THE BALLOT

The Chronicle KENYA

Beyond the Campaign. Into the Choices.

KENYA 2027 | ELECTIONS | POLITICS | ACCOUNTABILITY

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KENYA'S 2027 ELECTION: WHAT IS AT STAKE



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THE VOTER'S AGENDA: JOBS, COSTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

TWO BLOCS, ONE IMPASSE EACH: WHY NEITHER SIDE'S MUSCLE SECURES VOTES



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EDITORIAL NOTE

Beyond The Campaigns
Into The Choices

Kenya's 2027 General Election is still months away, but the decisions that will shape it are already being made.

Political alliances are taking form, parties are negotiating their interests, the electoral commission is preparing for a demanding exercise and millions of Kenyans are weighing what another five years of government might mean for their lives.

The campaign has not yet reached its peak. The politics, however, are well underway. Much of election coverage gravitates towards the visible contest: rallies, endorsements, defections, opinion polls and the personalities seeking power.

These developments matter, but they do not tell the whole story. Behind every political declaration are questions about organisation, resources, policy, institutional preparedness and, ultimately, the ability to deliver.

That is the space The Ballot seeks to occupy.

As a publication of The Chronicle Kenya, The Ballot will follow the road to the 2027 election beyond the daily political exchanges. We will examine the institutions responsible for delivering a credible election, the coalitions attempting to assemble national support, the candidates seeking public office and the issues that matter to voters.

We will pay particular attention to the evidence behind political claims. Who is registering to vote? Where is electoral participation growing or lagging? Can political alliances translate agreements among leaders into genuine voter support?

What do the competing political programmes offer on jobs, taxation, public services and the cost of living? And how will Kenyans measure the performance of those who seek their mandate?

Our approach is guided by a simple editorial principle: support ambition and scrutinise delivery.

Neither government nor opposition will receive a free pass. Political promises will be examined against records, resources, timelines and measurable outcomes. Polls will be presented with their methodology and limitations, while data will be used to illuminate rather than manufacture conclusions.

This first edition begins with the foundations of the coming election: the voters, the political blocs, the institutions and the issues shaping the choices ahead.

The election is not simply about who wants power. It is about what they intend to do with it, what they have done before and whether Kenyans can hold them accountable.

Welcome to the Ballot.

The Ballot is an election publication of The Chronicle Kenya, an affiliate of StrategiCrest Ltd.
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KENYA'S 2027 ELECTION: WHAT IS AT STAKE

Nine months out, the contest is being shaped by three things voters rarely see: who is on the register, which blocs hold together, and whether the electoral calendar survives the clock.

In exactly 270 day from today, Kenyans will head to the ballot in Kenya's next General Election

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has published the election timetable, setting in motion a process that will shape political parties, candidates and public institutions over the months ahead.

The contest is already taking form, even before the formal campaign period. Parties are negotiating alliances, politicians are positioning themselves for nominations, potential candidates are weighing their options and the commission is working towards a constitutional deadline that leaves little room for administrative failure.

Yet the election is often discussed as though it were a single contest for the presidency. That view misses much of what will be decided on polling day.

On August 10, Kenyans will elect a President, governors, senators, members of the National Assembly, county women representatives and members of county assemblies.

These are six different contests, involving distinct offices, responsibilities and political calculations. Together, they will determine who exercises public authority at national and county levels, who controls legislative institutions and how competing political interests are represented.

The presidential contest may command the largest crowds and the most attention, but it will not, on its own, determine how the country is governed.

2.35 million

Number of new voters registered during the 2026 enhance continuous voter registration exercise.



Six Elections, Different Consequences

The President and the national executive set national policy, direct government priorities and oversee the implementation of national programmes.

The outcome of the presidential race therefore has significant implications for the direction of the economy, public spending, national security and the relationship between government and citizens. But the President does not govern alone.

The National Assembly, inclusive of Woman Reps, legislates, approves national spending and exercises oversight over the national executive. Its composition will influence the government's ability to pass legislation, approve budgets and defend its decisions before Parliament.

The Senate has a different but equally important responsibility. Senators represent counties at the national level, participate in the allocation of revenue among counties and exercise oversight over county governments.

Their role makes the Senate a significant arena in the contest over devolution and the distribution of public resources.

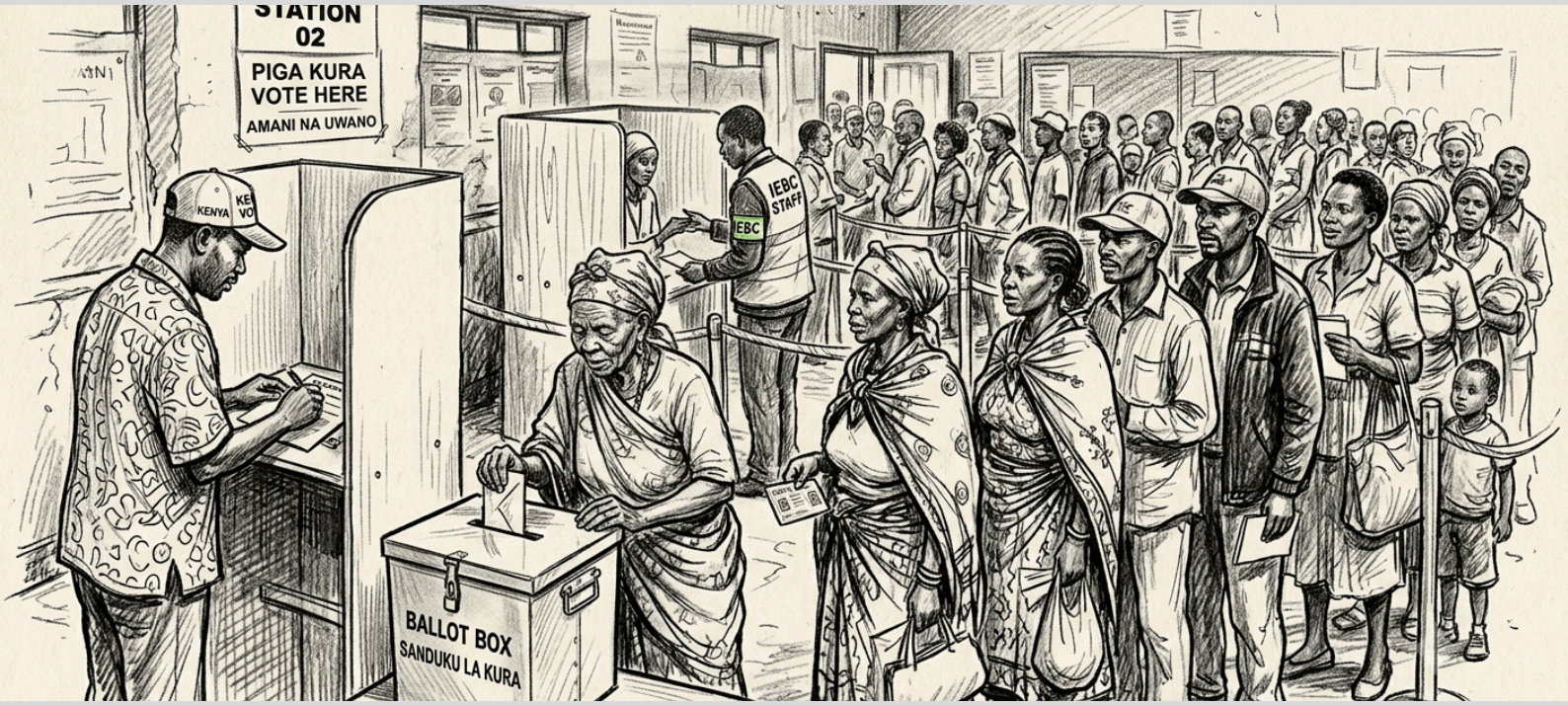
At county level, governors lead county executives and are responsible for delivering devolved services. County assembly members legislate, approve county budgets and oversee county executives.

