

Population Growth in Kenya: How Social Groups Shape Urban and Rural Trends

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Abstract

This article draws a link between social groups and perception about population growth in urban and rural counties in Kenya. Data indicates remarkable difference on how social groups, namely educational attainment, income sources and ethnic affiliation perceive population growth. Urban counties have more residents with secondary education and above, therefore a majority of them perceive population growth as a negative change than their counterparts in rural counties. Data also indicates that urban counties host many unemployed residents than rural counties who perceive population growth as a negative change. It is further revealed that the importance of political dominance because of the numerical strength of ethnic group in rural counties predisposes residents to perceive population growth as a positive change.

Keywords: education attainment, ethnic affiliation, income sources, population growth, social groups, Kenya

Introduction

Kenya's population is well documented in recent population policy reports and documents (KNBS, 2009; 2019; NCPD, 2017, 2018). The documents are in harmony that against a backdrop of "relatively high fertility and mortality rates" (RoK, 2013, p.8), Kenya's rapid population that began in 1960s would continue with this progression in the future. With the rapid population growth, it is anticipated that the country will increasingly continue to face demographic challenges such as high number of unemployed youth population, resulting to high dependency ratio. It is predicted that Kenya's population "would increase even if [the country] were to attain an immediate reduction of its current total fertility rate of 4.5 births per women to the replacement level of about 2.2 births per woman" (RoK, 2013, p.8). It is argued by the National Council for Population and Development that the birthrate policy per woman will reduce elementary school enrollment with the resulting savings being invested in improving the quality of education and creation of employment opportunities for youths (NCPD, 2013, p.9).

Despite the rapid population growth, the country also experienced demographic transition beginning from late 1980s (Cross, Obungu & Kitizo, 1991), a change that has resulted to alteration in age structure with a large number of youthful working population enough to sustain the dependent population. The rapid population growth has increased population densities in some parts of the country like Kiambu, Kakamega, Vihiga, Kisii and Kisumu to over 500 persons per square kilometer far above the national average of 68 persons per square kilometer. Consequently, these population densities have placed considerable strain on scarce resources with potential political and environmental risks. Notably, increased population density is likely to increase pressure on natural resources resulting to adverse environmental impact such as global warming and climate change exceeding the ability of the affected population to cope on normal resources. Over the years, the country's population has also experienced rapid urbanization seeing almost a third of the population settling in urban areas. Subsequently, urbanization has placed considerable pressure on the available public infrastructure and service delivery, leading to a number of negative outcomes including the emergence and expansion of informal settlements in urban areas, poor development planning as well as an overwhelmed public service delivery system. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 established 47 counties with the aim of "bringing government closer to the people, and providing democratic and development gains by giving previously marginalized communities an increased stake in the political system and by enabling local solutions to be found for local problems" (Cheeseman et al, 2016, p.3). The devolved units were also seen as solution to ethnic grievances fueled by perception of marginalization and exclusion (Aketch, 2010, p.20). Therefore, against Kenya's political and socio-economic contexts, population dynamics therefore plays an important role in the country's development trajectory, and democracy in particular.

Previous studies have attempted to link social groups like educational attainment to fertility (see for example, Lutz & Samir, 2010; Lutz et al., 2014). It is widely acknowledged that in all populations undergoing demographic transition, more uneducated women have higher fertility. A demographic and health survey conducted in Ethiopia established that uneducated women had six children on average, while those with intermediate education had only two children. In a demographic transition, the assumption that higher education results to lower fertility is reinforced by the view that education attainment would facilitate access to information concerning family planning which subsequently reinforce the notion of having fewer children with bright future than having many children with uncertain future. Given the strong relationship between female education and fertility, therefore understanding population changes in terms of the composition of the female population by educational attainment becomes an important undertaking. Because many developing countries have spent considerable resources on enhancing girls'

enrolment rates, the future women of reproductive age would probably be more empowered educationally. Some studies have looked at the relationship between demographic factors and political process.

For example, Wilson and Dyson (2017) use data for 77 previously non-democratic countries for the period 1970-2005 to examine the contribution of demographic factors on the emergence of democracy, arguing that other factors being constant, demographic transition promotes democratization. The author considered the effects of interrelated changes in morality, fertility, population's education attainment and population age structure on the emergence of democracy. More specifically, Lutz and Mohammad (2010), and Lutz and Samir (2014) draw a link between the population's level of education and democracy, arguing that educated people are more likely to be interested in public affairs, thereby participating more in politics than uneducated people. In addition, the educated people are likely to be familiar with democratic institutions within and outside the country. Ngau and Mbathi (2010) examine the geography of voting in Kenya using a case of 2007 presidential, parliamentary and civic voting patterns. They concluded that population's social-economic factors are strong indicators of voting patterns in Kenya with strong spatial correlation in voting patterns. Areas that viewed incumbent government as not having done enough voted for opposition candidates compared to areas that backed the government, observing low levels of representation of women at parliamentary and civil levels especially in Northern Eastern and Western regions.

A majority of the existing studies place less emphasis on how different social groups consider the effect of population growth. Social group understood as "two or more individuals who share a common social identification of themselves or, which is nearly the same thing, perceive themselves to be members of the same category" (Turner, 1982, p. 15), Kenya has many social groups across socio-economic and political spheres organized into; religious, ethnic and racial affiliations, economic status and level of education. This article focuses on social groups as defined by level of education, income sources and ethnic affiliations in the sampled counties and whether they consider population growth a positive or negative trajectory.

This article is organized into five sections including this introductory section. Section two outlines the methodology used to carry out the study. Section three looks at the social groups in urban areas and how they consider population growth. Section four looks at the social groups in rural areas and how they consider population growth. Section five concludes by discussing the variations among the social groups in urban and rural areas and how they perceive population growth.

Data and Methods

The data for this article comes from a study aimed at understanding the population trend and demographic changes in Kenya in view of developing political counter-measures. We undertook this research in collaboration with the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*.¹ The research team conducted more than 30 interviews and five focus group discussions (FGDs) drawn from sampled counties in the months of June and July 2020. The focus counties were selected based on the Urban Areas and Cities Act, 2011 to purposively identify four areas designated as big towns, municipalities and cities and those identified as small towns at least to gain insights on the different views regarding population growth. Nairobi Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru were selected as counties hosting cities and urban towns and Taita-Taveta, Garissa, Embu, Uasin Gishu and Bungoma as counties with smaller or peri-urban towns. Selection also included consideration to reflect Kenya's political and regional diversity and realities of devolved system. Kisumu County, for example, has historically been an opposition stronghold, while Garissa County has been underdeveloped. Nairobi County was selected because it is the seat of the national government. Other consideration included the need to reflect high, average and low population size according to 2019 Population and Housing Census. It relies on distribution of population by level of education, income sources and ethnic affiliations as provided by census data. The census collected data on non-formal and formal school was used to determine the educational attainment of population aged three years and above, thus the data on highest level of education completed. Under income sources, the article uses data on economic status of the population in terms of those who are working, those seeking work and those not in labour market. The data also provides the distribution of population according to ethnic affiliations noting that the five most populous groups in 2019 census were Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo and Kamba while the five least populous were Dahalo, El Molo, Konso, Goshu and Wayyu.

Through referral sampling technique, in the selected counties primary data was collected from members of County Assembly (MCAs) and representatives of civil society organizations. Data from the counties was triangulated with the data obtained at the national level drawn from knowledgeable stakeholders such as representatives of political parties, selected Parliamentary Caucuses like Parliamentary Network on Population and Development, University of Nairobi's Population Studies and Research Institute, key government agencies (the Kenya National Bureau for Statistics, Kenya Institute for Public Policy, Research and Analysis, National Treasury and Planning, National Council of Population and Development, National Government Action Affirmative Fund, Ministry of Devolution, Council of Governors, Gender and Migration).

¹ Permission obtained to reproduce the data as presented in the final report found at <https://www.kas.de/documents/286528/0/KAS+Publication+Demographics+%26+Politics+in+Kenya+2020.pdf>.

Participants were targeted because they were either directly involved in policy formulation or implementation of population related issues in the country. In each interview we asked participants about their perception about population growth, focusing question around their understanding of the salient issues that influence their perceptions. We also conducted five FGDs with approximately six people in the focus counties stratified by age, gender and social groups: level of education, income sources and ethnic affiliations. Our aim with FGDs was to gain insight into how different social groups perceive population group and how generally population growth in each county is discussed. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected, data was collected from a wide range of interviewees including relevant parliamentary and county assembly committee members and parliamentary caucuses. The study conducted regular item analysis to weed out ambiguous or poor performing questions. Two reviewers from the University of Nairobi Population and Research Department and Institute for Development Studies were outsourced to look into draft research output to further enhance the reliability of the data collected. The study also relied on verification of data to obtain reliable and objective information. Deductive approach was used to analyze data using a predetermined structure informed by the overriding objective. The data study utilized ethical research standards such as request for consent and confidentiality of information provided.

Social groups in urban counties

This section discusses the levels of education, incomes sources and ethnic affiliation in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru and Kisumu. **Table 1** shows the population projections in 2020 and estimated population growth of the selected urban areas. The city of Nairobi straddles over a surface area of 696 kilometers squared. This area together with the total number of residents brings the population density to approximately 4,850 residents per square kilometer. The city hosts one of the largest slums in the world and it is estimated that about 22 percent of the city's resident live in poverty.² The population growth of the city is growing almost 4 percent annually due to high birth rates and migrants coming to look for job opportunities. It is approximated that the city will continue on its upward trajectory in terms of population increase, reaching 5 million in 2025.³

Table 1: Population Projections and Population Growth in 2020

Urban Area	Population Projections in 2020	Population Growth
Nairobi	4,734,881	3.92%
Mombasa	1,295,975	3.36%
Kisumu	355,089	3.08%

² <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/nairobi-population/> (Accessed on 14 June 2020).

