portraying her as having little or no understanding of how the senate or parliamentary bills work. The phrases used to target her include ‘*Can someone explain to me like I am Karen Nyamu?*’ and ‘*Someone explain to me like you would to Karen Nyamu*’. These phrases have been used since the beginning of June 2024, when legislators were debating the finance bill 2024 in parliament.



Screenshots of demeaning X posts targeting Nyamu ([left](#), [right](#)) (Source: CfA using X)

In November 2024, an AI-manipulated [video](#) surfaced showing senators Omtatah and Nyamu in a fabricated public display of affection. The video was shared on multiple platforms, including [Facebook](#), TikTok, and [X](#), sparking mixed reactions. Some users noted concerns about the video’s potential harm to Omtatah’s presidential ambitions, while others criticised or praised the creator’s editing skills. The video accumulated 1.5 million views across Facebook and significant engagement on TikTok and X. The key actor in sharing this video is [@dougner](#), a TikTok account with 353 followers.

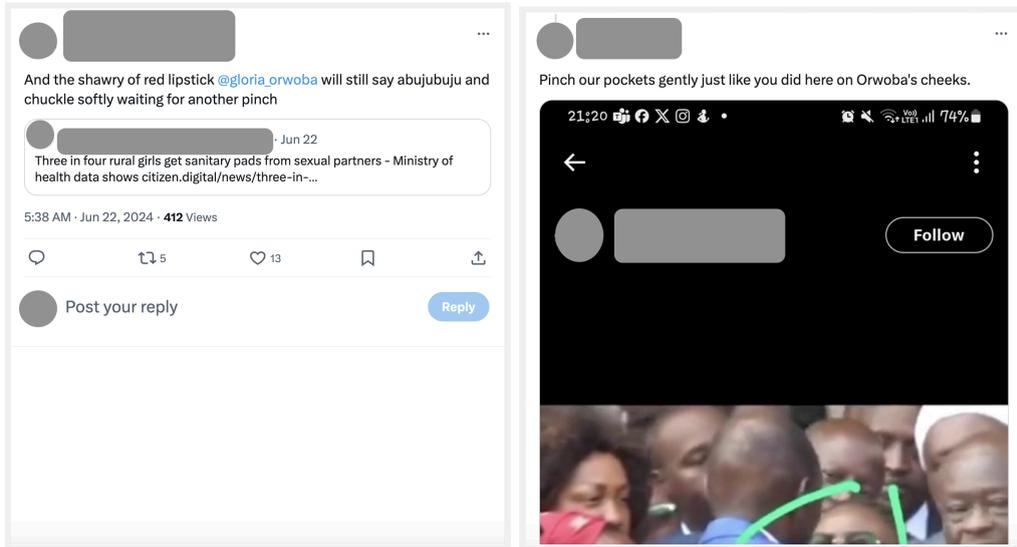
- ii. Similarly, politician Millicent Omanga was harassed on X in June and July 2024. The harassment followed a TikTok [video](#) posted on 13 May 2024 in which she flaunted her recently purchased luxury cars. Users attributed her wealth to a controversial Kes 1 billion (roughly \$7.8 million) [tender](#) the government issued to private investors to refurbish Kenya’s state house. They alleged that the government awarded Omanga the tender. This tender caused a backlash, as some users considered the refurbishment to be [wasteful](#) and contrary to the austerity measures the government had promised to implement to reduce the public wage bill and the country’s debt. The online posts accused Omanga of ‘benefitting’ from the current government because she was having alleged sexual relations with top state officials. On 29 June 2024, Omanga [stated](#) through her X account that she had never done any business with the current government.



Sample X posts targeting Omanga (Source: CfA using X)

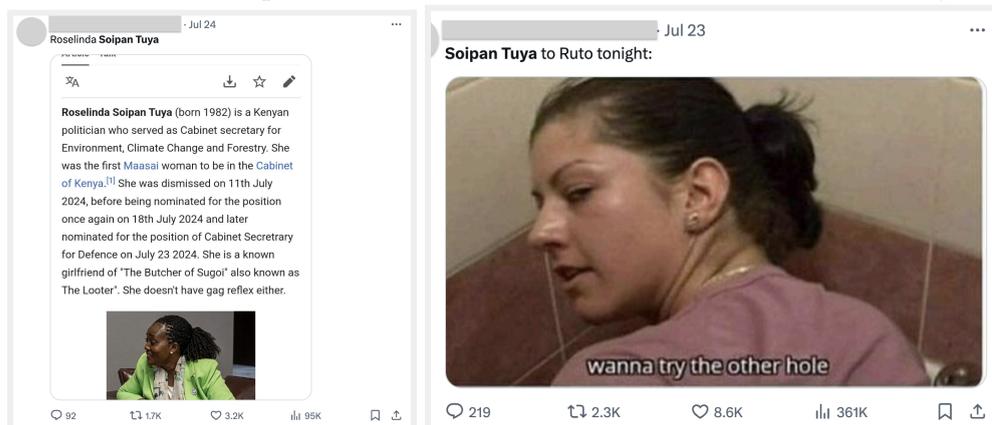
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- iii. Nominated senator Orwoba was also subjected to online [harassment](#) when Ruto pinched her cheeks after addressing the media at the State House, where he had held a parliamentary group meeting of the governing Kenya Kwanza alliance. The senator, who has often campaigned for access to sanitary pads, received criticism for supporting the finance bill 2024, which planned to levy taxes on sanitary pads.



Screenshots of X posts targeting Orwoba ([left](#), [right](#)) (Source: CfA using X)

- iv. In another case related to the #RejectFinanceBill2024 protests, Baringo county women representative Florence Jematia faced online sexual harassment on 23 June 2024 when nude pictures – allegedly of her – were leaked on dark social platforms WhatsApp and Telegram and later to open social media platforms like X. This harassment followed her anti-protests statement on 22 June 2024, in which she had called the [Gen Z protesters ‘lazy’](#), sparking online attacks targeting her.
- v. In another incident, when Soipan Tuya was [re-nominated](#) as cabinet secretary of environment, climate change and forestry on 19 July 2024, she faced online sexual harassment, with users [claiming](#) that her re-nomination had been based on her alleged sexual relationship with president Ruto. There is no public information available to confirm or refute this allegation.