The distinction matters because voters may elect a President whose party does not command equivalent support in Parliament or in key counties.

A national victory does not automatically translate into control of the institutions required to implement a political programme.

The election will therefore produce more than one measure of political strength.

It will establish who occupies the presidency, who controls or influences Parliament, which parties lead county governments and how power is distributed across the country.



A party that performs strongly in the presidential contest may still face difficult negotiations in Parliament. A coalition that wins nationally may find that its partners have competing interests in county contests.

And a candidate who commands support among national political leaders may still struggle to secure the backing of local organisers and voters.

The structure of the election makes local politics consequential, even when the national campaign appears to revolve around a handful of prominent personalities.

The Politics Before the Campaign

The second major question concerns the political arrangements being built ahead of the election.

Parties and political leaders are already considering how to combine their support, negotiate influence and present themselves to voters. These discussions are not merely about endorsements or public declarations of unity. They involve decisions about leadership, candidate selection, the distribution of political opportunities and the terms on which parties will work together.

The ruling side is exploring a formal arrangement between the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), including discussions around a coalition framework, power-sharing and a joint manifesto.

On the opposition side, leaders are seeking a common platform and a presidential candidate capable of holding together different political interests. Both efforts face a similar test: whether agreements among leaders can survive the practical demands of an election.

Political partnerships are easier to announce than to manage. Parties may agree on a national direction while competing for the same parliamentary seats.

Leaders may endorse a common candidate while their supporters favour different political figures. Negotiations over nominations, constituencies and influence can expose disagreements that public declarations of unity conceal.

The question is not simply how many parties join an alliance. It is whether the arrangement can organise candidates, mobilise voters and maintain discipline when political interests collide.

The presidential contest will provide the most visible test of these arrangements, but the parliamentary and county races will reveal whether they have developed into functioning electoral coalitions.

This is why the coming months matter. The decisions made during negotiations and party processes will shape the choices presented to voters long before the official campaign period reaches its peak.

The Clock Is Part of the Contest

The third test is institutional: whether the IEBC can deliver the election within the legal and operational timetable.

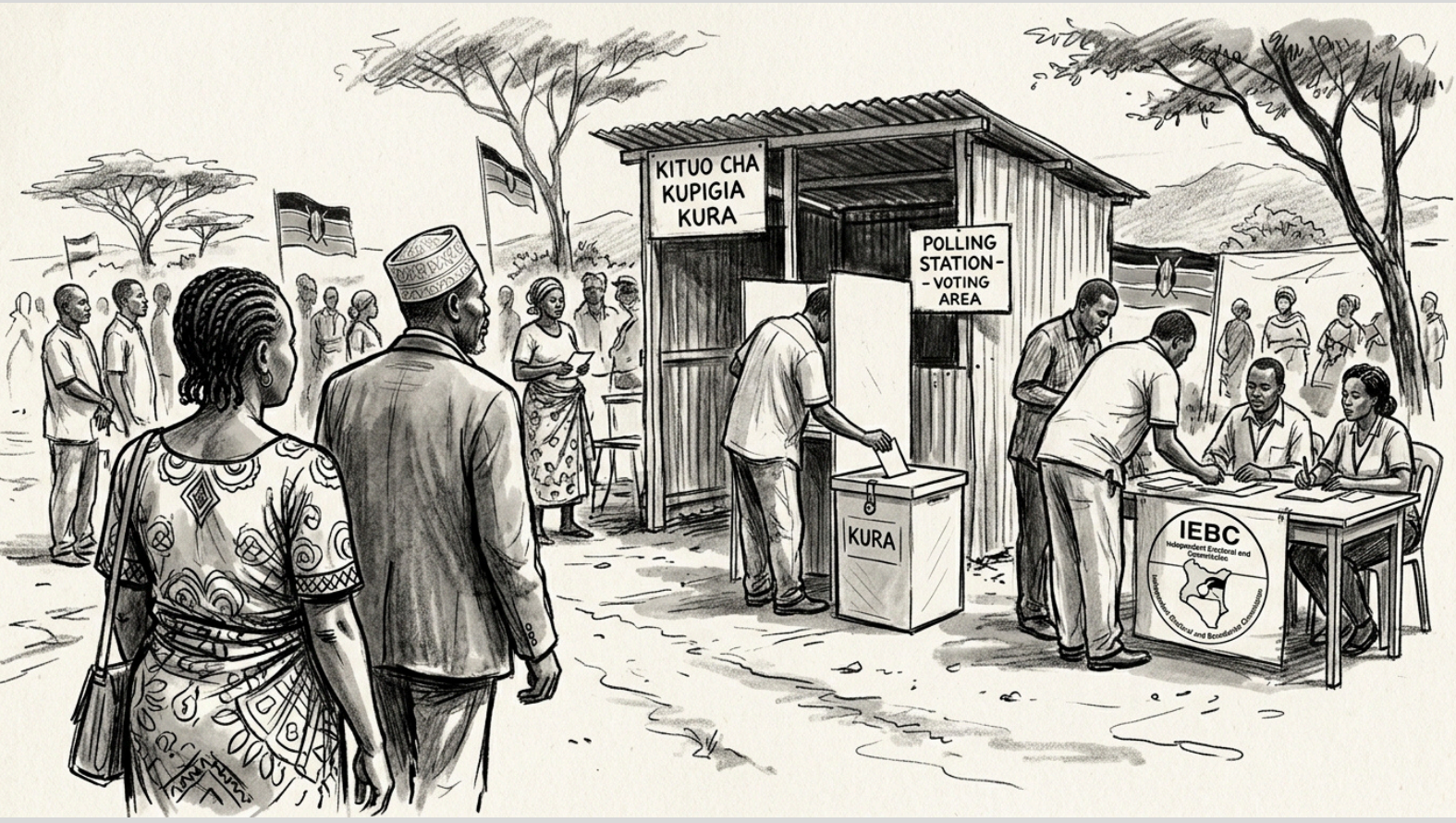
The commission has gazetted August 10, 2027, as polling day and set deadlines that will shape the conduct of parties, candidates and public officers.

Among the milestones identified in the timetable are December 9, 2026, when restrictions on public fundraising during the pre-election period take effect, and February 10, 2027, the deadline for public officers seeking elective office to resign.

Party primaries, nominations, party lists and the official campaign period will follow. Each stage has consequences for the next. Delays in resolving disputes or settling nominations can compress the time available for parties and candidates to prepare for the final contest.

The commission's task is considerably larger than announcing a polling date. It must coordinate procurement, technology, staffing, logistics, voter education, polling arrangements and results management across a nationwide exercise involving millions of voters and thousands of polling stations.