³ Ibid.

Nakuru	3,883,461	2.88%
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Source: World Urban Population Prospects (2020)

Mombasa is a coastal city along the Indian Ocean. It is the second largest city after the capital city with estimated population of 1,295,975 people and estimated annual population growth of about 3.7 percent. Its economy is based largely on tourism, transportation (port, railway and road), manufacturing industry and trade. Kisumu is the third largest city with estimated population of about 355,089 with estimated annual population growth of 3.08 percent. Its economy is based largely on farming, livestock keeping, fishing and small scale trading. Nakuru municipality has a big urban population in towns such as Nakuru, Naivasha, Molo, Gilgil, Njoro, Maai-Mahiu, Subukia and Dondori. Its economy is based largely on tourist attractions, private ranches, hospitality centres, extensive dairy farming, commercial wheat and maize farming.

Population's Level of Education and Population Growth

Table 2: Distribution of Population by Highest Level of Education Completed in Urban Areas

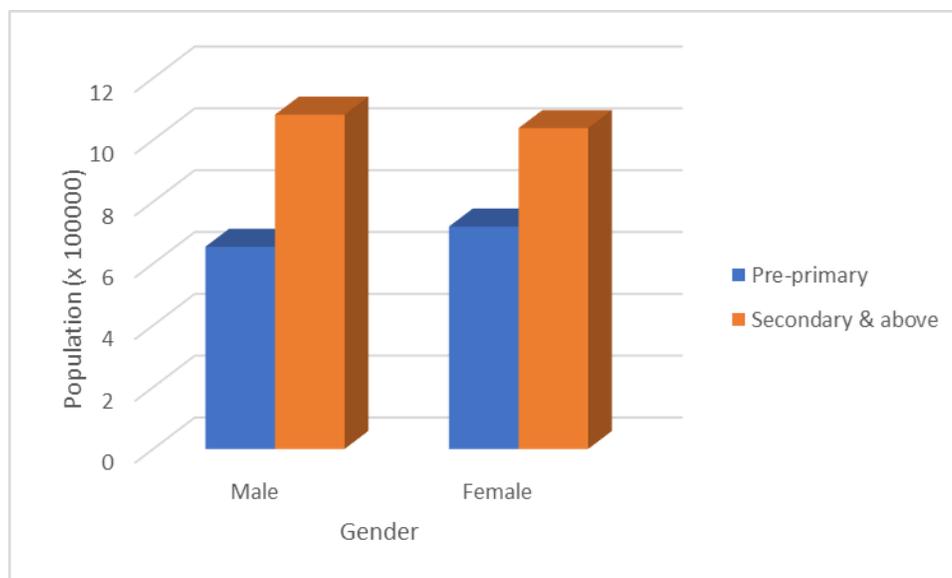
Sex	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary	TIVET	University	Adult Basic Education	Madras
Nairobi							
Male	56537	597904	655589	239880	186181	332	97
Female	58142	661505	629329	260559	148288	401	89
Total	114688	1259466	1284981	499951	334485	733	186
Mombasa							
Male	27062	204322	153058	51168	23574	203	36
Female	28254	211476	128837	50782	16287	216	42
Total	55316	415805	281897	101951	39864	419	78
Kisumu							
Male	26015	227318	118712	34237	21556	179	-
Female	27347	254395	118274	34970	14750	153	2
Total	53362	481724	236991	69207	36298	332	2
Nakuru							
Male	43892	434439	254694	59495	33819	165	3
Female	42520	450066	243730	67932	23976	197	1
Total	86017	884543	498450	127430	57798	362	4

Source: KNBS (2019)

Distribution of Nairobi's population by highest level of education completed as indicated in **Table 2** shows that a majority of people living in Nairobi have completed technical and

vocational education training (TIVET), followed by those who have completed university and coming a distance third are those who have completed secondary education. Those who have completed primary education are fewer than those who completed secondary education. In other words, as summarized in **Figure 1**, Nairobi County has many people who have completed secondary education and above compared to those who have completed primary and pre-primary education.

Figure 1: Distribution of Population's Level of Education in Nairobi



Source: KNBS (2019)

More females with secondary education than females with primary education implies that infant mortality in Nairobi County is very low⁴, because child survival of a parent with secondary education is higher than that of primary educated.⁵ However, others perceive Nairobi as having high mortality rate because facilities in such urban areas are strained by high population and hence high rate of infant mortality.⁶ Also sizeable proportion of female graduates in Nairobi implies that the fertility level in the county may be on decline. It was heard in the FGD that female primary drop outs mostly found in slum side of Nairobi City are less concerned about family planning compared to their graduate counterparts in other parts in Nairobi. While in Mombasa the leading segment of the population are those who have completed primary education followed by those

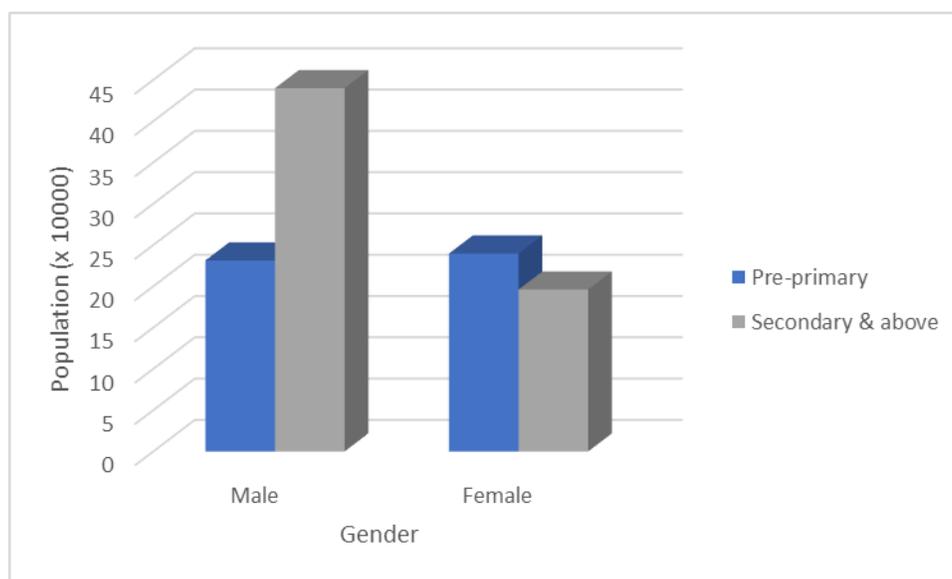
⁴ Personal interview, Deputy Director, Communication, Advocacy and Public Education Division, National Council for Population and Development, 6 June 2020.

⁵ Ibid,

⁶ Personal interview, Regional Coordinator, North-Rift Region, National Council for Population and Development, 9 June 2020.

have completed secondary education. At a distance third are those who have completed TIVET then followed by those who have completed pre-primary education. Those who have completed pre-primary and primary education are more than those who completed secondary education and above as summarized in **Figure 2**. Linking education to fertility, it was heard in the FGD that with primary education many women are not likely to be conscious about family planning and health development, thereby perceiving population change as a positive change.

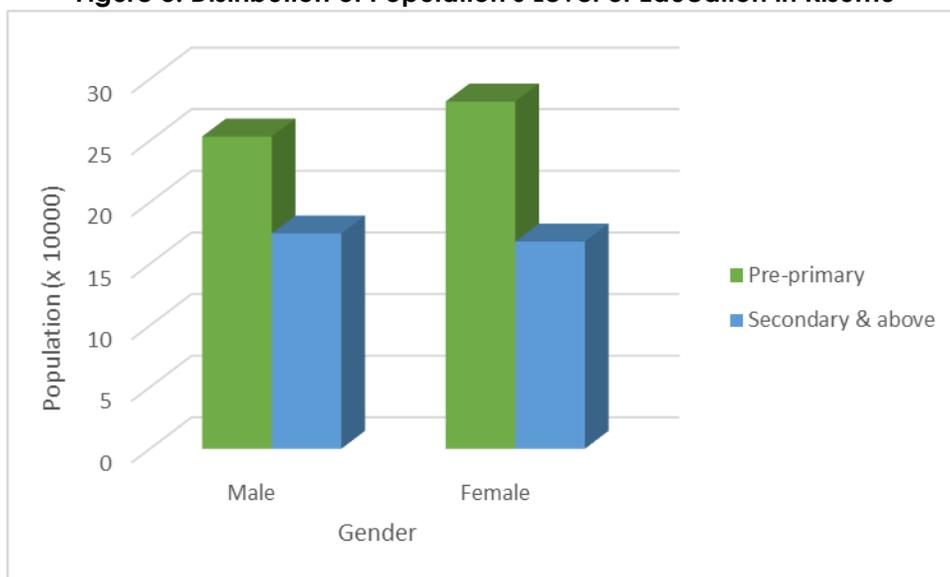
Figure 2: Distribution of Population's Level of Education in Mombasa



Source: KNBS (2019)

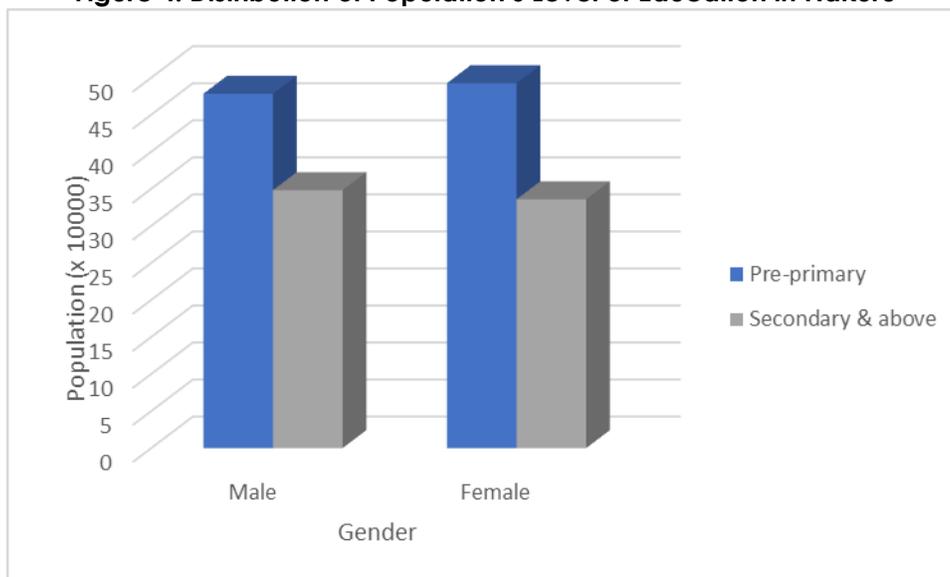
Kisumu and Nakuru have similar trends with Mombasa. However Nakuru's population segment with primary education is higher than that of Kisumu and Mombasa as shown in **Figures 3 and 4**. Therefore keeping other factors constant, Nakuru has the highest fertility rate in all the selected urban counties. Similarly, it was heard in the FGD that with primary education many women are not likely to be conscious about family planning and health development, thereby perceiving population change as a positive change.