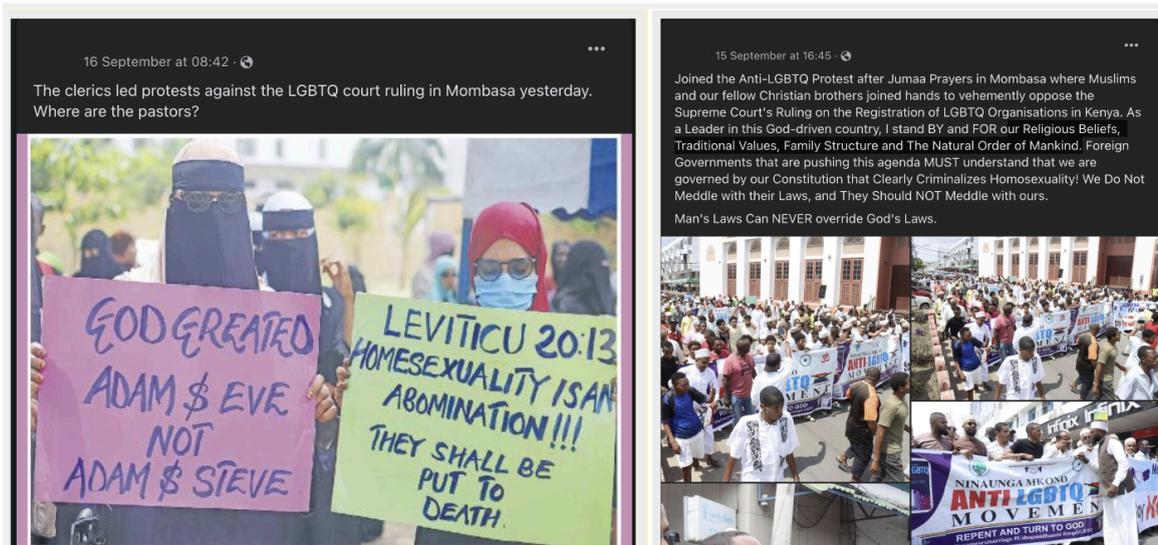


Sample X posts targeting Tuya ([left](#), [right](#)) (Source: CfA using X)

b. LGBTQ+ community

Hateful sentiments were directed towards the LGBTQ+ community after the Kenyan supreme court [upheld the rights](#) of the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, affirming the LGBTQ+ community's right to association. The ruling on 12 September 2023 sparked anti-LGBTQ+ protests in various counties, including Mombasa and Uasin Gishu, on 13 October 2023. [Protesters](#), including politicians like Nyali MP Ali and religious leaders, [condemned](#) the ruling, citing religious texts. They further claimed the ruling aligned with Western pro-LGBTQ+ agendas. While some framed the protests as a defence of Kenyan cultural and spiritual values, others viewed them as politically motivated.

- i. On 13 September 2023, there was a notable increase in Facebook posts about Muslims and Christians who organised the Mombasa county [anti-LGBTQ+ protest](#). This protest was prompted by the court's dismissal of Homa Bay legislator [Kaluma's petition](#), which contested the supreme court's LGBTQ+ ruling. There were 113 posts on Facebook about the protest, with ~27,000 interactions and 32,911 views. This protest's distinctive aspect was its widespread support from government officials, politicians, and political commentators, who disapproved of the supreme court's decision on various platforms, including social media, national media, and vernacular radio stations. Some politicians and government officials also participated in the anti-LGBTQ+ protests. The chief executive of the Music Copyright Society of Kenya, Ezekiel Mutua, criticised the supreme court's decision, [arguing](#) that allowing the LGBTQ+ community to form its association was similar to allowing 'terrorists' to operate in the country.



Screengrabs of Facebook posts showing the anti-LGBTQ+ protests in Mombasa ([left](#), [right](#)) (Source: CfA using Facebook)

- ii. On 13 September 2023, KTN News channel posted a [video](#) about the anti-LGBTQ+ protests in Mombasa and Uasin Gishu counties on its YouTube channel. The video featured Christian leaders in Uasin Gishu and Muslim leaders in Mombasa leading the demonstrations. The video received 3,139 views and 22 comments. Based on sentiment analysis, users had mixed reactions, with some favouring the ruling and others congratulating the religious institutions on their stand. Several comments suggested that there might be a hidden political agenda behind the verdict, implying that the Kenyan government wanted to strengthen its relationship with the US and United Kingdom governments by supporting the LGBTQ+ community.



Screengrabs of some comments on the video. 'Sisi sio wajinga' translates to 'We are not stupid' (top). 'Ruto na Martha Koome ni vabaraka vya wazungu' translates to 'Ruto and Martha Koome [Kenya's chief justice] are pawns of the whites' (bottom) (Source: CfA using [YouTube](#) and [Google Translate](#))

- iii. A [video](#) on YouTube, posted on 14 September 2023, connected the supreme court's LGBTQ+ ruling to Al-Shabaab. A channel called Leaked Politics KE, now renamed to [Kenya National Intel Forecasts](#), uploaded the video, captioning it 'LEAKED! LGBTQ++ RIGHTS FRUSTRATES AL SHABAAB WAVE IN KENYA'. It has received 24 views to date. The channel has 513 subscribers and describes itself as a 'trusted source of political issues hidden from the public domain'. The video argued that the supreme court's ruling could potentially undermine Kenya's security, suggesting that Al-Shabaab, known for opposing Western cultural influences, might react negatively. It claimed the ruling could impact Muslim-majority areas such as Eastleigh in Nairobi, Garissa, Lamu, Marsabit, Mombasa, and Wajir. The video also speculated that the anticipated attack mentioned in the video might have repercussions for non-Muslims residing and working in these areas. According to the video, Al-Shabaab sources had revealed their intention to violate the freedom of association of the LGBTQ+ community. They were allegedly planning to launch an online campaign in the Muslim community as a warning to the government. They speculated this move would result in a reconsideration of laws about sexual identity.
- iv. Between 03 and 19 January 2024, an urgent plea for help emerged from LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers in the Kakuma refugee camp, northwestern Kenya, highlighting their experiences of [intimidation](#), [arrest](#), and [discrimination](#) for voicing their rights. The LGBTQ+ community urged [organisations](#) such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Amnesty International to fulfil their obligations to protect all refugees, regardless of sexuality. The community also requested donations to relocate LGBTQ+ individuals to South Sudan, where resettlement opportunities were available.

It's unbelievable that you have spent almost one month behind bars and it's extremely dangerous for LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers in the Kakuma refugee camp those who were trying to speak up and enlighten the world about the situation of LGBTQ living in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.

The intimidation is too much about our life at this moment you don't know what next because we are living here day and night even the UNHCR left us behind they don't want to care about LGBTQ anymore. We are coming here to seek protection not to be arrested for no reason because of fighting for our rights and freedom we are ending up in the police court or prison.

I'm calling upon all human rights organizations and human rights defenders in the entire world to come and intervene in our situation because we don't know what next.

Please we pledge your advocacy and create more awareness.

outreach.faith/2023/12/in-ken...