ODM'S SUPPORT CANNOT BE ASSUMED TO TRANSFER AUTOMATICALLY, NOR WILL LOCAL LEADERS' INTERESTS DISAPPEAR BECAUSE NATIONAL LEADERS COOPERATE.



These activities are interdependent. Technology must be tested before it is needed. Election officials must be recruited and trained in time. Materials must reach polling stations.

Procedures must be understood by officials, candidates and voters. Results management must be sufficiently transparent to withstand scrutiny.

Disputes over election technology, procurement or the administration of the process can create uncertainty and undermine confidence if they are not addressed early.

The commission must demonstrate not only that it is working towards the deadline, but that the systems required for a credible election are being prepared, tested and explained.

The timetable must also be understood within the legal framework governing elections. Constitutional and appellate processes may affect particular decisions, and IEBC must be prepared to respond without compromising the preparations.

The credibility of an election is not established on polling day alone. It is built through the decisions, procedures and safeguards that precede it.

What Voters Should Be Watching

For voters, the months ahead should be about more than tracking political movements and predicting the eventual winner.

The first question is what each candidate is seeking authority to do.

A presidential manifesto should be judged alongside the legislative and budgetary support required to implement it.

Candidates for Parliament should explain how they intend to legislate and exercise oversight, rather than treating their campaigns as extensions of the presidential race.

Governors and county assembly candidates should be assessed against the responsibilities of devolved government.

Their promises should reflect what counties can deliver, what resources are available and how they intend to account for public money.

Voters should also watch how parties choose their candidates, how they resolve internal disagreements and whether their alliances offer a coherent programme beyond the arithmetic of political support.

PUBLIC ELECTION COVERAGE OFTEN FOCUSES ON RALLIES, DEFECTIONS, ENDORSEMENTS, PROMISES AND POLLS. THESE MATTER, BUT TELL ONLY PART OF THE STORY.

The IEBC, meanwhile, must provide regular, credible information about its preparations and demonstrate that the election can be conducted lawfully, transparently and within the prescribed timetable.

The 2027 General Election will be a contest for political power, but its consequences will extend well beyond the identity of the next President.

It will determine the composition of institutions, the balance between national and county leadership and the political relationships through which government is exercised.

The campaign may eventually be reduced to personalities, rallies and competing predictions. The election itself will be more complicated.

Understanding what is at stake requires looking beyond the presidential race to the institutions, candidates and decisions that will shape the next five years.



THE ELECTORAL TEST: IS KENYA READY?

The IEBC wants a register of about 28.5 million, up from 22.1 million in 2022. A slow start, a strong April and a long way to go leave the target in doubt.

Kenya's 2027 election will be decided by those who turn out to vote, but participation begins much earlier: with registration.

An eligible citizen who is absent from the voters' register cannot cast a ballot. The size, accuracy and accessibility of that register will therefore help determine who is included in the electorate and whether the country's next election reflects the choices of those entitled to participate.

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has set a target of about 28.5 million registered voters for 2027, up from approximately 22.1 million in the 2022 General Election.

Reaching that figure requires the commission to add millions of voters while maintaining the accuracy of the register and ensuring that eligible citizens can access registration services.

The early results show both the scale of the task and the difficulty of sustaining progress. Continuous voter registration began on September 29, 2025, with a target of 6.3 million new voters based on National Registration Bureau data. Young people are expected to account for about 70 per cent of new registrations.

The initial pace was modest. In the first two weeks, the commission registered about 20,754 voters in 266 constituencies, excluding areas holding by-elections. By October 31, 2025, the total had reached 90,020, alongside 15,619 voter transfers and 188 updates.

Nairobi recorded the highest number of registrations during that early period, with 16,512, followed by Kiambu at 9,917 and Machakos at 4,026.

The numbers suggested that a nationwide registration exercise would require more than making registration available at constituency offices.

It would also require reaching people who live far from those offices, have limited time to travel or do not know where and how to register.

April Proved The Potential

The enhanced registration exercise conducted from March 30 to April 28, 2026, demonstrated what a more concentrated national drive could achieve.

The IEBC reported 875,501 new voters by April 9 and 1,876,274 by April 23. The final total was 2,345,476, equivalent to about 94 per cent of the 2.5 million target. The exercise fell short by approximately 154,500 registrations.

The scale of the increase was significant. In a month, the commission registered more than two million voters, substantially exceeding the pace recorded during the opening weeks of continuous registration. But the results also raise a question about the model of registration.

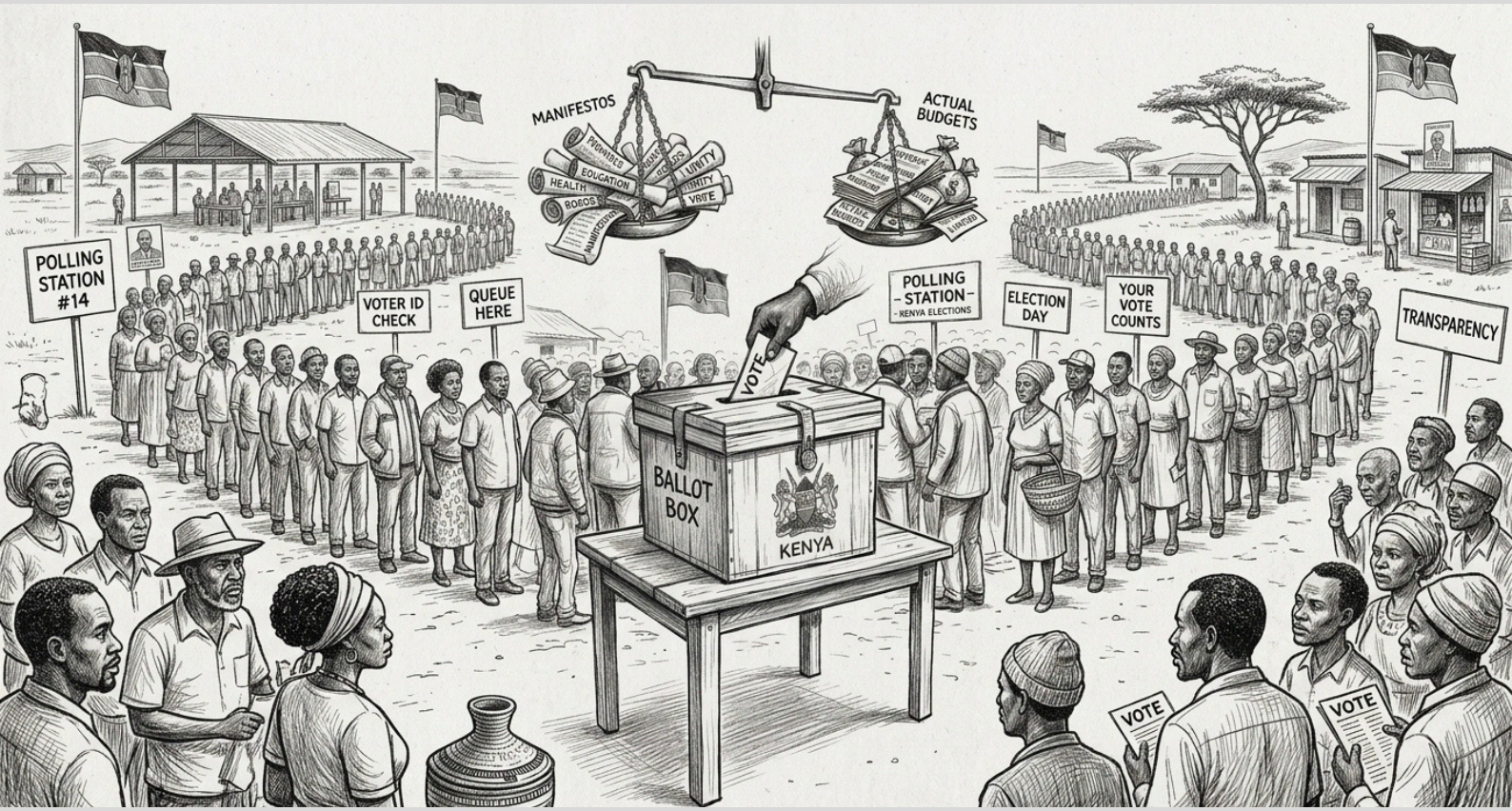
If a concentrated national exercise can produce such a large increase, can the commission sustain that momentum through routine registration, particularly in areas where access is difficult?