Figure 3: Distribution of Population's Level of Education in Kisumu



Source: KNBS (2019)

Figure 4: Distribution of Population's Level of Education in Nakuru



Source: KNBS (2019)

Income sources and population growth

As shown in **Table 3** and distribution in **Figure 5** and **Figure 8** Nairobi City and Nakuru Municipality have higher segments of population working than those outside the labour force. While in Mombasa and Kisumu those outside the labour force are higher than those working as indicated

in **Figure 6** and **Figure 7**. This distribution has implication on how they perceive population growth as explained by a policy implementer at NCPD.⁷

The working population in urban areas can be classified into two broad categories: owners of means of production and workers. Owners of means of production include industrialists, entrepreneurs and landlords, and since they are keen on increasing profit, they see population increase as a good thing since they are assured of ready markets for their manufactured products. Workers on the other hand are afraid of oversupply of labour and competition for scarce job opportunities, and therefore they consider population growth as not a positive thing, after all. Similarly, those outside the labour force and those seeking work because they have no opportunities, do not consider population growth as a positive thing.

Given that all urban areas have significant number of unemployed population, it implies that this category of population is likely to exert considerable pressure to existing infrastructure like health and education further limiting the capacity of the government to offer these essential services important for the wellbeing of a youthful population.

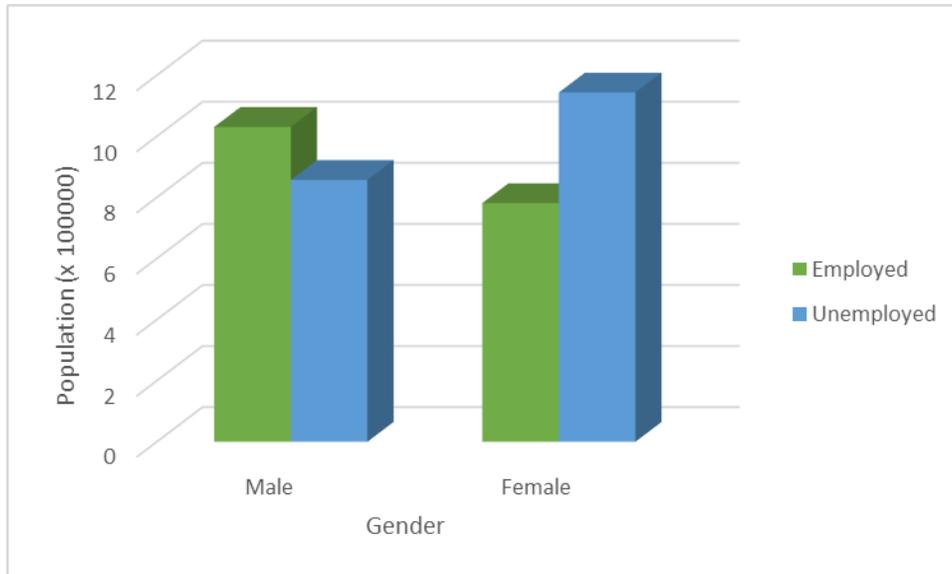
Table 3: Distribution of population by economic status in urban areas

Urban Area	Persons in the labour forced		
	Working	Seeking work/No work available	Persons outside the labour force
Nairobi			
Male	1030840	203434	653821
Female	781389	218822	924806
Total	1812311	422288	1578696
Mombasa			
Male	252197	76485	195024
Female	171233	65453	282938
Total	423439	141942	477965
Kisumu			
Male	86511	14417	83013
Female	74670	14762	105158
Total	161192	29179	188173
Nakuru			
Male	224915	34515	181423
Female	204459	31154	224773
Total	429904	65674	406220

⁷ Personal interview, Regional Coordinator, North-Eastern Region, National Council for Population and Development, 10 June 2020.

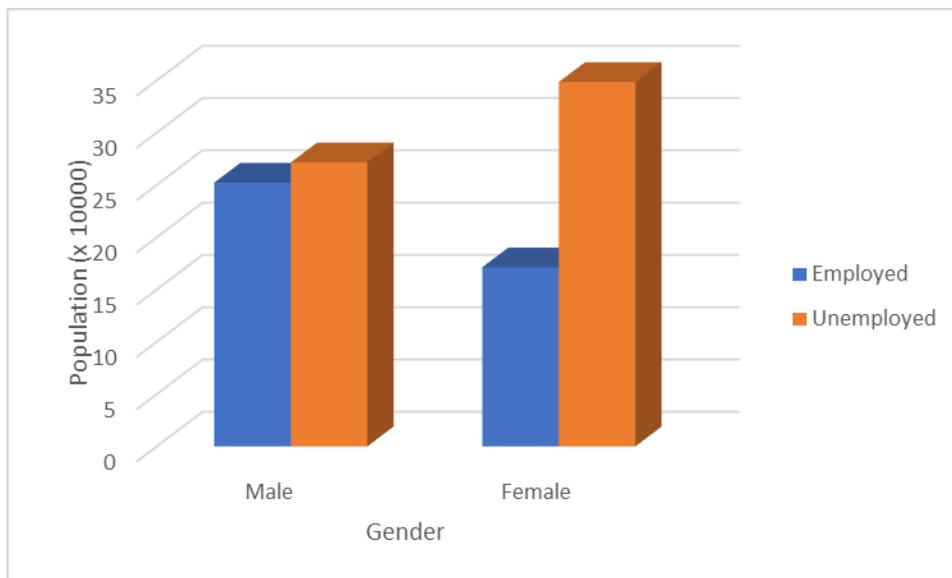
Source: KNBS (2019)

Figure 5: Distribution of employed population versus unemployed population in Nairobi



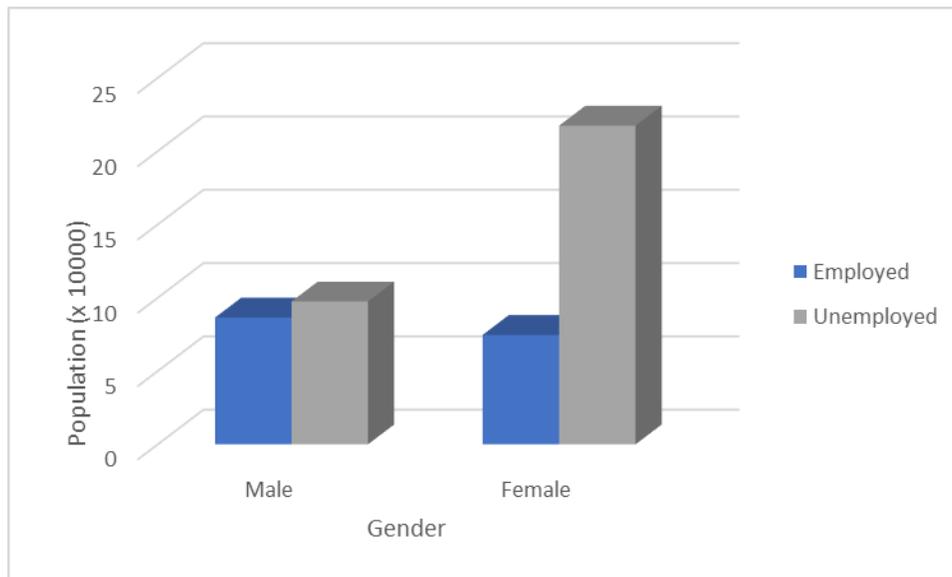
Source: KNBS (2019)

Figure 6: Distribution of Employed Population versus Unemployed Population in Mombasa



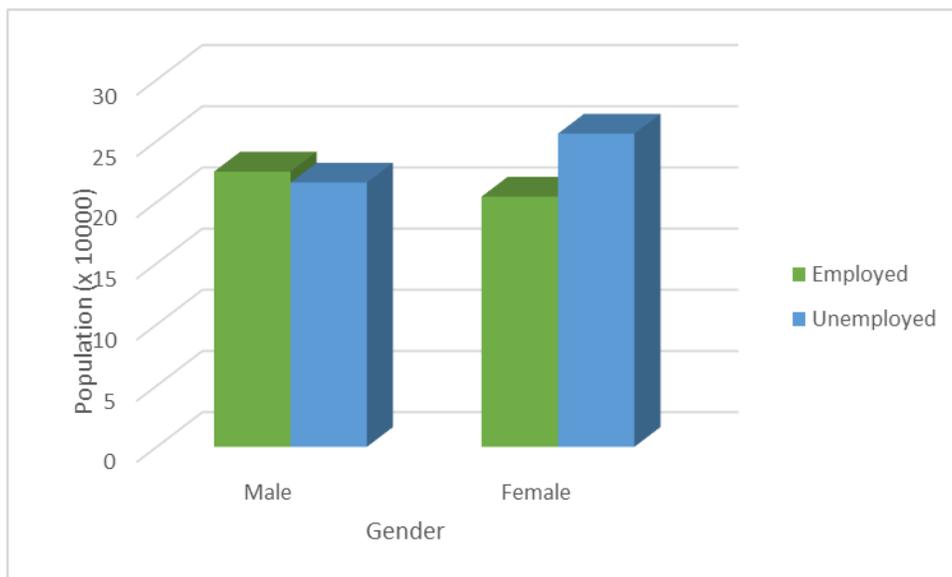
Source: KNBS (2019)

Figure 7: Distribution of employed population versus unemployed population in Kisumu



Source: KNBS (2019)

Figure 8: Distribution of employed population versus unemployed population in Nakuru



Source: KNBS (2019)

Ethnic Affiliations and Population Growth

Although urban areas are cosmopolitan the distribution of resources revolves power politics between the major groups and minority groups. Therefore, how members of different ethnic affiliations consider population growth has to be analyzed through the prism of numerical strength

relative to one another. **Table 4** shows the major ethnic groups and minors in the sampled urban areas.