Love+solidarity 🇺🇸🇧🇪

[@UNHumanRights](#) [@Refugees](#) [@amnesty](#) [@UNGeneva](#)

As we open the new year, we would like to bring to your attention the distressing situation unfolding in Kakuma camp. Reports show LGBTQ+ asylum seekers who have been living in Kakuma camp, continue to face the harsh realities of assault, discrimination, and forced displacement. Their plight persists, overshadowed by the noise of the festive holidays, ongoing genocide in DRC, Darfur, Gaza and assault on gay activists in the region but the urgency of their situation remains unchanged. This situation is troubling and it demands our immediate attention. The very individuals seeking refuge and protection, fleeing persecution from neighboring countries are being subjected to persecution and danger within the confines of what should be a refuge. This year, stakeholders should ensure enhanced protection of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers in the camp.

[@UNHumanRights](#)
[@UnKenya](#)

3:33 PM · Jan 4, 2024 · 3,916 Views

*Sample X posts about the injustices faced by the LGBTQ+ community in the Kakuma refugee camp (top, bottom)
(Source: CfA using X)*

- v. On 05 March 2024, discussions focusing on the community's [urgent](#) need for safety, food, and supplies increased. Advocates continued to call for action to [ensure](#) the camp is a safe space for all refugees, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- vi. From 30 April to 01 May 2024, some posts reiterated concerns about the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals in Kakuma, mentioning incidents such as the [burning](#) of their homes and a lack of support from the Kenyan government and UNHCR. The community called for [urgent](#) assistance and attention to their plight.
- vii. Between 03 and 19 June 2024, a wave of retweets emerged, directing attention to a [fundraiser](#) aimed at supporting LGBTQ+ individuals to escape Kakuma. An X user reported the fundraiser to be 31% fulfilled, and made a [call](#) for others to share the post to increase visibility of the fundraiser or to donate money.

c. Ethnic minorities

Cite this research as: Amanda Strydom, Dorcas Solonka, Doreen Wainainah, Jacktone Momanyi, Juliet Atellah, Michelle Awuor, Mwende Mukwanyaga, Nirali Patel, Sandra Roberts, and Justin Arenstein. 'The landscape: Information manipulation and interference in Kenya', Code for Africa (CfA), November 2024. www.disinfo.africa

Ethnic minorities in Kenya frequently face targeted digital attacks, often rooted in longstanding socio-political tensions. Online platforms have become battlegrounds for spreading hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation, particularly against communities such as Somalis and Indians. These narratives often frame Somali politicians as linked to extremist groups like Al-Shabaab, while Indian businesspeople are accused of facilitating political corruption. Such digital attacks fuel discrimination and contribute to real-world marginalisation and hostility.

1. Somalis face prejudicial accusations

Kenyan Somali politicians have been increasingly subjected to [online attacks](#) fuelled by ethnic and political tensions. These politicians often become targets of cyberbullying, hate speech, and mis-/disinformation campaigns on social media platforms. The online narratives frequently involve accusations of affiliations with Al-Shabaab, which has been responsible for numerous attacks in Kenya. For example, in July 2024, accounts on X criticised the announcement of former defence cabinet secretary Duale, who is of Somali origin, as the environment cabinet secretary. This narrative received 1,040 mentions and 84,111 views. The sentiments were negative, accusing Duale of having connections to Al-Shabaab and failing to protect Kenya from extremism.

The following is a summary of the narratives being constructed on social media:

- a. **Allegations of financing Al-Shabaab:** Some posts [suggested](#) that Duale was one of the [financiers](#) of attacks carried out by Al-Shabaab against the police and the military.
- b. **Claims of prior knowledge:** Several users recalled that Duale had [promised](#) to reveal Al-Shabaab's financiers after the Garissa University attack in April 2015. However, they claimed he had failed to keep this promise and undermined security measures, such as the security wall on the Somalia border.
- c. **Criticism of Duale's role:** Some posts criticised Duale for reportedly overstepping his role and [clashing](#) with other government officials, leaving the country's borders vulnerable. They also suggested that his actions as defence cabinet secretary were about political manoeuvrings rather than effectively combating extremism.
- d. **Claims of sympathising with extremists:** Additional allegations suggested that Duale condemned military operations against Al-Shabaab and that he might be [sympathetic](#) to their cause, given his alleged connections.
- e. **Political tension:** There were posts suggesting that Duale's perceived political manipulation and his [influence](#) within the powerful Somali Ogaden clan were intertwined with his links to extremist groups.
- f. **Somalis are moving money for Al-Shabaab in Kenya:** Economic factors, ethnic tensions, and security concerns influence this perception. This suspicion is mainly directed towards the Hawala system, an informal funds transfer system traditionally used by Somalis, which allows for shifting money from one person to another without the physical movement of cash. Despite its efficiency and significance for the Somali diaspora, [Hawala](#) is often perceived as opaque and vulnerable to exploitation by extremist organisations. In response to these concerns, Kenyan authorities have increased [regulatory scrutiny](#) and occasionally cracked down on Hawala operators. For example, in 2015, the government temporarily [froze](#) the accounts of 13 Somali money transfer companies because of concerns about financing extremist groups. Although these measures aimed to prevent the funding of violent extremist activities, they also had adverse effects on the Somali community, which relies on these financial networks for everyday necessities, such as supporting family members and conducting business.