The county figures show why the national total is not enough to answer that question. Turkana recorded 58,428 new registrations, equivalent to 24.5 per cent of its 2022 register. Samburu added 19,418, or 19.4 per cent, while West Pokot recorded 39,605, equivalent to 18 per cent.

Among larger electoral centres, Nairobi added 276,886, representing 11.5 per cent of its 2022 register. Kiambu grew by 10.1 per cent and Nakuru by 9.7 per cent. Mombasa and Murang'a each recorded growth of about 8 per cent, Kisumu 7.5 per cent and Nyandarua 5.7 per cent.

These figures compare new registrations with the 2022 county registers. They do not account for deaths, removals, population changes or subsequent updates, and should therefore be read as indicators of registration activity rather than a definitive picture of the 2027 electorate.

The geographical differences nevertheless matter.



A national increase can conceal counties where registration is progressing more slowly. It can also obscure the practical barriers facing citizens who live far from registration centres.

A registration target is meaningful only if eligible citizens across the country have a reasonable opportunity to be counted.

The Barriers Behind The Numbers

The first phase of registration exposed weaknesses in access and public awareness. The IEBC cited limited registration points and logistical constraints, while the Elections Observation Group (ELOG) raised concerns about poor accessibility, limited outreach and low awareness.

Weekday operating hours, from 8am to 5pm, also created difficulties for people unable to leave work or other responsibilities during the day.

For prospective voters, registration involves more than knowing that an exercise is underway. They must know where to go, have the time and means to get there, and be able to complete the process without undue delays.

In large constituencies, travelling to a central registration office can impose significant transport costs. For people working during the day, weekday-only hours can make registration difficult.

THE COMMISSION MUST ALSO EXPLAIN CLEARLY AND CONSISTENTLY HOW THE REGISTER IS GROWING.

Persons with disabilities may face physical or procedural barriers that are not visible in national totals.

Technical problems can compound these challenges. Mombasa residents reported poor connectivity and slow biometric systems, while the IEBC cited the distance to constituency offices in large constituencies as another obstacle.

These are not merely administrative inconveniences. When registration services are difficult to reach, the practical opportunity to participate becomes unequal.

The commission has said it would widen access after the by-elections and has conducted an enhanced registration exercise in Ol Kalou following the suspension of registration there. But the next phase needs a clear and consistent plan for taking services closer to eligible voters.

ELOG's recommendations include mobile registration units, weekend hours and regular reporting by county and demographic group. Mobile units could reduce the burden of travelling to central offices, while extended hours would help workers and students who cannot attend during the standard working day.

The commission should also explain where and how often mobile teams will operate, whether weekend registration will be available, and how it intends to address network and biometric failures.

A temporary mass drive can generate impressive numbers. The more difficult test is whether accessible services become a routine feature of registration.

The Youth Question

The IEBC expects young people to make up about 70 per cent of new registrations. That expectation places the participation of younger Kenyans at the centre of the exercise.

Political leaders have increasingly directed their messages towards young people, with promises around employment, economic opportunity, lower living costs and political change.

But the attention they receive in political communication does not automatically translate into registration.

Early reports described a gap between young people's strong online political presence and their participation at registration centres. That observation should not be mistaken for evidence that they are unwilling to vote.

COUNTY REGISTRATIONS IN 2026 AS PERCENTAGE OF 2022			
County	**April 2026 new voters**	**As % of 2022 register**	**Reading**
Turkana	58,428	24.50%	More than twice the national rate
Samburu	19,418	19.40%	Small base, fast growth
West Pokot	39,605	18.00%	Above the national rate
Nairobi	276,886	11.50%	In line with the national rate
Kiambu	128,859	10.10%	Slightly below
Nakuru	102,207	9.70%	Below
Mombasa	51,286	8.00%	Below
Murang'a	49,791	8.00%	Below
Kisumu	45,280	7.50%	Below
Nyandarua	20,467	5.70%	Roughly half the national rate

It raises a more practical question: whether the registration process is accessible and convenient enough to convert eligibility into participation.

The figures reviewed for this story do not provide a reliable age breakdown. It is therefore not possible to establish how much progress the commission has made towards the 70 per cent expectation.

The IEBC should publish regular demographic data showing the ages of new registrants and identify the groups and areas where registration is lagging.

It should also report on persons with disabilities and remote communities, so that the public can assess whether the process is reaching eligible voters beyond the easiest-to-serve population centres.

National totals show how many people have registered. Demographic information helps establish who has been reached and who may still be missing.

Without that information, the commission can report progress towards a numerical target without demonstrating whether the next generation of voters is being adequately included.

The Numbers Must Add Up

There is also a reporting problem that the IEBC needs to address.

By August 20, 2026, the commission reported 2,936,516 registrations since continuous registration began, equivalent to about 47 per cent of its 6.3 million target.

Separately, material reviewed for this story puts the updated 2026 register at 24,455,491, approximately 2.35 million above the 2022 register of about 22.1 million.

That increase appears to correspond to the April mass-drive intake. The two figures do not align if they are treated as measures of the same registration period and categories.

The cumulative figure reported in August is higher than the increase implied by the updated register.

The difference may reflect the distinction between gross registrations, transfers, updates, removals and the cleaned register, but the available figures do not provide enough detail to establish a definitive reconciliation.

The commission should explain the difference rather than leave citizens, parties and observers to piece together the register from separate announcements.

Gross registrations are not the same as the final number of eligible voters. Biometric checks and register cleaning may remove deceased voters and duplicate entries, while transfers and other updates affect the composition of the register.

A regular public dashboard should show the 2022 baseline, new registrations, transfers, removals, updates and the resulting net total. It should also provide county and demographic breakdowns, alongside clear reporting dates and definitions.