Table 4: Ethnic groups in sampled urban counties

County	Dominant/major ethnic groups	Minority ethnic groups
Nairobi	Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Kamba	Kisii, Kalenjin, Meru, other groups
Mombasa	Mijikenda	Arab-Swahili, Kikuyu, Luo, other groups
Kisumu	Luo	Kisii, Luhya, other groups
Nakuru	Kikuyu, Kalenjin (Tugens & Kipsigis)	Kisii, Luhya, Luo, other groups

Source: Researchers (2020)

Nairobi City is very ethnically diverse, and major ethnic groups like Kikuyu, Luhya, Kamba, Luo, and Kalenjin reside here. Kikuyu comprise almost 20 percent of the population. There are also Asians, Europeans and Somalis. One politician attributed the high number of the major ethnic groups especially Kikuyu and Luhya to ethnic mobilization rooted in pre-independence politics in Nairobi during the formation of Kenya National African Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) in early 1960s.⁸ The former comprised mainly of Kikuyus and Luos while the latter comprised mainly Luhya, Mijikenda and pastoralist communities. Ultimately it was the Kikuyu-Luo axis that would remain at the centre stage of Nairobi politics following the fallout between Oginga Odinga (Kenya's first vice-president) and Jomo Kenyatta (first president). Since then, supporters of political parties drawing major support from Kikuyu and Luo have found meaning to mobilize people to come and reside in certain areas in Nairobi. He further observed that the high number of Kikuyus in Nairobi could be explained by two factors namely; proximity to Nairobi and the reign of previous political regime. He observed that Nairobi is proximate to Kikuyu dominated counties like Kiambu, Murang'a, Nyeri and Kirinyaga allowing them an easy access to Nairobi. Also, the first political regime of Jomo Kenyatta laid foundation for access to economic opportunities beholden in Nairobi, thereby placing 'deliberately' Kikuyu ahead of other communities.⁹ As the most populous county, Nairobi receives the highest revenue transfers from the national government. Given that the revenue is controlled by the Governor, this increases incentive for political competition among political formations allied to major ethnic groups in the city. For this reason, some interviewed MCAs observed that major ethnic groups in the city tend to view population

⁸ Personal interview, Member of National Assembly, 8 June 2020.

⁹ Ibid.

growth as a positive change to the extent some politicians mobilize supporters from rural areas to register in the city.

The uniqueness of Mombasa City is that in the Island area all constituencies apart from Likoni have a sizeable Arab-Swahili majority. In the Mainland, the Mijikenda are the majority with a strong presence of upcountry communities notably Kikuyu, Luo and Kamba. The increasing number of these communities has not been received well by the indigenous communities. Two facets of perception about population growth came out strongly from participants in the FGD. On one hand, the fact that the upcountry communities are dominating trade and employment and denying indigenous opportunities, the population growth as attributed by "outsiders", is not perceived entirely as a positive change. On the other, aware that the upcountry communities may in future aspire to join politics and protect their interests in trade, the indigenous communities would want to increase their number to remain politically relevant. Therefore, this political argument allows the indigenous communities to perceive population growth as a positive change. There also exists an uneasy relationship between the Arab-Swahili and Mijikenda communities which finds expression in electoral politics leading to framing one group versus the other (CRECO, 2012). Given that hostilities have emerged between these two communities during elections, each group traded its importance to their numerical strength. As such, both communities would tend to view population growth as something positive.

In Kisumu City, the dominant ethnic group is Luo with significant pockets of Kisii, Luhya, Nubians and Asians. Whereas the dominance of Luo is evident in politics, trade and employment, the minorities are equally competing for the scarce economic and political opportunities. Perspectives on population growth differ depending on its implications on the sphere of society. On politics, Luo would want to continue having greater influence over other minorities, and would therefore see population growth as a positive component of the political arithmetic. With regard to employment, population increase leads to oversupply of labour therefore leading to reduction of wages and eventually underemployment and unemployment. Consequently from this perspective, the social group fighting unemployment and joblessness would perceive population growth as negative change. However, within the Luo community living in Kisumu there is a sharp divide between immigrants from neighboring counties and the native. Revolving around the clan identity, the immigrants are perceived as outsiders and largely discouraged from actively participating in elective politics. Because of the threats from outsiders and the desire to consolidate themselves within the political leadership structure of the city, the natives in this line of thought perceive population growth as a positive change. Conversely, marginalization and underrepresentation in the city predispose the minority communities to aspire to increase their

sizes so that they can compete with the dominant group. Therefore Luhya, Nubians and Asian living in Kisumu would perceive population growth as something positive.

Nakuru municipality is also ethnically cosmopolitan with groups such as Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luo, Luhya, Kisii and Maasai. Kikuyu community is the largest in terms of size followed by Kalenjin. The numerical strength of Kikuyu and Kalenjin has given them upper hand in politics, trade and employment in the country. As one of populous counties, political dynamics mirror that of Nairobi County with implication on how ethnic affiliations perceive population growth. Nakuru County also receives the high revenue transfers from the national government with implication for political competition of the county leadership. Comparative advantage of Kikuyu predisposes them to perceive population growth as a positive change since that is likely to guarantee them the control of resources. Similarly, marginalization and underrepresentation of other groups would predispose them to perceive population growth as a positive change in their pursuit to shove their numbers and make them politically relevant.

Social groups in rural counties

This section examines how identity around levels of education, incomes sources and ethnic affiliation perceive population growth in Taita-Taveta, Garissa, Embu, Uasin Gishu and Bungoma. Taita-Taveta is located in the southern part of the country and borders Tanzania and Kwale in the South, Kilifi and Kitui to the East, Makueni and Kajiado to the north. It occupies a total of 17,084 square kilometers and a population of 340,671 (2019 Census). The County has high poverty level of about 55 percent (CRA, 2018), however, it is rich in minerals like gemstones, limestone and iron core. Other income sources of the County include tourism mainly from Tsavo National Park and many animal sanctuaries. Garissa County is located in the lower region of the former North Eastern province and borders Somalia, Wajir, Tana River, Kitui and Lamu counties. It has an area of 44,175 square kilometers with a population of 841,353 (2019 Census). The County has relatively lower poverty levels at 49 percent (CRA 2018) than other two counties in the North-Eastern region and draws its economic strength from sedentary agriculture long River Tana and livestock pastoralism. Embu County is located in the middle of the former Eastern Province and covers 2,818 square kilometers with a population of 608,599 persons (2019 Census). The poverty levels in the county are very high (CRA, 2018).

Uasin Gishu is located in the former Rift Valley Province. It borders Nandi County to the South, Trans Nzoia County to the North, and Elgeyo Marakwet County to the East. It shares short borders with Bungoma and Kakamega counties to the West and Kericho County to its South Eastern tip. It occupies 3,345 square kilometers with a population of 1,163,186 persons (2019 Census). The County is agriculturally rich with commercial cultivation of maize and wheat on

plantation. Maize, potatoes, beans and peas are grown for subsistence purposes. There is also livestock farming for beef and milk products. The County has international airport providing the region with connections to local and international destinations, thereby boosting the county economy by promoting transportation of agricultural produce and tourists. Bungoma County is situated in Western Kenya and has an area of 3,953 square kilometers with a population of 1,670,570 persons (2019 Census). The County is densely populated with over half of the population living in poverty (CRA, 2018). Agriculture is the mainstay of the county economy, mainly subsistence farming.