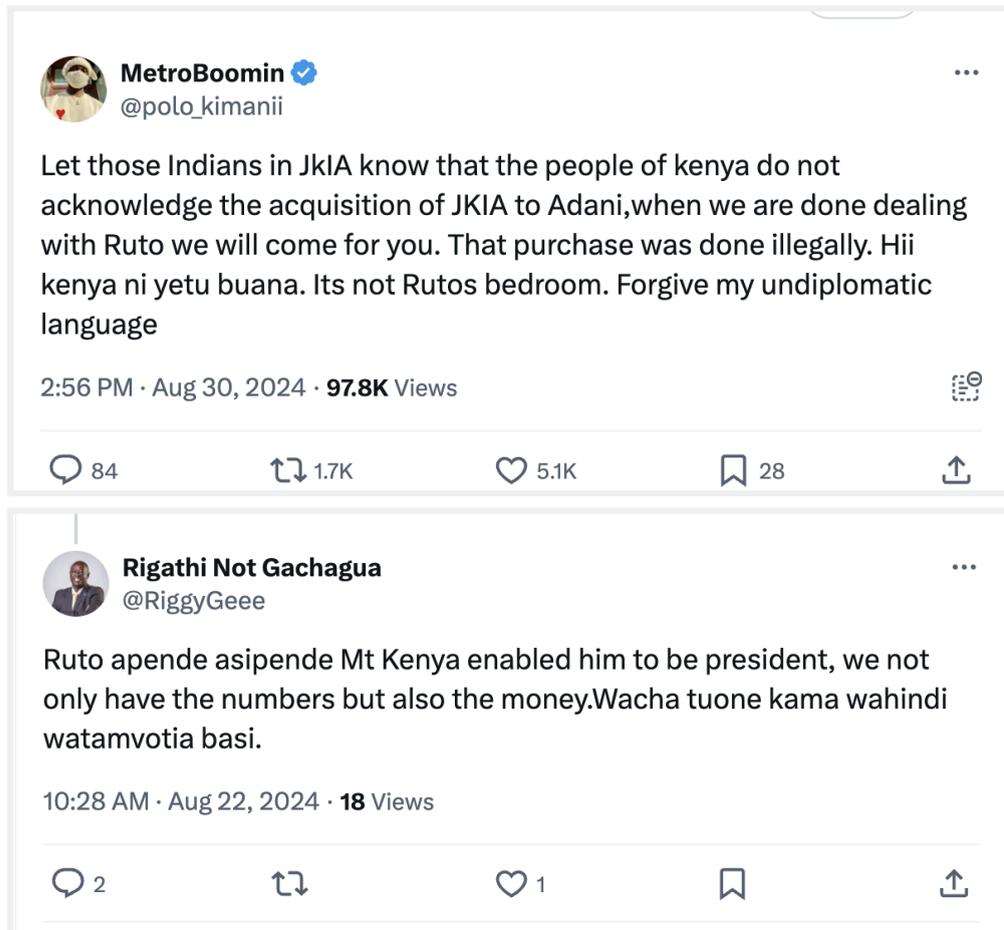


Screengrabs of X posts highlighting Somalis moving money to Kenya ([top](#), [bottom](#)) (Source: CfA using X)

2. Indians experience hate speech following Adani deals

There was an increase in hateful narratives directed towards the Indian community in Kenya following whistleblower [reports](#) that the Kenyan government planned to lease the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) to an Indian firm, [Adani Group](#). According to [documents](#) obtained by the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), Adani submitted a privately initiated proposal (PIP) in March 2024 for a 30-year concession to expand and operate the airport under a ‘build, operate, transfer’ arrangement.

- i. On 30 August 2024, an X [post](#) warned Indian workers at JKIA that Kenyans did not acknowledge the Adani PIP and threatened that, once they had concluded dealing with Ruto, they would come for the Indians. A comment on this post suggested that, once ‘we get there’, Indians would seek refuge in Parklands, a neighbourhood in Nairobi that is predominantly inhabited by the Indian community.
- ii. On the same day, another X [post](#) said, ‘So JKIA staff just sat by & watched as the govt sell their livelihoods to foreigners. Do they expect Gen Zs to go and protest for them or what? Soon you’ll start seeing Indian pilots & workers in JKIA. Sometimes you deserve what you get. You’ll soon join the jobless youth. #Adani’. Various posts accused Ruto of [selling](#) national assets to Indians while threatening to ‘salimia’ those Indians. ‘Salimia’ translates to ‘say hi’ or, in this context, to ‘doxx them’. This [phrase](#) is used in Kenya to target individuals accused of complicity in bad governance. Between 19 and 30 August 2024, there were 1,624 mentions of Indians and the Adani deal on X, resulting in 56,800 engagements and 147,000 views.



Screenshots of X posts spreading hateful content against Indians in Kenya ([top](#), [bottom](#)) (Source: CfA using X)

- iii. Following the [rollout](#) of the Social Health Insurance Fund (SHIF) to replace its predecessor, the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), and the establishment of the Social Health Authority (SHA), online conversations claimed that Ruto was [conspiring](#) with Indians to steal public resources. Notably, some of the Indians mentioned include the [Jayesh Saini family](#), which runs the Nairobi West Hospital and the Bliss Healthcare chain of hospitals, and Adil Arshed Khawaja, the [Safaricom board chairman](#) who is also [accused](#) of having links to Adani. On X, there were 4,377 mentions of Ruto, SHIF and Indians, which received 17,700 engagements and 533,000 views. This narrative builds on existing ones about Indians [being conduits for politicians](#) to syphon off public funds. For instance, Indian businessman Kamlesh Patni is known for his involvement in the [Goldenberg scandal](#) during Moi’s presidency, and Chamanlal Kamani, Rashmi Kamani, and Deepak Kamani were involved in the [Anglo Leasing scandal](#) during the administration of former president Mwai Kibaki.

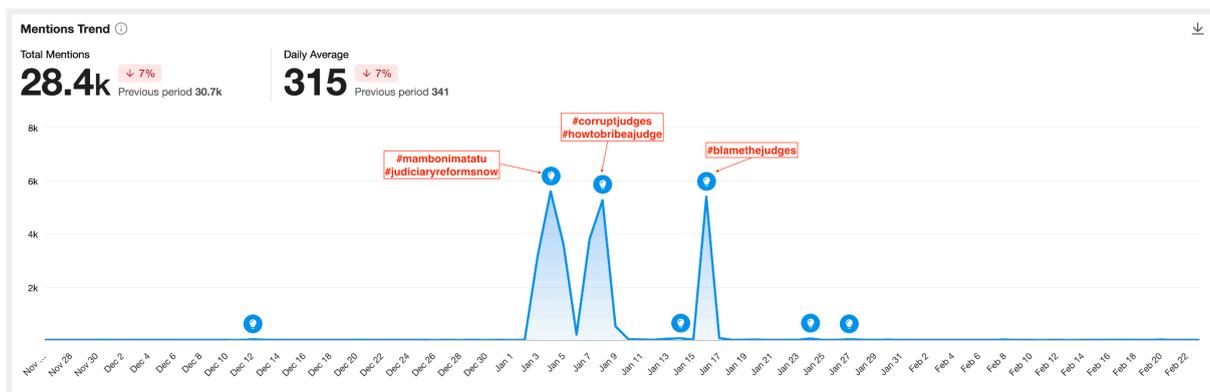
d. The judiciary

The Kenyan government has been criticised for not adhering to court orders on key rulings, such as the housing levy. On several occasions, the president has made remarks disregarding [stay orders on key projects](#). However, before the online campaigns trended, the current administration led an offline campaign against the judiciary. This began with Ruto’s 2024 New Year address, in which he [claimed](#) that the judiciary and opposition were frustrating his efforts to implement his development agenda.

Ruto’s address followed temporary court orders [halting](#) the implementation of some of Kenya Kwanza’s flagship acts – including the deduction of a 1.5% housing levy, the social health insurance act (2023), the primary healthcare act (2023) and the digital health act (2023) – until important legal and constitutional questions had been addressed.