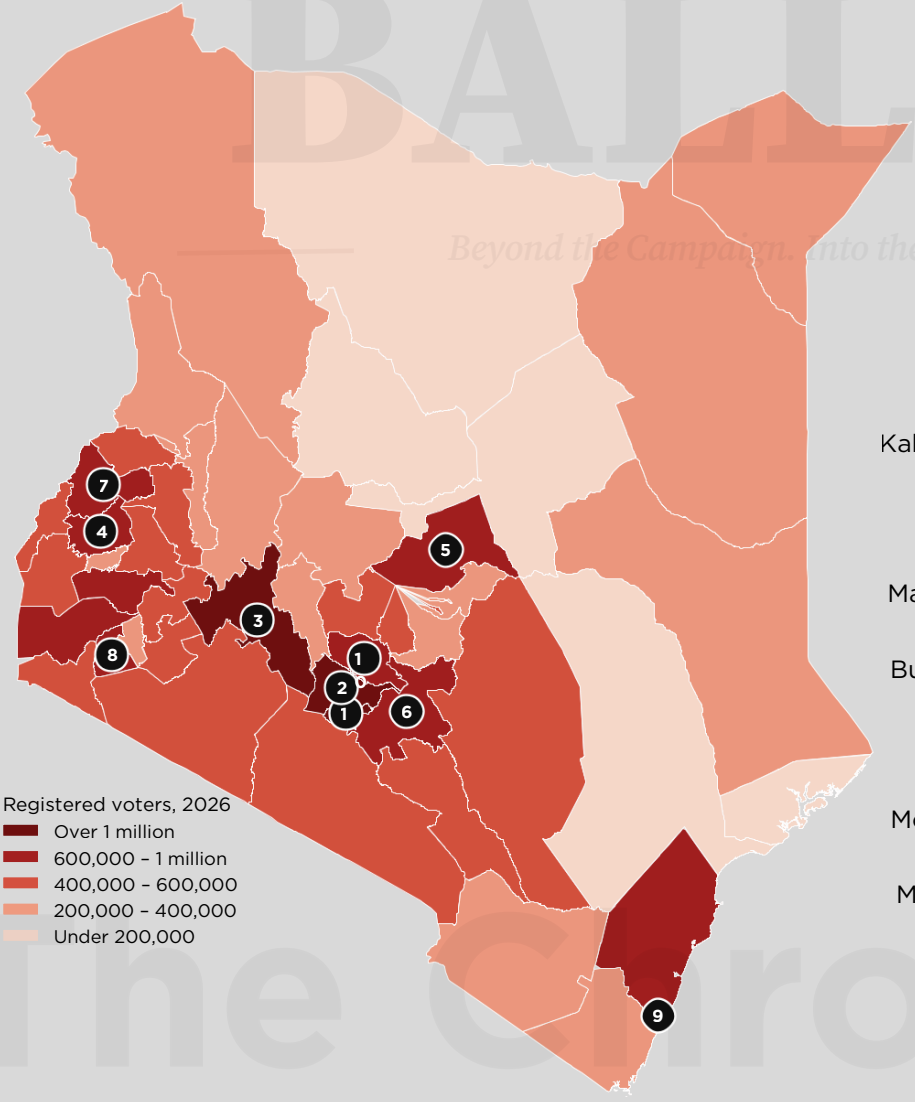
The IEBC has said the cleaned register will be available for public verification for 30 days. That process will be important, but verification should be supported by information that allows the public to understand how the register has changed and what the commission has done to improve its accuracy.

The next update should make it possible to assess whether the commission is on course for 28.5 million, where registration is progressing and which interventions are working.

ELIGIBLE CITIZENS MUST HAVE A REASONABLE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE, WHEREVER THEY LIVE AND WHATEVER THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES.

WHERE KENYA'S VOTES ARE

- Registered voters by county, 2026 register (24.5million), up from 22.1 million in 2022
- Ten counties hold 43% of all registered voters. Nairobi and Kiambu alone hold 17%.



THE BIG TEN

		vs 2022
Nairobi	11.0%	+11.5%
Kiambu	5.7%	+10.1%
Nakuru	4.7%	+9.8%
Kakamega	3.8%	+11.1%
Meru	3.4%	+8.8%
Machakos	3.2%	+12.3%
Bungoma	2.9%	+11.4%
Kisii	2.9%	+10.2%
Mombasa	2.8%	+8.1%
Murang'a	2.7%	+8.0%

Together: 43.3% of the register

WHAT HAS CHANGE SINCE 2022

+2,352,959
voters since 2022 (+10.6%); 4,044,509 short of the IEBC's 28.5M projection

+278,127
in Nairobi, the largest gain, but at +11.5%; only slightly above the national +10.6%

+24.5%
in Turkana, the fastest growth, followed by Samburu (+19.5%) andWest Pokot (+18.0%)

+5.7%
in Nyandarua; the slowest growth of the 47 Counties

Sources: IEBC updated register of voters by county

TIFA POLL TIE IS NOT THE STORY: RUTO HAS A BLOC, SIFUNA HAS A MAP

Ruto and Sifuna both poll 31 per cent in TIFA's latest survey. One gets there through two regions and the Broad-Based Government's loyalists; the other through six zones and the opposition's own pool.

In June, President William Ruto and Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna together accounted for 39 per cent of Kenyans' preferred winners of the 2027 election. In the survey TIFA Research released on November 12, they account for 62 per cent. Each now stands at 31 per cent, a tie within the poll's ±2.16-point margin of error.

The tie is the headline, but the mechanism behind it is the story. The two men have reached the same number by routes that share almost nothing, and the difference decides which of them is better placed to assemble what Article 138 of the Constitution demands of a first-round winner: more than half of all votes cast, and at least a quarter of the vote in more than half of the counties.

A Race That Has Narrowed To Two

Between June and November, Ruto rose from 24 per cent to 31 per cent and Sifuna from 15 per cent to 31 per cent. Over the same months, Kalonzo Musyoka slipped from 13 per cent to 9 per cent, Fred Matiang'i from 14 per cent to 5 per cent, Rigathi Gachagua from 7 per cent to 4 per cent, and the undecided from 20 per cent to 15 per cent. Ruto and Sifuna gained 23 points between them; those four columns shed 21.

TIFA reads Sifuna's rise as coming at the expense of his opposition colleagues rather than the President, and the series supports that reading: nothing in it shows Ruto losing ground to him. What it shows is a field consolidating around two poles before either has a running mate.

Ruto's Bloc, And Its Ceiling

Ruto polls 59 per cent in Central Rift and 62 per cent in Northern, and above 30 per cent in Coast and Nyanza as well. In Mt Kenya he polls 11 per cent and in Nairobi 13 per cent, two zones that together make up 32 per cent of TIFA's sample.