Table 5: Distribution of population by highest level of education completed in rural areas

Sex	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary	TIVET	University	Adult Basic Education	Madras
Taita-Taveta							
Male	7132	78795	34849	10633	3381	26	1
Female	6997	76855	30620	9418	1950	23	2
Total	14129	156650	65469	20051	5331	49	3
Garissa							
Male	4811	46077	23623	4517	2487	373	57
Female	4039	34106	11931	2398	804	260	51
Total	8850	80183	35554	6915	3291	633	108
Embu							
Male	14254	140996	65267	17115	7882	87	1
Female	13367	132672	66513	19512	5976	80	1
Total	27621	273668	131780	36627	13858	167	2
Uasin Gishu							
Male	22206	223415	134529	39932	26374	175	3
Female	21331	225165	131673	48373	22479	153	3
Total	43537	448580	266202	88305	48853	328	6
Bungoma							
Male	40789	351525	149597	34340	17884	412	1
Female	41716	333661	156117	35243	11108	379	2
Total	82505	685186	305714	69583	28992	791	3

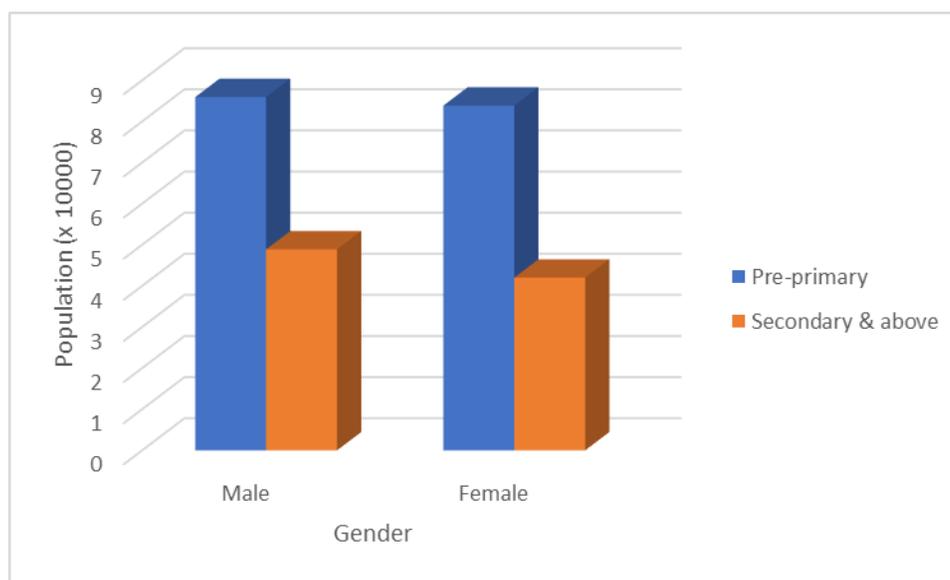
Source: KNBS (2019)

Distribution of Taita-Taveta's population according to the highest level of education completed as indicated in **Table 5** shows that a majority of people living in rural part of the county have completed primary education, followed by those with secondary education and TIVET. There is also a sizeable number with university education and much fewer with adult basic education. The total number of those who have completed pre-primary and primary education is almost double those with secondary education and above as shown in **Figure 9**. Whereas the literature links low educational attainment with high fertility; however reality in Taita-Taveta is quite different because it is one of the least populated counties. Participants in the FGD observed that low population in the county is attributed to land issues whereby a vast fraction of the land is under the Tsavo National Park. The remaining fraction is shared between large scale land holders and residents. Consequently, land pressure in the county has caused some locals to move to other counties in search of opportunities. Given this geographical fact and its potential to limit transfer of revenue from the national government, participants observed that generally they would perceive population growth as a positive change.

A female participant argued that although educated people are more knowledgeable on family planning matter, if this is applied in this county, then it is likely to continue receiving small revenues from national government. She went on to observe that the population of the county would rather continue to increase than decrease because that is the surest way that more revenue would be channeled to the county. That is why politicians in the county have expressed fear concerning the low population. Wundanyi MP Danson Mwashako has observed that "their population is decreasing by the day because women are not giving birth. It is a very disturbing trend", while County Assembly Deputy Speaker Chrispus Tondoo expressed fear that "[Taveta] will disappear, especially if Taveta Constituency is abolished".¹⁰ But the area Senator seems concerned with combating the high levels of poverty in the county arguing that attention should be put on educating "our children instead of giving birth to more due to poverty".¹¹

¹⁰ "Four constituencies in Taita-Taveta to be merged due to low population", 4 December 2018, The Standard, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001294434/four-constituencies-in-taita-taveta-to-be-merged-due-to-low-population> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

¹¹ Ibid.

Figure 9: Distribution of population of level of education in Taita-Taveta

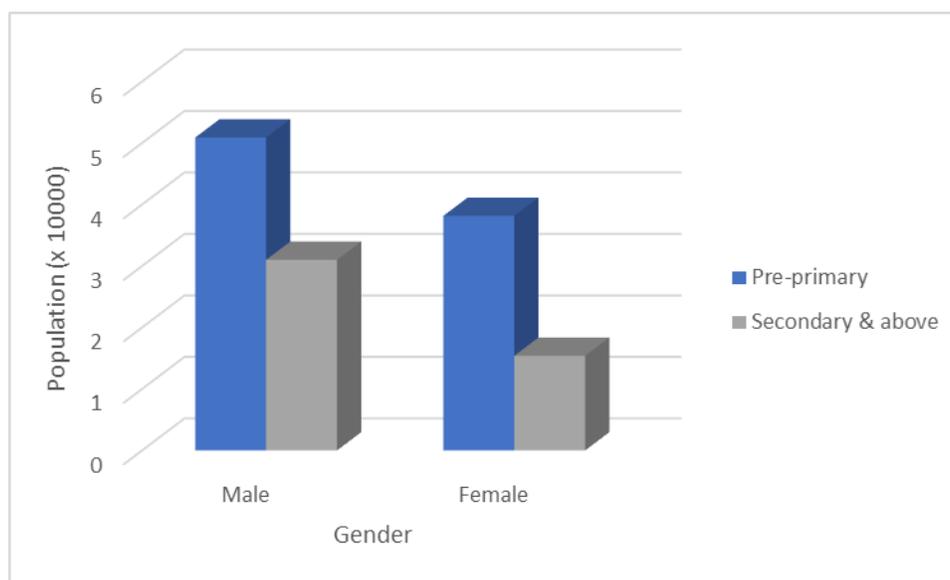
Source: KNBS (2019)

In Garissa, a majority of the population has completed primary education followed by those who have completed secondary education. At a distance third are those who have completed pre-primary education followed by those with TIVET and university education. Those who have completed pre-primary and primary education are more than those who completed secondary education and above as summarized in **Figure 10**. It was observed in the FGD that low educational attainment in the county has attributed to high fertility. Indeed, the population of the county has been on the increase and that explains why the 2019 Census data was almost double the projected population by 2030.¹² In fact participants recalled how their leaders disputed the 2019 census results citing malpractices.¹³ Given that high fertility promises to benefit the county in terms of the allocation of the national revenue, participants believe that population growth is a positive change. Like Taita-Taveta the reality of low educational attainment and high fertility is different.

¹² Personal interview, Regional Coordinator, North-Eastern Region, National Council for Population and Development, 10 June 2020.

¹³ "Balambala MP protests over disputed census results", 29 December 2019 The Star, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/eastern/2019-12-29-balambala-mp-protests-over-disputed-census-results/> (accessed 20 June 2020).

Figure 10: Distribution of population's level of education in Garissa



Source: KNBS (2019)

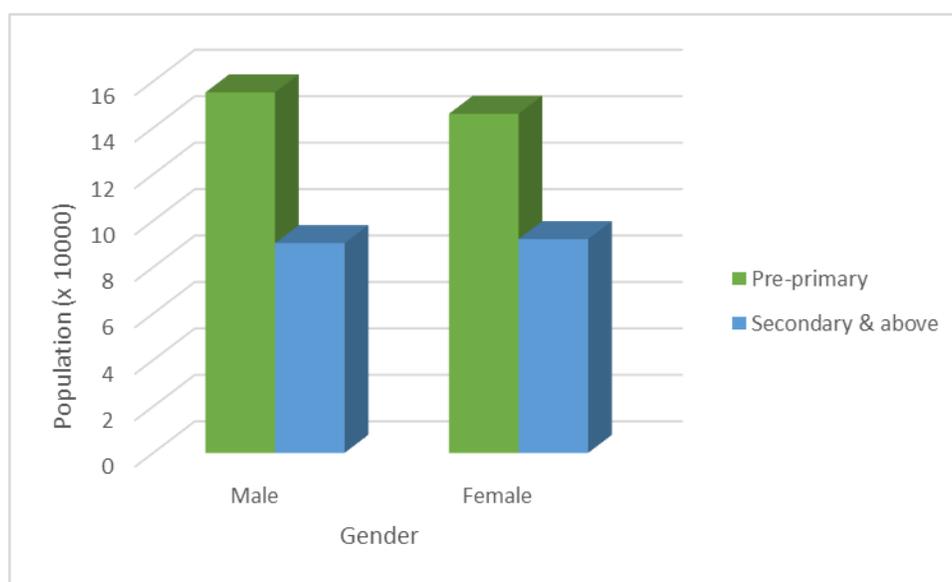
The pattern in Embu mirrors that of Garissa with a majority of the population having completed primary education followed by those who have completed secondary education. There is substantial number of people with TIVET followed by those who have completed pre-primary education. A sizeable number of the population has completed university education while fewer have attained adult basic education. Those who have completed pre-primary and primary education are almost double than those who completed secondary education and above as summarized in **Figure 11**. Embu County Government Annual Development Plan 2015/2016 identifies poor physical infrastructure and inadequate social amenities like schools as one of the challenges facing the county.

Whereas the literature links low educational attainment and high fertility thereby expecting high population, the reality of Embu is just like in Taita-Taveta. Participants in FGD attributed low population to the geographical location of the county, and generally perceived the low number as negative change. Those with low educational attainment generally perceived population growth as a positive change. As corroborated by opinion leader in the area, the concept of family among the uneducated people is different from educated, with former preferring large family structure compared to the latter. He further noted that, however there are pockets in the rural area where even the educated people have more than five children, and this is influenced by other variables such as religion, morality and sources of income.¹⁴He went on to note that the

¹⁴ Personal interview, a resident of rural Embu, 20 June 2020.