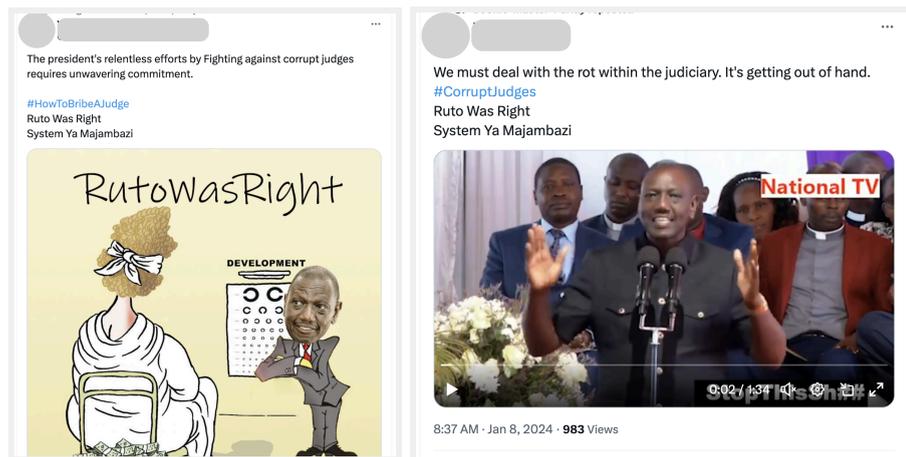
The president’s comments against the judiciary received support from influential pro-government leaders and influencers. In contrast, the opposition, civil society, and the judiciary called on the government to respect the latter’s independence. In a closed-door meeting, chief justice Koome [said](#) that although the judiciary was willing to engage in dialogue with other arms of government, judges and magistrates would not be coerced into giving the government favourable judgments. The Law Society of Kenya organised a peaceful protest dubbed #ConstitutionalSafeguards on 12 January 2024 in response to the president’s comments and in defence of the independence of the judiciary. The hashtag trended on X between 11 and 13 January 2024, receiving 816 mentions, ~2,980 interactions and ~9.07 million impressions.

- i. In January 2024, the Kenyan government faced harsh backlash for its refusal to obey the courts’ stay orders after the court of appeal [declined](#) to extend an order allowing the government to continue collecting the housing levy on 26 January 2024. Digital mercenaries quickly coordinated hashtags and used similar language in their posts, attempting to portray the judiciary as corrupt. Between 01 January and 18 February 2024, [@finestkuria](#), [@kababaake1](#), [@kelitu](#), and [@muthonikate](#) were pivotal in seeding and amplifying the five leading hashtags: [#blamethejudges](#), [#corruptjudges](#), [#howtobribeajudge](#), [#judiciaryreformsnow](#), and [#mambonimatatu](#), targeted at the judiciary. These coordinated, amplified hashtags [began](#) emerging on 03 January 2024. This was not a one-off incident. These hashtags are often posted after court judgments overturning new policies by the government. The policies include the housing levy, healthcare acts, and a suspension of the government’s orders [directing](#) all school fee payments to government institutions to be paid through the e-citizen platform. About 28,400 mentions of these hashtags have resulted in more than 2.04 million views on X.



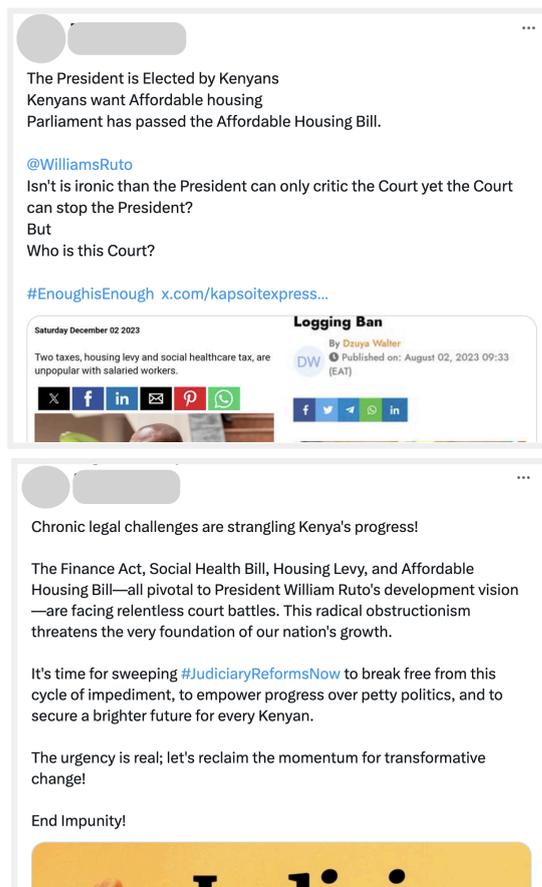
Hashtags targeting the judiciary trended between 01 January and 18 February 2024 (Source: CfA using Meltwater).

- ii. In the same month, posts on X alleged that the judiciary was involved in bribery, sided with the opposition, and was being run by cartels. Several posts referred to historical events implicating several judges, including a [video](#) recorded and leaked by former Nairobi governor Mike Sonko while bribing a retired high court judge, Said Juma Chitembwe. There were 3,750 posts on X spreading alleged claims of bribery. They received 341,000 views.



Screengrabs of X posts using similar phrases but with two different hashtags criticising the judiciary ([left](#), [right](#))
 (Source: Cfa using Meltwater)

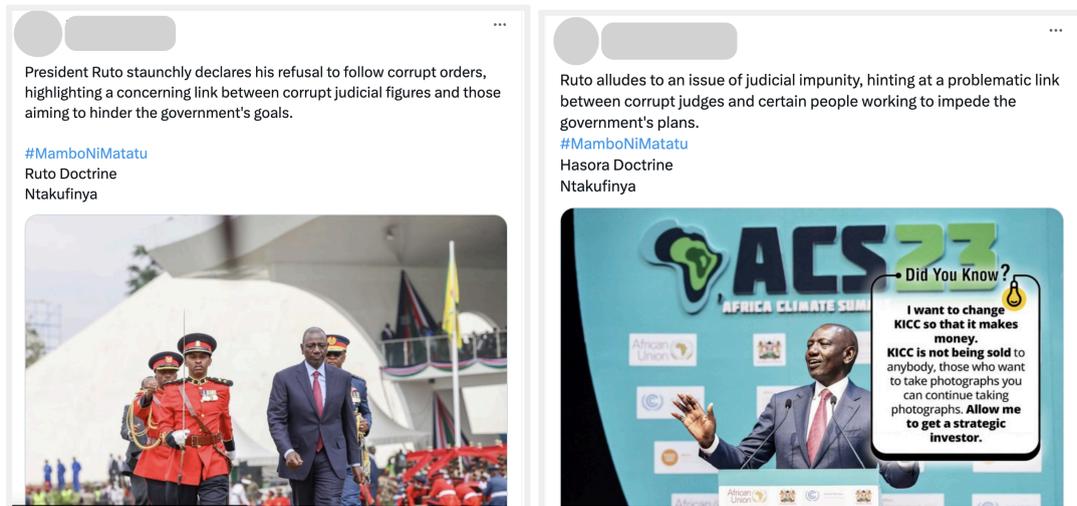
- iii. Coordinated amplification on X targeted the judiciary after the high court suspended the implementation of the social health insurance act on 27 November 2023, barely a week after health cabinet secretary Susan Nakhumincha had gazetted a notice operationalising the fund. The Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists, and Dentists Union obtained court orders to halt the act’s implementation, scheduled for January 2024. The union argued that the government had implemented the act without engaging with relevant stakeholders.