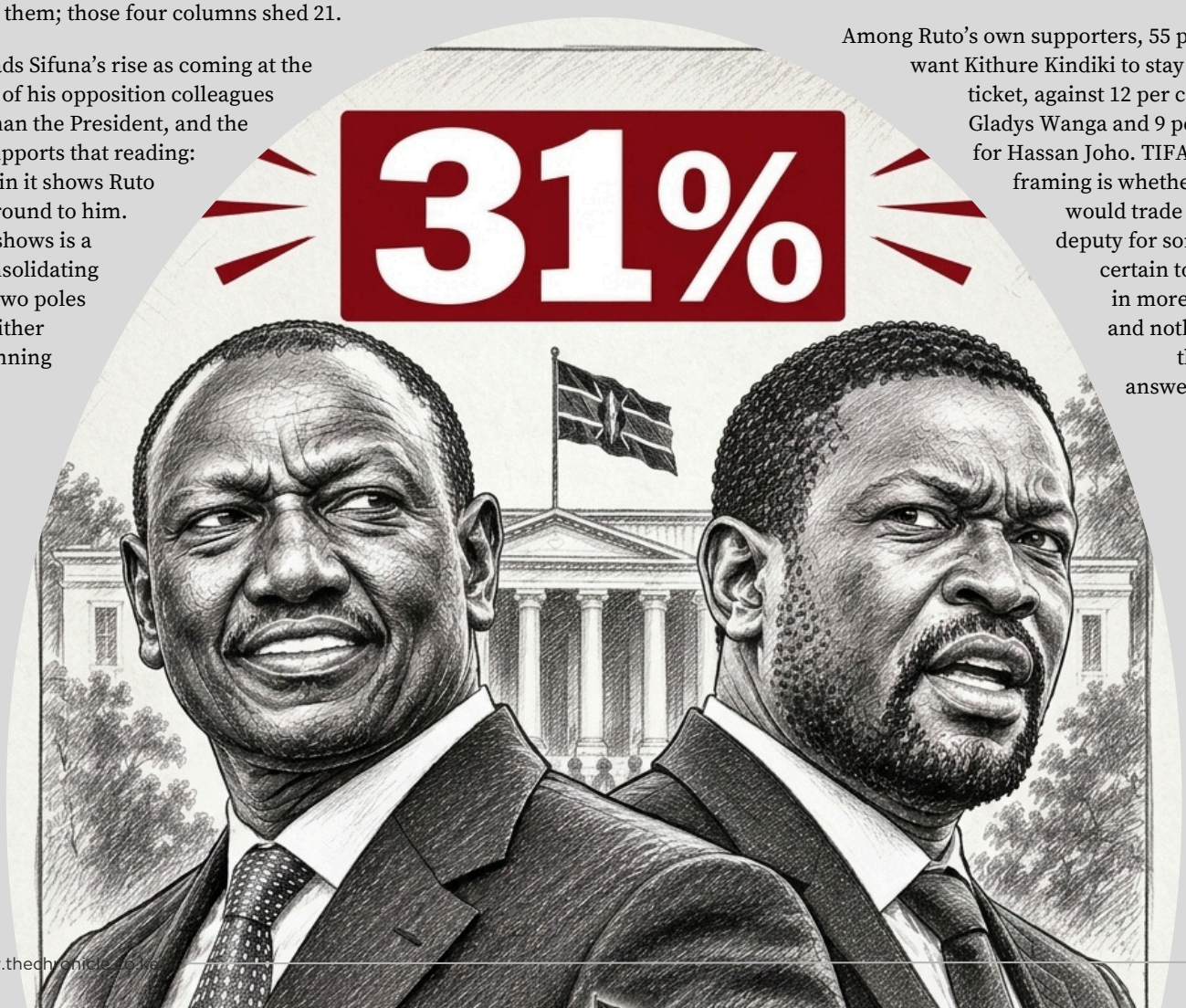
That is the Broad-Based Government's geography. Support for the BBG is 68 per cent in Northern and 57 per cent in Central Rift, but 12 per cent in Mt Kenya and 13 per cent in Nairobi.

At the individual level, the coupling is tighter still. Among respondents who support the BBG, 83 per cent prefer Ruto; among those who oppose it, 3 per cent do. Opponents outnumber supporters 43 per cent to 32 per cent.

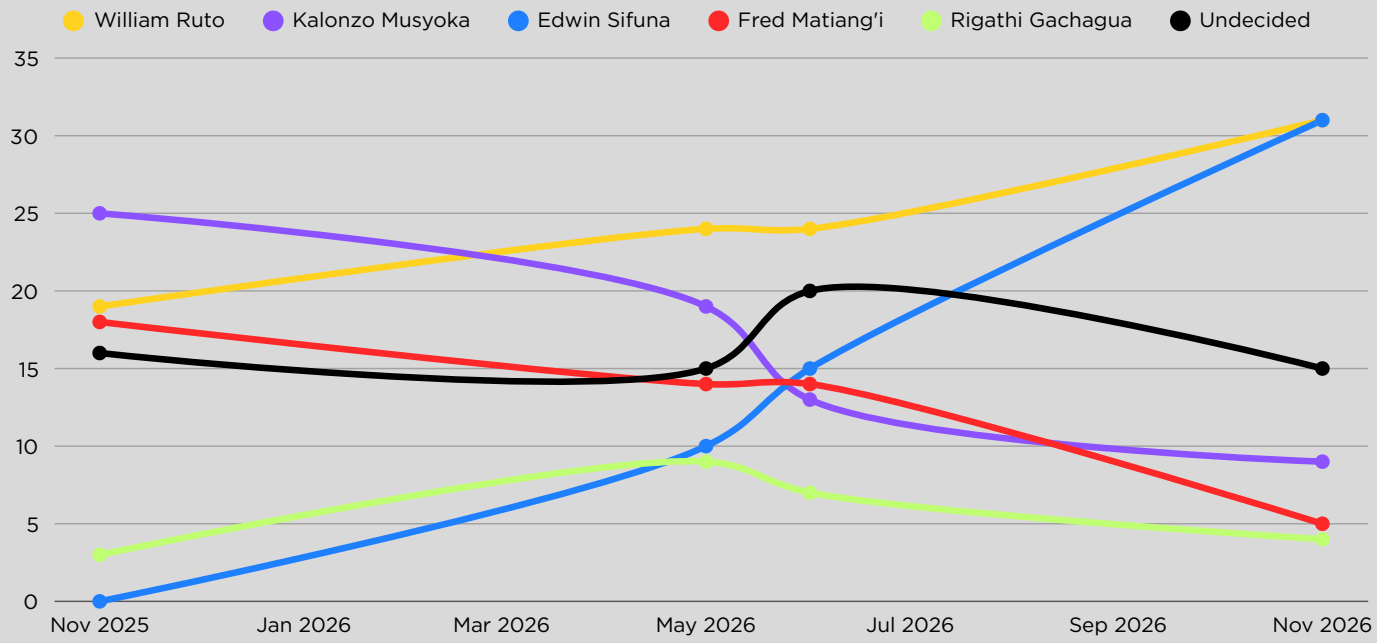
His 31 per cent is, in effect, the BBG's constituency plus a slice of the indifferent, and his room to grow lies in the 25 per cent who have no view on the arrangement or have not heard of it, and in the 15 per cent who are undecided.

His running-mate question is the visible edge of the same problem.

Among Ruto's own supporters, 55 per cent want Kithure Kindiki to stay on the ticket, against 12 per cent for Gladys Wanga and 9 per cent for Hassan Joho. TIFA's own framing is whether Ruto would trade a loyal deputy for someone certain to bring in more votes, and nothing in the poll answers that.



PRESIDENTIAL RACE: POPULARITY TREND OVER TIME



TIFA Poll, November 2026

Sifuna's Map, And Where It Came From

Sifuna's 31 per cent is spread rather than stacked. He leads in Western at 55 per cent, and polls 39 per cent in Nairobi, 36 per cent in Coast, 33 per cent in Nyanza, 32 per cent in Mt Kenya and 31 per cent in South Rift: six of nine zones at 30 per cent or more, against four for Ruto. In Mt Kenya he outpolls both Ruto and Gachagua, who stand at 11 per cent each.