Embu people have been bundled with their Kikuyu and Meru cousins and there is a political narrative that they should increase their numbers, thus this narrative tends to erode the influence of education to the extent that even the educated are drifting towards the idea of having many children to meet political ends of the entire Mt. Kenya region. The high population density in the county is mostly concentrated in agriculturally productive sub-counties of Runyenjes and Manyatta. The two sub-counties of Mbeere North and Mbeere South are largely semi-arid. One local administrator informed the study that these two semi-arid sub-counties promise to have high population in future as they have recently benefitted from rural-rural migrations.¹⁵

Figure 11: Distribution of population's level of education in Embu

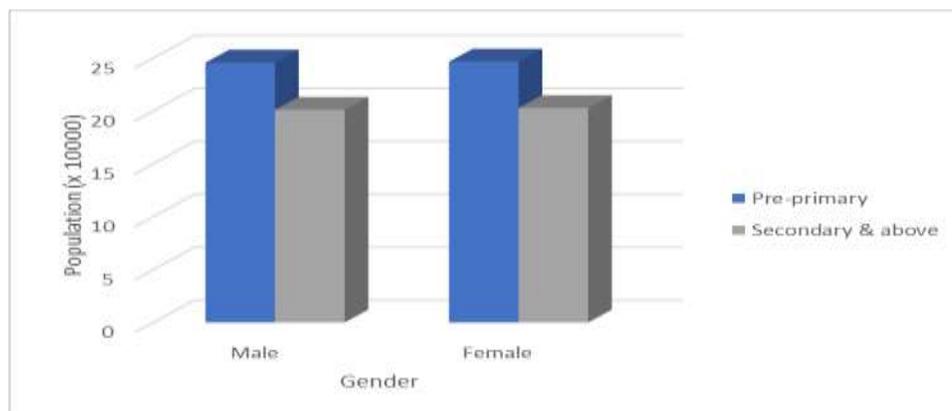


Source: KNBS (2019)

In Uasin Gishu, a majority of the population has completed primary education followed by those with secondary education and TIVET. There is also a significant number of population with university education followed by those with pre-primary education. Those who have completed pre-primary and primary education is slightly ahead of those who have completed secondary education and above as summarized in **Figure 12**. High transition rate from primary to secondary in Uasin Gishu has been attributed to the implementation of subsidized education (Magak et al., 2014). Perspectives from both segments of the population indicate that they perceive population growth as a positive change, even though those with secondary education and above especially the graduate tend to have the opposite view.

¹⁵ Personal interview, Local Administrator, Embu County, 18 June 2020.

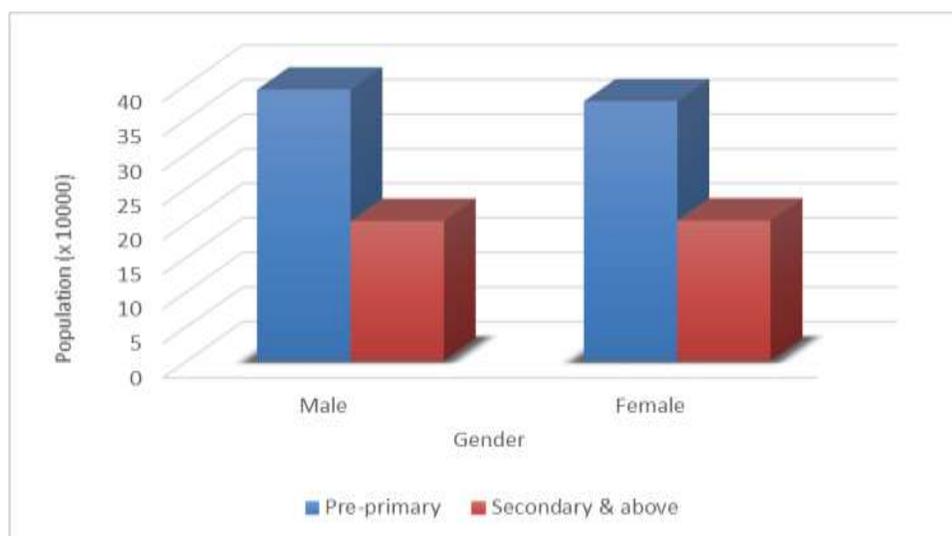
Figure 12: Distribution of population's level of education in Uasin Gishu



Source: KNBS (2019)

In Bungoma County, a majority of population have completed primary education followed by those with secondary education. At third distance are those who have completed pre-primary education followed by TIVET and university education. As indicated in **Figure 13** the number of those with pre-primary and primary education almost quadruples that of secondary and above. This high number of people with primary education explains why Bungoma County is one of the populous rural counties. Participants in the FGD reported that a majority of those with primary education practice polygamous and the number of children one has raises his social standing in the locality. Therefore, this segment of society tends to view population growth as generally good compared to those with secondary education and above.

Figure 13: Distribution of population's level of education in Bungoma



Source: KNBS (2019)

Income sources and population growth

Turning to income sources and population growth, as indicated in **Table 6**, in Taita-Taveta County, more than half of person in the labour force are working, followed by persons outside the labour force and those seeking work. As summarized in **Figure 14** those working are more than those unemployed. Participants in FGD observed that the employed in the county are mainly in tourism, mining and sisal farming. There is also a sizeable chunk in county government who are small traders. It was further observed that those working do not see population growth as positive change as it is likely to exert pressure on limited opportunities. However, mine owners and owners of sisal plantation have different perspectives. On one hand, they perceive population increase as not positive change as is likely to exert pressure on the available land. On the other, it was observed that population increase is a positive change as it supplies labour consequently reducing wages for workers in the mines and farms. Similarly, traders in this county perceive population increase as positive change as that is likely to increase market for goods and service.

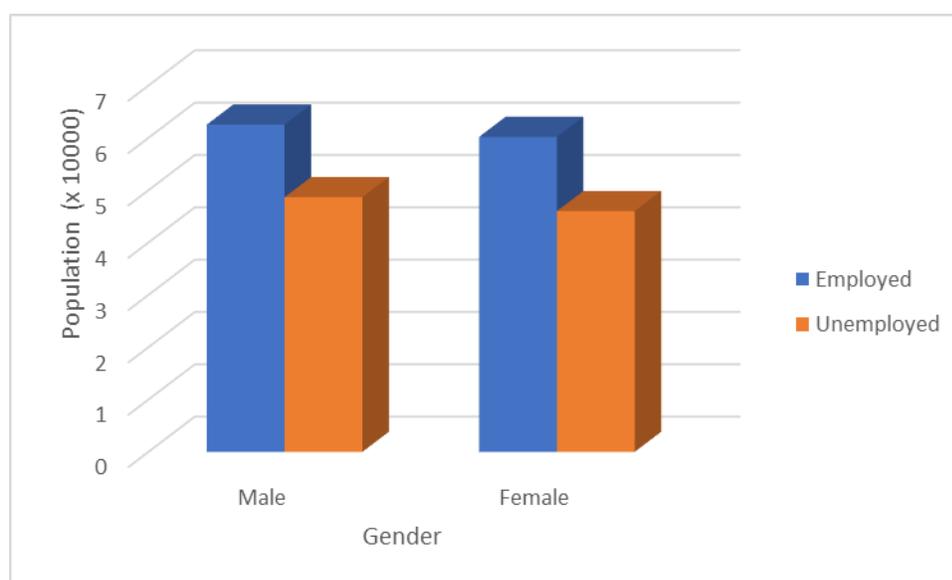
Table 6: Distribution of population by economic status in rural areas

Rural Area	Persons in the labour force		
	Working	Seeking work/No work available	Persons outside the labour force
Taita-Taveta			
Male	62538	6265	42402
Female	60195	2409	43597
Total	122733	8714	86000
Garissa			
Male	126756	72853	105397
Female	96256	48919	93104
Total	225021	121777	198510
Embu			
Male	139320	10825	89237
Female	140859	4858	93125
Total	280186	15683	182365
Uasin-Gishu			
Male	127431	14753	144346

Female	133725	8497	144847
Total	261161	23250	287196
Bungoma			
Male	256536	19273	345205
Female	302119	11413	346845
Total	558664	30692	692066

Source: KNBS (2019)

Figure 14: Distribution of employed population versus unemployed population in Taita-Taveta

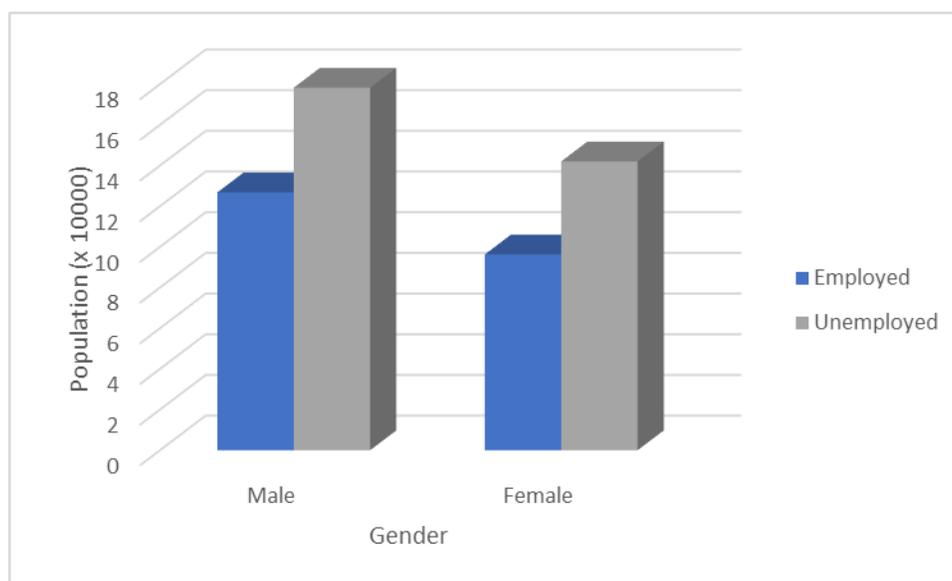


Source: KNBS (2019)

In Garissa County, 41 percent of the rural population is working; followed by 36 percent that are outside labour force and 22 percent seeking work. Thus, the number of unemployed populations is higher than employed population as summarized in **Figure 15**. Views from the FGD indicated that those working are mainly pastoralists and farmers and they tend to have different perspectives on population growth. From cultural perspective, among pastoralists there are those who perceive population growth as positive change because those with many livestock are also expected to have many children. It is the boy child that is more preferred than girl child, because the former is considered as likely to provide security to homestead and look after the livestock. Still, among pastoralists, it was observed that they are those who see population growth as

negative change because it is likely to exert pressure on the grazing land and water. This perception is also shared among farmers settled along the bank of River Tana who see population increment as likely to put them into direct conflict with pastoralist over access to pasture and water.