Screengrabs of X posts targeting the judiciary for suspending the social health insurance act ([top](#), [bottom](#))
 (Source: Cfa using Meltwater)

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- iv. There were 427 X posts between 07 and 10 January 2024 mentioning Ruto’s comments about disregarding court judgments with the hashtag [#mambonimatatu](#). X posts claiming that the president would not follow orders from ‘corrupt’ judges, effectively derailing his development agenda, were amplified. These posts had an estimated reach of ~2.27 million on the platform.



Screengrabs of X posts highlighting Ruto’s comments about disregarding directives from corrupt judges ([left](#), [right](#))
(Source: CfA using Meltwater)

e. Kenya media

More than 4,574 X accounts have targeted Kenyan [media](#) as the press calls for accountability and consistently expose various Ruto administration scandals concerning widespread mismanagement of public resources. The network of digital mercenaries is involved in a systematic campaign to undermine the credibility and independence of media institutions such as NMG, RAG, and SG. The digital mercenaries have conducted a series of coordinated hashtags discrediting the editorial independence of the media houses, pushing the narrative that these organisations are corrupt and biased. A network of digital influencers on X, who often label themselves as ‘digital advertisers’ or ‘digital strategists’, has orchestrated these campaigns. These accounts often do not contain publicly identifiable information and have generic names which are not linked to real people.

- i. Between 01 and 09 February 2024, the hashtags [#CancerInk](#), [#DearAgaKhan](#), [#KEBSPublicAlert](#), [#RIPNationMedia](#), and [#WhatIsNationHiding](#) were trending topics in Kenya. This was an anomaly because the trends were not linked to offline events, which often trigger such online discussions. These topics resulted in ~25,000 X posts by more than 4,000 users (including reposts and quote posts), reaching more than five million users on X. NMG, which purportedly portrays the government negatively, was criticised for alleged bias and suppression of independent journalism. It was accused of serving vested political and commercial interests, claiming it favoured the opposition political alliance, Azimio la Umoja. The campaign against it used historical revisionism by quoting from the MCK’s report that the ‘2022 election coverage reveals a bias favouring the Azimio candidate over the Kenya Kwanza Alliance’.



Keywords used in posts attacking the NMG (Source: CfA using X and Meltwater)

There were 391 X seeder posts about the ‘political bias in reporting’ narrative. These posts received 882 engagements, gaining 702 reposts and 52,272 views. A [post](#) by the account [@kelitu](#) and [@Gandalf_vih](#) had the highest views, with 7,217 and 1,136 respectively.



Screenshots of X posts containing claims of NMG’s alleged political bias (Source: CfA using X)

The accounts also accused NMG of bias, bribery, inaccurate articles, misleading reporting, promoting mis-/disinformation, and skewed headlines. The demand for transparency and accuracy became a rallying cry against the alleged dissemination of falsehoods by popular TV channel NTV, owned by NMG, and the company’s journalists.



Screenshots of unique users employing the [#WhatsNationHiding](#) hashtag on X, in combination with the copy-paste technique (Source: CfA using X)

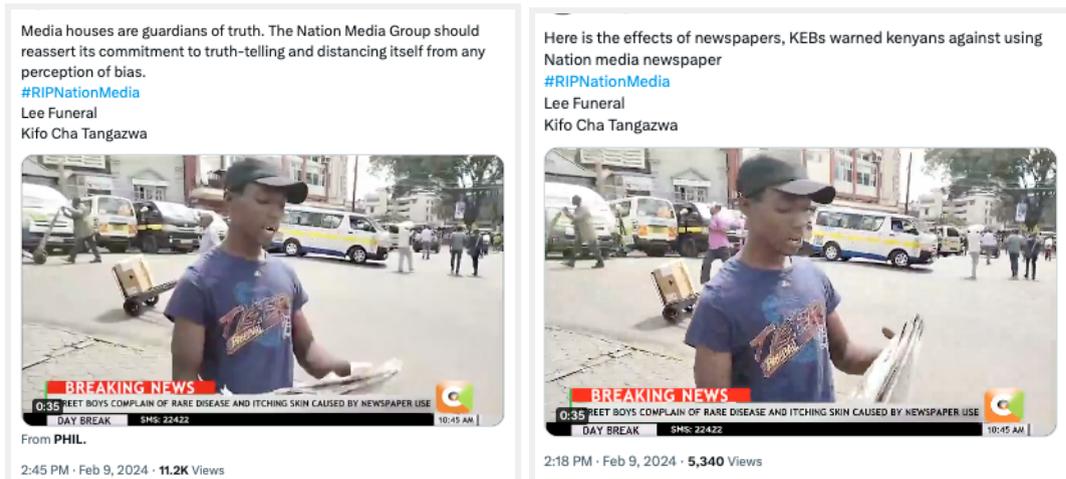
- ii. Between 01 and 09 January 2024, a network of 372 unique accounts claimed that KEBS had stated that NMG and SG were using carcinogenic ink to print their newspapers. The attack, led by X account [@Gandalf_vih](#) as the seeder account, resulted in further mis-/disinformation campaigns against the media using the trending hashtag [#KEBSPublicAlert](#).



X posts driving mis-/disinformation about NMG using carcinogenic ink to print its newspapers (Source: CfA using X)

An edited [video](#) with Citizen TV's banner and logo was shared as evidence of NMG using a carcinogenic ink that was affecting the health of its readers. The video, whose

source could not be identified, was shared on X on 09 February 2024 by [@Phil_kel](#) and [@florenceetuku1](#), receiving 16,543 views.