Zone	Ruto	Sifuna
Central Rift	**59 per cent**	16 per cent
Coast	**40 per cent**	36 per cent
Lower Eastern	**20 per cent**	8 per cent
Mt Kenya	11 per cent	**32 per cent**
Nairobi	13 per cent	**39 per cent**
Northern	**62 per cent**	20 per cent
Nyanza	**35 per cent**	33 per cent
South Rift	29 per cent	**31 per cent**
Western	25 per cent	**55 per cent**

The party numbers explain the engine. The Linda Mwananchi Movement, registered shortly before fieldwork began, now draws 17 per cent and is second to UDA's 25 per cent, while ODM has halved from 20 per cent to 10 per cent.

In Nairobi, Linda Mwananchi stands at 26 per cent, against ODM's 9 per cent and UDA's 8 per cent. Ninety per cent of its supporters want Sifuna as president.

The soft spots are visible too. ODM's remaining supporters still prefer Ruto to Sifuna, 42 per cent to 33 per cent. And among BBG opponents, Sifuna holds 56 per cent, leaving a large remainder scattered among other aspirants and the undecided.

The Arithmetic Trap

Add Sifuna's 31 per cent to the 19 per cent held by Kalonzo, Matiang'i, Gachagua and Ndindi Nyoro and the sum reaches 50 per cent. TIFA itself warns against the sum, citing competition inside the opposition and the advantages of incumbency.

The negotiation has no agreed calendar. Among opposition supporters, 45 per cent want a joint ticket named in early 2027, 35 per cent before the end of this year and 16 per cent in mid-2027.

A clear majority, 57 per cent, call unity "very likely", though TIFA's own gloss is that this is as much hope as belief. The harder puzzle is the second slot. TIFA observes that Kalonzo seems unlikely to accept running under Sifuna, while Sifuna accepting the deputy's role would look like a sell-out to his keenest supporters.

TIFA OBSERVES THAT KALONZO SEEMS UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT RUNNING UNDER SIFUNA, WHILE SIFUNA ACCEPTING THE DEPUTY'S ROLE WOULD LOOK LIKE A SELL-OUT TO HIS KEENEST SUPPORTERS.

The reason is mechanical: each of those percentages has a custodian. Kalonzo's 9 per cent is concentrated, with 55 per cent in Lower Eastern and 80 per cent of Wiper supporters behind him. Matiang'i's base is thin even at home, with only 57 per cent of Jubilee supporters backing him. Votes held that way do not transfer by arithmetic; they transfer by negotiation.

PRESIDENTIAL RACE: POPULARITY OF TOP ASPIRANTS BY REGION

	Central Rift	Coast	Lower Eastern	Mt Kenya	Nairobi	Northern	Nyanza	South Rift	Western
William Ruto	**59%**	**40%**	20%	11%	13%	**62%**	**35%**	29%	25%
Edwin Sifuna	16%	36%	8%	**32%**	**39%**	20%	33%	**31%**	**55%**
Kalonzo Musyoka	2%	3%	**55%**	6%	11%	3%	5%	12%	0%
Fred Matiang'i	4%	2%	2%	8%	10%	1%	12%	5%	0%
Rigathi Gachagua	1%	4%	1%	11%	3%	3%	1%	3%	0%
Undecided	16%	12%	10%	21%	17%	10%	12%	14%	14%

Gachagua's Party, Sifuna's Voters

The poll's most awkward finding for the opposition concerns Gachagua. Among opposition supporters, 43 per cent name him as the person most responsible for the opposition's disagreements.

The next answer, Ruto and the UDA government, draws 15 per cent, and Sifuna 7 per cent. Nationally Gachagua's own presidential rating is 4 per cent, and 11 per cent in Mt Kenya, his home ground.

That sits oddly beside Ol Kalou. On 16 July, Gachagua's Democracy for the Citizens Party won the constituency by-election with 35,440 votes to UDA's 5,450, about 85 per cent of ballots cast.

Critics, among them law professor Makau Mutua, noted that it was one win in ten by-election contests and cautioned against reading too much into it.

The poll suggests a distinction the by-election cannot: DCP can win a Mt Kenya seat while its leader is, for now, not the presidential choice even of his own party's supporters. Among DCP supporters, 34 per cent prefer Sifuna and 25 per cent Gachagua.

NATIONALLY GACHAGUA'S OWN PRESIDENTIAL RATING IS 4 PER CENT, AND 11 PER CENT IN MT KENYA, HIS HOME GROUND.

TIFA frames the opposition's selection debate as Gachagua's emphasis on ethno-regional "vote-basket" numbers against Ndindi Nyoro's emphasis on experience and capacity to perform.

The poll is the sharpest available test of the first argument, and the numbers do not flatter it. A vote-basket argument assumes the basket can be delivered.

In Mt Kenya, those polled prefer Sifuna to Gachagua almost three to one, 32 per cent to 11 per cent. Preferring a winner is not the same as refusing a ticket, but it is the evidence the argument has to answer.

What The Poll Cannot See

Three limits matter. First, TIFA asked whom respondents would like to win "whether or not you have ever voted or intend to vote", so 31–31 describes adults' preferences, not voters'.

The release's outline promises a registered versus non-registered breakdown, but it does not appear in the deck. It is the cut that would test every number above.

Second, the undecided are not evenly spread.

Only 5 per cent of BBG supporters and 8 per cent of its opponents are undecided about the next president; among those with no view on the BBG the figure is 36 per cent, and among those unaware of it, 43 per cent.

The 15 per cent undecided are concentrated among the politically disengaged, who may also be the least likely to turn out.

Third, time. Fieldwork ran from 26 October to 5 November, and the opposition's unity talks have continued since. TIFA says as much, and promises further releases from the same survey.

What to watch is therefore specific: whether a registered-voter cut preserves Sifuna's geographic spread, whether Ruto can move in Mt Kenya and Nairobi without the BBG moving first, and whether the opposition names its ticket before the year ends or after it.

The tie says the race is open. The maps say how.

TWO BLOCS, ONE IMPASSE EACH: WHY NEITHER SIDE'S MUSCLE SECURES VOTES

The UDA–ODM partnership has chosen William Ruto as its presidential candidate, but negotiations persist. The opposition aims to present a single candidate but has not yet agreed on the selection process. Both sides are finding that declaring political arrangements is simpler than executing them.

Kenya's 2027 presidential contest is taking shape around two broad formations. President William Ruto has won the backing of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM).

Opposition leaders, meanwhile, have pledged to unite behind one challenger.

This sets up a potential contest between the incumbent's governing alliance and an opposition coalition. Yet neither has shown that its leaders' agreements can deliver the expected votes.

The ruling partnership assumes ODM supporters will back the president they opposed in 2022. The opposition assumes leaders with presidential ambitions, party structures and regional bases will accept a shared candidate without losing supporters.

These are fundamental questions: can either alliance become a national electoral vehicle, rather than a temporary pact among leaders?



UDA and ODM have chosen their candidate; the opposition is still negotiating how to select one. Both face the same challenge: leaders' agreement does not guarantee voters' consent.

Ruto Has The Ticket, But ODM Still Has To Deliver

The UDA–ODM partnership has made its most consequential decision: President William Ruto will be its 2027 presidential candidate, while ODM will not field its own candidate and will back his re-election.