Figure 15: Distribution of employed population versus unemployed population in Garissa

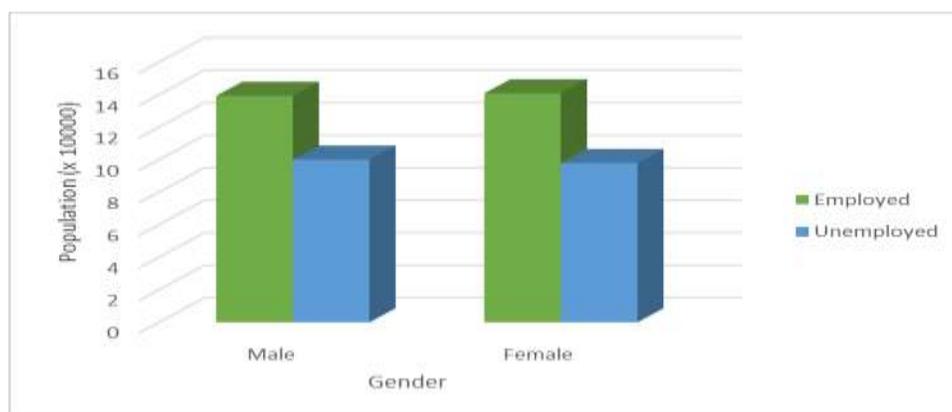


Source: KNBS (2019)

In Embu, the working population represents about 60 percent of the persons in the labour force, 38 percent are persons outside the labour force and the rest are seeking work. In other words, the employed population is more than unemployed population as summarized in **Figure 16**. Employed population is predominantly in agricultural sector growing crops like coffee, tea, pawpaw, green grams, macadamia and sweet potatoes; and a sizeable number in trading sector.¹⁶ Participants in the FGD observed that the perception of family structure among the agriculturalists is depended on the size of the farm and perhaps the ability to take care of the family. Those with large pieces of land tend to prefer large family compared to those with small pieces of land. Consequently farmers with large pieces of land would perceive population growth as a positive change.

¹⁶ Personal interview, a resident of rural Embu, 20 June 2020

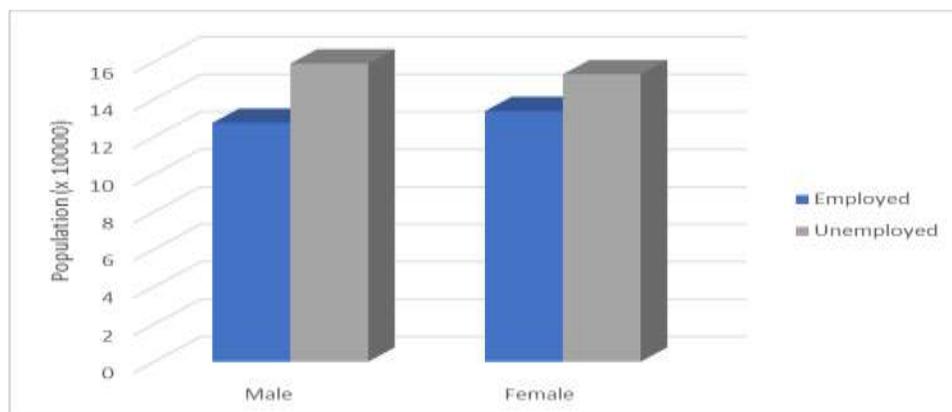
Figure 16: Distribution of employed population versus unemployed population in Embu



Source: KNBS (2019)

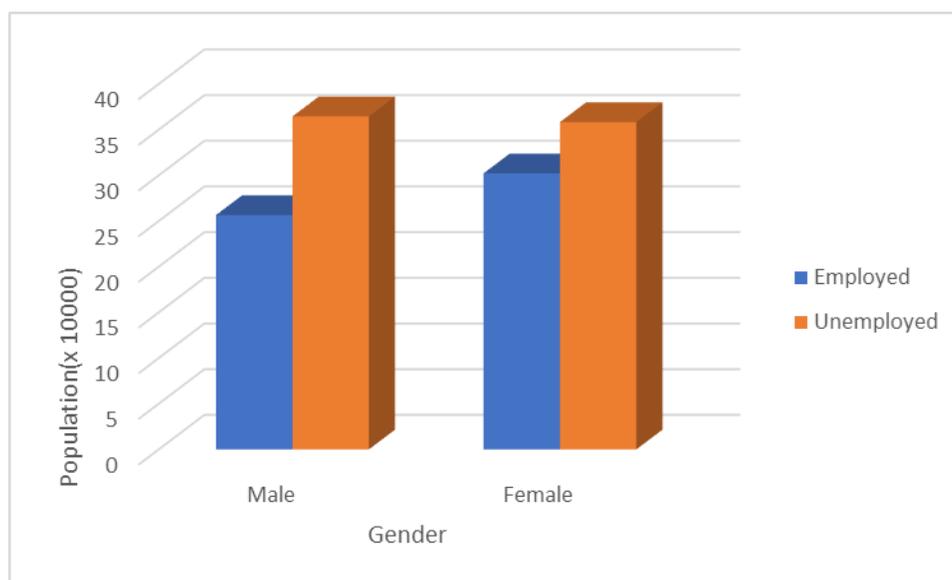
In Uasin Gishu, almost half of the persons are outside the labour force, 45 percent are working and a paltry 4 percent are seeking work. As summarized in **Figure 17**, the unemployed population is more than employed population. The workers are mainly farmers who own large tracks of lands. It was reported that some largescale farmers especially the educated ones tend to see population growth as a positive change as they view children as source of labour. From cultural perspective, they prefer children because of inheritance and generation success. Similarly, Bungoma has many persons outside the labour force, followed by those working and those seeking work as summarized in **Figure 18**. A majority of working population are practicing small-scale farming because of land pressure. According to one MCA, their perception of population growth is also tied to education, such that uneducated farmers tend to prefer large families compared to educated farmers. Therefore, uneducated farmers tend to perceive population change as a positive change.

Figure 17: Distribution of employed population versus unemployed population in Uasin Gishu



Source: KNBS (2019)

Figure 18: Distribution of employed population versus unemployed population in Bungoma



Source: KNBS (2019)

Ethnic affiliations and population growth

Just like in urban counties ethnic identity is also an important consideration because in rural counties there is exclusionary identity politics as majority of them contain ethnic majority and minorities (Bosire, 2014). Similarly how members of different ethnic affiliations consider population growth has to be analyzed through the prism of numerical strength relative to one another. **Table 7** indicates major ethnic groups and minors in sampled rural counties.

Table 7: Ethnic groups in sampled rural counties

County	Dominant/major ethnic groups	Minority ethnic groups
Taita-Taveta	Taita, Taveta, Dawida	Watta, Pare, Maasai, Kamba, Kikuyu, Luo, Somali
Garissa	Somali-Ogaden sub-clans (Abdwak, Abdalla and Auliyan subclans)	Muhammad Zubeir Clan Boni, Borana, Sakuye, Harti
Embu	Embu & Mbeere	Kamba, Kikuyu, Tharaka, Kisii, Somali, Luo, Indian
Uasin Gishu	Kalenjin (Nandi & Keiyo)	Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Kisii
Bungoma	Bukusu, Tachoni	Sabaot, Bungomek, Ogiek, Batura, Teso.

Source: Researchers (2020)

As shown in the table the indigenous communities in Taita-Taveta are Taita, Taveta, Watta, Pare and Dawida with a sizeable number of Kikuyu, Maasai, Luo and Somali who have migrated in the area. Politics in this area has always been framed in terms of indigenous versus the migrant communities. Of the indigenous groups, perhaps it is Watta that is more marginalized than the others. The group is characterized by high poverty, illiteracy and unemployment levels. They are also socially excluded from primary economic activities and have no political representation (National Gender and Equality Commission [NGEC], 2017, p.37). Accordingly, participants in the FGD observed that the perception of population growth among ethnic groups is depended on the kind of politics in question. On the politics of land, participants observed that small arable land shared between residents and few largescale land holders has been a source of discontent among the indigenous communities. Therefore, to the extent that the population growth is caused by migrant communities, indigenous groups do not perceive it as positive change.

The second concern is whether the increasing number of indigenous communities would attract interest in elective position and administrative positions in the county. There is fear among the locals that the increasing number of migrants in area may cause them to seek elective positions in future. In addition, given that County Public Service Act requires that employment in the county must reflect its diversity; migrant communities are also applying for jobs in the county government. Consequently, to the extent that the population growth caused by migrant communities potentially threatens political hegemony of indigenous communities, the population growth is perceived as negative change. However, the rising concern about the low population and the desire to increase it via the migrant communities so that more revenue from national government may be transferred, the population growth is perceived as positive change.