Screenshots from a manipulated video purportedly published by Citizen TV containing false claims about NMG (Source: CfA using X)

9. Stakeholder mapping

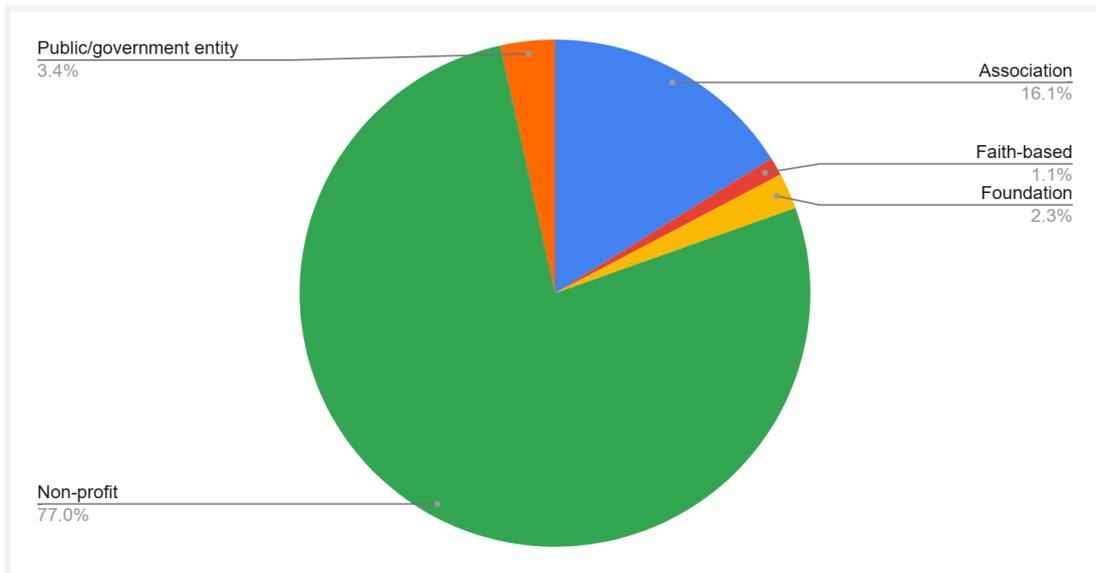
This section provides an overview of CSOs and CBOs operating in six Kenyan counties, focusing on those working to protect communities facing digital threats.

An ongoing stakeholder mapping initiative has to date documented 87 CSOs and CBOs working as frontline human rights defenders across the six focus Kenyan counties. These organisations' focus areas are harassment, hate speech, and various forms of digital intimidation. Most mapped organisations focus on advocacy as their key activity and are mainly concerned with women's rights, serving as key support infrastructure in these high-risk regions.

The highest concentration of the mapped organisations is in Nairobi (23), Homa Bay (20), Nakuru (17), Mombasa (13), Busia (11), and Lamu (3).

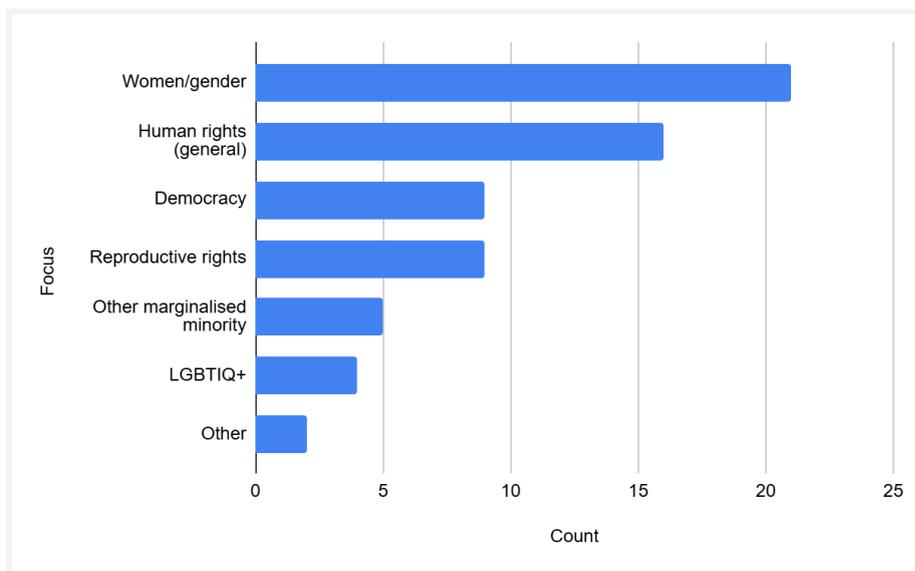
Out of the 87 mapped organisations, 67, or 77% were non-profits. Associations represent the second-largest category at 16.1% (14 organisations). However, many organisations across all types have members. Three organisations are public/government entities, two are foundations, and one is faith-based.

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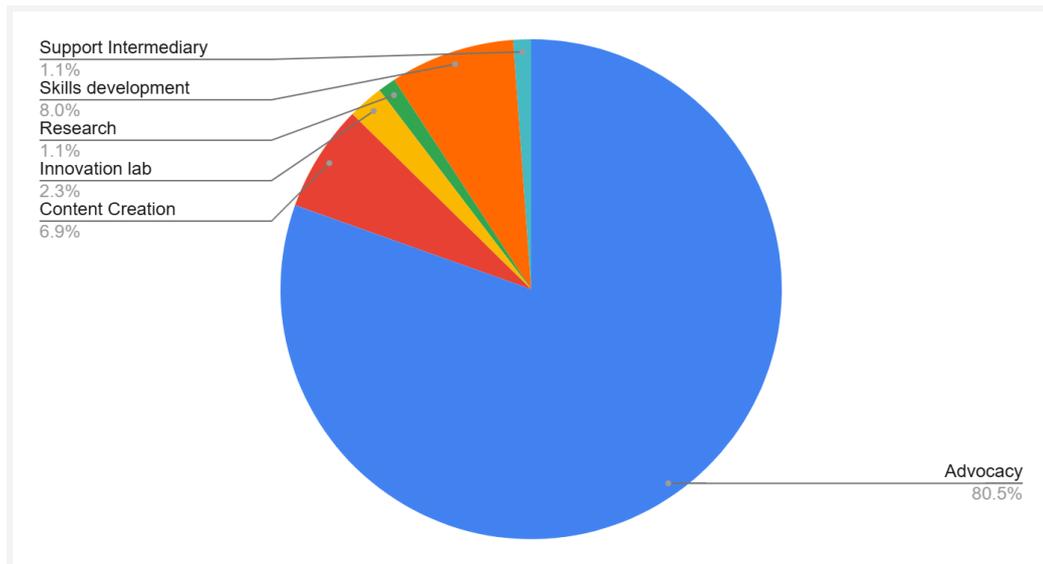
Type of organisations mapped in relevant counties (Source: CfA)

Organisations with a focus on women/gender issues are most common across all regions, at 21, followed by general human rights (16), and equal numbers focusing on democracy and reproductive rights (nine each). Organisations focusing on other marginalised minorities (five), LGBTQ+ rights (four), and other focus areas (two) maintain a presence across several of the focus counties.



Focus of organisations mapped in relevant counties (Source: CfA)

Across the counties, a total of 70, or 80.5% of mapped entities, centred their activities on advocacy. The remaining roles represented less than 10% of the sample, including seven focused on skills development, six on content creation, and two operating innovation labs. Each entity specialises in research and intermediary support (assisting other groups).



Roles of the organisations mapped in relevant counties (Source: CfA)

10. Glossary

This section provides a list of the technical terms and acronyms used in this report.

CA	Communications Authority of Kenya.
Chirpwire	A social media platform with similar features to X.
CrowdTangle	A social media monitoring tool owned by Meta.
Dark social	Content posted or shared through dark social media, which are private channels such as texts, emails, or private messages.
DTT	Digital terrestrial television.
Disinformation	False information which is deliberately spread to deceive and mislead people.
ICT	Information and communication technology.
KBC	Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation.
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. The '+' refers to other gender or sex identifications.
MCK	Media Council of Kenya.
MDM	Mis-, dis- and malinformation. The term refers to the different types of false and misleading information.
Meltwater	A social media monitoring tool.
NMG	The Nation Media Group.
OSINT	Open-source intelligence, which involves collecting, analysing and sharing publicly available information from various sources, including the internet and traditional media.
RMS	Royal Media Services.

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RSF	Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders).
TOR	The Onion Router, free and open-source software for enabling anonymous communication.
TTPs	Tactics, techniques and procedures.
DISARM	DISARM is an open-source framework for describing and understanding disinformation incidents.

11. Methodology

This section outlines the methodology and tools the CfA team uses to identify and map key events in the Kenyan information ecosystem and the actors or networks behind them.

This analysis uses social media listening and mainstream media monitoring tools to scan emerging trends and narratives in the Kenyan information environment. The report focuses on content primarily published in English, Kiswahili and Somali between 01 July 2023 and 31 July 2024.

The analysis team used a number of tools, including:

1. **Primer.AI Command:** This is an advanced threat intelligence toolkit that uses natural language processing (NLP) and other machine intelligence techniques to discover, analyse and report on multi-source data summaries of news and social media. The toolkit interprets narratives, pinpointing influential factions, motives and connections. It has been used to identify Kenyan mis-/disinformation campaigns and their strategic implications.
2. **CrowdTangle:** This social monitoring tool, developed by Meta, can be used to detect trends and spikes in activities on Facebook, Instagram, Reddit and X. CrowdTangle has limited functionality, but the tool enables partners to set up early warning alerts for sudden spikes in mentions on these platforms. Although it was phased out on 14 August 2024, it was used for the Facebook investigation in this report.
3. **Meltwater:** This social media monitoring tool tracks and maps mentions of specific keywords and individuals across various social media platforms. It provides access to data feeds from Facebook (limited), Instagram (limited), X, blogs, online news sources, Reddit, Twitch, WeChat and YouTube.
4. **CivicSignal MediaCloud:** CfA's media monitoring platform was built using technology developed by MIT. It monitors 4,235 digital publications from 54 African countries, using keywords and queries to assess media bias and balance.
5. **SMAT/Open Measures:** This Telegram monitoring tool enables users to access content from mapped Telegram channels for ongoing monitoring and assessment.

The analysis used specific Boolean search terms to gather relevant data for monitoring and analysis. These search terms were carefully selected to capture relevant content related to the topic of interest. Here is an example of a Boolean search query:

(‘Ruto’ OR ‘Zakayo’ OR ‘William Ruto’ OR ‘Rigathi Gachagua’ OR ‘Kimani Ichungwa’ OR ‘Aden Duale’ OR ‘Faraah Malim’ OR ‘Sakaja’ OR ‘Karen Nyamu’ OR ‘Rachel Ruto’ OR ‘Millicent Omanga’ OR ‘Soipan Tuyu’ OR ‘Hawkers’ OR ‘Al-Shabaab’ OR ‘Lamu’ OR ‘Mpeketoni’ OR ‘Nakuru’ OR ‘Mombasa’ OR ‘Busia’ OR ‘Kikuyus’ OR ‘Kalenjins’ OR ‘Luos’ OR ‘Somalis’ OR ‘LGBTQ’ OR ‘Madoadoa’ OR ‘Financebill’ OR ‘RejectFinancebill’)

It is important to note that the general query is used only for an initial search. Based on the results, it is then customised to conduct more specific searches. Although we aim to capture a broad range of

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relevant content, there is always the possibility of missing posts that do not explicitly match the selected search terms. Additionally, the effectiveness of the Boolean search terms may be influenced by factors such as variations in language use, slang or evolving terminology. It is also important to note that the data gathered for this analysis may have certain limitations. These include:

1. The reliance on publicly available information on social media platforms.
2. The possibility of missing data from private accounts or restricted platforms.

*The report is based on insights from Baseline Report Version 2, which includes contributions from Insights Deputy Manager **Mungui Ngige** and Research Manager **Sandra Roberts**, who drafted the media ecosystem sections with support from Data Analyst **Dawit Hassen**. The fact-checking ecosystem section was authored by CfA PesaCheck Managing Editor **Doreen Wainainah**, supported by AFCA Coordinator **Bilal Taïrou**. Contributions to the narratives, TTPs, and actors sections came from Senior Analysts **Nirali Patel**, **Dorcas Solonka**, **Ivy Kemunto**, **Moffin Njoroge**, **Agape Karashi**, and Data Journalist **Nyakerario Omari**. **Juliet Atellah** and the **Siasa Place** team provided county-level context. The Baseline Report Version 2 was edited and reviewed by CivicSignal Senior Program Manager, **Amanda Strydom**, investigative manager **Jacktone Momanyi**, insights manager **Mwende Mukwanyaga** and systems manager **Mitchelle Awuor**, copy edited by **Theresa Mallinson**, **Gloria Aradi**. The research was overseen by CfA iLAB Managing Editor **Athandiwe Saba** and commissioned by CfA Editor-in-Chief **Justin Arenstein**. Drafts were peer-reviewed by Consortium members and thematic experts from research institutions affiliated with the African Digital Democracy Observatory (ADDO).*

Do you have incidents of suspected information manipulation, coordinated influence operations or other forms of disinformation or weaponised toxic content that you think we should investigate? Share your leads with us securely at ilab@codeforafrica.org.



*This report contributes to a growing knowledge base documenting African-focused information manipulation, influence operations and weaponised disinformation. The knowledge base is curated by the **African Digital Democracy Observatory (ADDO)**. The research in this specific report was produced by analysts attached to ADDO member Code for Africa (CfA), including CfA's **CivicSignal** media monitoring lab, its **iLAB** forensic investigation unit, and its **PesaCheck** fact-checking team.*

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