Garissa is predominantly inhabited by Somalis exclusively the Ogaden clan. Perception about population growth is influenced by sub-clan identities, and thus how the locals consider the growth is divided along Adwak, Abdalla and Auliyen sub-clans. However we also have minority communities such as Sakuye, Borana, Harti and Boni. Of these groups it is Boni community that is isolated and marginalized in terms of high unemployment, poverty and illiteracy level (NGEC, 2017, p.38). The Adwak occupies Dujis and Fafi sub-counties, the Auliyen occupy the Lagdera sub-county, while the Abdulla occupies Ijara sub-county. As elective politics among Somalis is centred on clan identity, therefore the rise of one clan to the leadership is viewed as springboard towards claiming exclusive claim of a given political area (Pkala & Halakhe, 2011). For instance, Adwak have made exclusive political claims over Dujis and Fafi constituencies. However, the steady flow of Auliyen from Somalia following political instability in Somali overtime has altered the demographics in two political units to the disadvantage of Adwak. Subsequently, the population

rise of Auliyani has given impetus to the Adwak to equally increase theirs. As such both Auliyani and Adwak perceive population growth as positive change.

The dominant groups in Embu are Embu and Mbeere, but there is also sizeable number of Kamba. The minorities and marginalized ethnic groups are Tharaka, Kisii and Somali. These groups are characterized by high poverty, illiteracy and unemployment levels and they are not politically represented through elective politics (NGEC, 2017, p. 43). Embu are found in Embu East, North and West sub-counties, while Mbeere and Kamba are found in Mbeere South and North sub-counties. Kikuyu and Meru are thinly spread in the rural areas of the county. It was observed during FGD that political competition among these ethnic groups has been there since independence¹⁷; however, this took a new twist with the devolved governance. In a bid to avert ethnic animosity, a local power-sharing agreement was coined in the run-up to 2013 general election that saw the Embu community- the dominant group- take the governor's position while the senatorial position was given to Mbeere. However, following the dissatisfaction with the governance practice of incumbent governor, Mbeere challenged Embu in the gubernatorial contest in 2017. With no arrangement similar to 2013, Embu community ended up taking governor and senator positions. Whereas Mbeere are numerically disadvantaged the fact that the two positions are held by Embu has given politicians from Mbeere community an opportunity to urge their supporters to increase their population. Expressing fear that Mbeere North Constituency may be scrapped if it fails to achieve the minimum threshold of 133,000 persons, Member of National Assembly from the area, Hon. Muriuki Njagagua came up with a plan to offer every woman who gives birth US 16 so as to increase the population.¹⁸ This implies that the imperative of elective politics cause members affiliated to Mbeere community to consider population growth as a positive change. On the Embu's side, the fear of losing political leadership of the county, would want its population to continue increasing relative to their Mbeere counterparts. In this sense members affiliated to Embu community would consider population growth as a positive change.

Similar dynamics are also found in Uasin Gishu hosting predominantly Kalenjin and other ethnic groups such as Kikuyu, Luhya, Kisii and Luo. Political contest over county leadership resurrected the perennial rivalry between Nandi and Keiyo sub-groups of Kalenjin. Nandi (the second biggest Kalenjin sub-group after the Kipsigis) is the dominant group followed by Keiyo. Nandis are found in Turbo and Soy Constituencies (northern part of the county), while Keiyo are found in Kapseret, Moiben and Ainabkoi constituencies (eastern part of the county). Both groups

¹⁷ For instance, former Gachoka Constituency was a political hotbed between Mbeere and Kamba community.

¹⁸ "Mp offers Sh 2,000 for every woman who give birth", Daily Nation, <https://www.nation.co.ke/kenya/counties/embu/mp-offers-sh2-000-for-every-woman-who-gives-birth-106208> (accessed 20 June 2020). Also see "Mbeere MP praises residents for many children", 21 May 2019 The Star, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/eastern/2019-05-21-mbeere-mp-praises-residents-for-many-children/> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

are also found in Kesses in the southern part of the county. Whereas other ethnic groups are predominantly found in areas close to Eldoret town, Kikuyu are found both in urban and rural areas. Kikuyu are approximated to be about 10 percent of the county population, and their location in rural areas has been a subject of contestation by Kalenjin traceable to colonial and post-independent land appropriation schemes (Elfeversson & Sjögren, 2020). Thus although the numerical weakness of other ethnic groups has not been a source of threat to Nandi and Keiyo at sub-county level, it is the role they play in reinforcing the rivalry between the two Kalenjin groups in the struggle for county leadership that we can understand the extent to which each group considers population growth. In 2013 general election, Jackson Mandago, a Nandi, clinched the coveted governor's position, however his position was challenged in 2017 by Zedekiah Bundotich, a Keiyo with report indicating that he was being supported by other ethnic group in the county.¹⁹ Although the Keiyo community lost gubernatorial seat, they clinched County women representative seat and Senatorial position. Nandis as a community have always perceived themselves as the majority in the county²⁰ as exemplified by a statement by Soy Member of National Assembly Caleb Kositany:

I implore you as Kalenjins that we all belong to Uasin Gishu, with Nandis in the lead followed by others. Anyone who wants to be governor in Uasin Gishu should not disturb us until we Nandis decide. Let us keep to our lanes when it comes to leadership. I plead with the people of Nandi, if Nandis have not spoken, no one should tell us where the seat should go.²¹

The political challenge from Keiyos is likely to reinforce their desire of retaining this dominance through clamor for population increase.²² Consequently the political competition is likely to inform members of both groups to consider population growth as a positive change.

Finally, Bungoma appears to follow Embu and Uasin Gishu patterns albeit in different version. Bukusu is the indigenous dominant group followed by Tachoni and both are found in Bungoma East, South, North, Kimilili, Tongaren and Webuye sub-counties. Sabaot are found in Lwandanyi and Mt. Elgon, while Batura are found in Khasako. Bungomek are spread across the rural parts like Malakisi, Kabuchai and Bukembe, while Teso are found in Mianga and Kimaiti areas. The near absolute majority of Bukusu has allowed them to dominate the political leadership of the

¹⁹ "Maize politics at play in battle for Uasin Gishu governorship seat", Daily Nation <https://www.nation.co.ke/kenya/news/politics/maize-politics-at-play-in-battle-for-uasin-gishu-governorship-seat-407882> (Accessed 19 June 2020).

²⁰"Maize politics at play in battle for Uasin Gishu governorship seat".

²¹ "Uasin Gishu politics: Mandago succession stirs ethnic contests", 20 August 2018, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001292597/uasin-gishu-politics-mandago-succession-stirs-ethnic-contests> (Accessed 19 June 2020).

²²"Governor Mandago faces strong challenge for Jubilee ticket", 20 April 2017, The Standard <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001230157/governor-mandago-faces-strong-challenge-for-jubilee-ticket> (accessed 19 June 2020). See also, "Chaos as Buzeki, Mandago supporters clash in Eldoret", 23 July 2017 The Standard, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001248717/chaos-as-buzeki-mandago-supporters-clash-in-eldoret> (Accessed 19 June 2020).

county at will. For example, in both 2013 and 2017 elections, Bukusu took positions of governor, senator and women representative. This dominance has created a sense of exclusion by minorities groups in terms of employment opportunities and access to social amenities. Thus, for these group population increase promises to reverse this exclusionary politics, as such members affiliated to these minorities group would tend to consider population growth as positive change more than members affiliated to Bukusu.

Conclusion

From the above findings, there are some remarkable differences in social groups in urban and rural areas and how they consider population growth. In terms of level of education, Nairobi and Mombasa cities have more residents who have completed secondary education than primary education. Our data shows that Kisumu City and Nakuru Municipality have more residents who have completed pre-primary and primary education than those who have completed secondary. Following the literature, our expectation was that the two urban areas would have many residents who have completed secondary education than those with pre-primary and primary.²³ Magak et al. (2014) found that the implementation of subsidized secondary education increased enrolment in secondary schools in urban areas because of accessibility and availability of physical and human resources compared to rural schools. High numbers in urban areas than rural areas is also attributed to socio-economic indicators of parents. Parents in urban areas tend to be more exposed to information and advocacy campaign with regard to children education as compared to those in rural areas. Indeed Birdsall, Levine and Ibrahim (2005) observe that poverty and rural residence strongly influence the enrolment rate in rural schools. Linking low educational attainment to high fertility, therefore a majority of rural population are likely to consider population growth as a positive change than their counterparts in urban areas.

Turning to labour force and income sources, data indicates that urban areas host many unemployed population than rural areas. The employed segment in urban areas is predominantly found in informal sector, while in rural areas the employed ones draw their income mainly from subsistence and a few large-scale farming. This income sources is also intermediated by other variables such as level of education having decisive perception on population growth. Those in informal sector in urban areas are mostly primary and secondary drop-outs who perceive family in terms of many children and would tend to consider population growth as a positive change. Their perception would also be similar to farmers in rural areas with large pieces of land who would prefer to have many children as a source of labour. But literature observes that generally

²³ This could be a statistical issue as KNSB did not disaggregate level of education according to urban and rural population.

educated employed people in urban areas would prefer to have small families than employed in rural areas because of cost of living. In urban areas the consumption and expenditure per household is higher than in the rural areas. As whole therefore, unemployed population in urban areas are likely to perceive population growth as negative change.

With regard to ethnic affiliation, the numerical strength of majority ethnic groups is higher in rural areas than urban areas, further heightening the importance of ethnic identity in rural politics than in urban politics. With devolved governance structure, political competition to a large extent has been fairly managed in urban areas like Nakuru, Nairobi and Mombasa more than in rural areas like Taita-Taveta, Uasin Gishu and Bungoma. However, the extent of management depends on the local-centre relations and role of national elites in local- power sharing agreement (Elfeversson & Sjögren, 2020). In Nakuru municipality, power-sharing agreement mollified the relations between the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin communities but did not erode ethnic hostility. A relatively stable pact between Uhuru Kenyatta and his running mate William Ruto influenced cohesion and predictability. Embu adopted similar arrangement only in 2013 elections, however in Uasin Gishu and Bungoma calls for similar arrangement was ignored by local politicians rendering minority communities to experience marginalization in representation and access to social amenities. The discontent among the minority groups has found expression in clamor for increase in their population. Therefore the linkage between political dominance and population increase is more pronounced in rural areas than urban areas.

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