This gives the ruling coalition a settled presidential ticket, but leaves ODM with a difficult task: explaining why it is supporting a president it opposed in the last election and showing it can mobilise its supporters for him.

Earlier this month, ODM Director of Elections Junet Mohamed said the parties had agreed to form a joint campaign committee and a single treasury account to fund candidates from grassroots to presidential level.

A written coalition agreement is expected in February 2027. The parties have also formed a joint manifesto team, due to complete its work by January 2027.

They have reportedly rejected formal constituency zoning in favour of what Junet called "complementarity": each party would draw on the other's regional strengths rather than compete where one is better positioned.

These are meaningful steps. A shared campaign structure could coordinate mobilisation, and a written agreement could make commitments more binding.

But key details remain unsettled, including government positions, the Deputy President's post and ODM's influence in a future administration. Junet says ODM wants a documented partnership, not unconditional support based on goodwill.

The party intends to negotiate from its current place in government and seek further guarantees.

UDA leaders, however, have suggested the presidency and deputy presidency are not negotiable. The disagreement exposes the limits of the consensus: Ruto's candidacy is settled, but the terms of campaigning together and sharing power are not.

ODM must retain its identity and show it gained tangible value from a partnership that gives up its clearest expression of political independence: its own presidential ticket.

The challenge is also organisational, as ODM supporters are not a transferable asset controlled by party leaders. Those who backed Raila Odinga did so for varied reasons — including party loyalty, regional politics, policy, the candidate and opposition to the incumbent. These motivations may not translate into support for Ruto.





The 2022 results show the constituency's scale, but cannot predict how many Odinga voters will back Ruto in 2027. Ruto won 7,176,141 votes (50.49 per cent) and Odinga 6,942,930 (48.85 per cent), a margin of 233,211. The close result highlights the importance of mobilisation, turnout and regional distribution, not a transferable vote count.

The candidates ran on opposing platforms; their supporters were not voting on a future UDA–ODM deal. The next election will directly test whether the partnership can persuade them to choose differently. ODM representatives, county networks, local organisers and political influencers must make the case in their constituencies.

Some may do so enthusiastically; others may hesitate if the final deal falls short of their expectations. The ruling alliance has a candidate, but no proof yet that the electorate is consolidated.

Unity Is A Promise, Not Yet A Selection Process

The opposition's problem is nearly the reverse: it has pledged unity, established leaders and a shared interest in challenging the incumbent, but no agreed, trusted way to choose its campaign leader.

At an August 24–25 Kiambu retreat, opposition principals signed a unity pledge and coalition agreement, promising to stay together, select one presidential candidate through a credible process and support the winner.

The United Alternative Government's leadership includes Rigathi Gachagua, Kalonzo Musyoka, Fred Matiang'i, Martha Karua, Justin Muturi, Eugene Wamalwa and Peter Munya.

LINDA MWANANCHI MOVEMENT HAS THROWN ITS WEIGHT BEHIND NAIROBI SENATOR EDWIN SIFUNA. THIS HAS FURTHER COMPLICATED THE UNITED OPPOSITION AGENDA AS SIFUNA HAS EMERGED AS THE WILD CARD THAT NO ONE EXPECTED.

The field is crowded. Musyoka, Gachagua, Matiang'i, Karua, Wamalwa, Muturi, and Ndindi Nyoro have been reported to have presidential ambitions or interest in the ticket.

Their profiles, regional networks and leadership claims differ. Some have declared their ambitions; others have expressed interest while saying they will back a shared candidate.

Then there is the Linda Mwananchi Movement that has thrown its weight behind Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna. This has further complicated the United Opposition agenda as Sifuna has emerged as the wild card that no one expected.

The coalition must therefore turn unity into a legitimate process. Options include consensus among principals, negotiated political concessions, an opinion-based process or formal nominations. Each carries risks: consensus can drag on, voting can alienate the losing faction, and decisions controlled by party leaders may lack broader public legitimacy.

November 9 statements by Nyoro and Matiang'i, and Karua's assurance that disagreements were normal, reaffirmed support for a single candidate. But they did not resolve the operational questions left open in August.

The opposition must settle these issues before the campaign is fully underway. A late choice would leave little time to build a national campaign; a bitter contest could cause the fragmentation unity was meant to prevent.

Supporting a candidate is also different from campaigning for one.



The latter requires parties to pool resources, coordinate messages, negotiate nominations for other offices and manage the expectations of leaders who miss out on the presidential ticket.

Running Mate Is A Negotiation, Not A Regional Formula

Both alliances face another major decision: choosing a running mate.

For UDA and ODM, the choice will signal how they plan to share power. ODM's support for Ruto raises questions about what it will receive in return and whether that agreement will shape the presidential ticket.

For the opposition, a running mate could balance regional interests and reassure factions that their support is valued. However, appeasing one bloc may alienate others if the presidential candidate's selection is already disputed.

The IEBC's election timetable sets nominations for May 29–June 11, 2027, depending on the position. Parties must settle and submit their presidential tickets within that window, concluding negotiations early enough for campaigning, running-mate selection and formal requirements.

Coalitions in 2013, 2017 and 2022 united parties and leaders with established support bases, but results cannot show how many votes partners transferred.

NEITHER SIDE SHOULD MISTAKE LARGE RALLIES, CROWDED NEGOTIATING TABLES OR REGIONAL CLAIMS FOR SECURED VOTES

Voters are not delegates, and national totals cannot reveal how individuals might have voted if their preferred party or candidate had acted differently.

By-Elections Offer Clues, Not A National Forecast

By-elections since the last General Election offer clues about the political climate, but are not national opinion polls.

In November 2025, UDA candidates won the closely watched Mbeere North and Malava parliamentary contests. In February 2026, UDA's Mohamed Tubi Tubi won Isiolo South.

In May, UDA's David Kipsang Keter won Emurua Dikirr with 18,266 votes, ahead of DCP's 10,760. But in July, DCP's Sammy Douglas Kamau Waweru won Ol Kalou with 35,440 votes, defeating UDA.

These results show UDA retaining or gaining seats, while the opposition can also win. Ol Kalou especially warns against treating UDA's other by-election wins as proof of an automatic national advantage.

Each contest had different candidates, turnout, party structures and local grievances. They cannot show how constituents would vote in a presidential election, let alone predict the national outcome.

Nor can parliamentary by-elections measure whether ODM support would transfer to Ruto; that partnership has not faced a presidential contest.

The Ball Will Test The Arithmetic

The ruling coalition has an early advantage: it has a presidential candidate and has begun negotiating how the parties will campaign. But the partnership's terms, power-sharing arrangements and ODM's ability to persuade supporters to back Ruto remain unresolved.

The opposition shares a goal and has pledged to field one candidate, but its selection process and coalition arrangements are unsettled. It must prove unity can survive competition among its leaders.

Neither side should mistake large rallies, crowded negotiating tables or regional claims for secured votes. These indicate organisation, not voter behaviour.

The next nine months will show whether the alliances can resolve internal disputes, build credible campaigns and give voters a clear reason to support them.

The ruling partnership must prove it is more than a deal among party leaders; the opposition must show its unity can withstand choosing a leader. The bottomline is not who can gather more political leaders, but who can convince voters they deserve support.



THE VOTER'S AGENDA: JOBS, COSTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Cost of living, jobs and taxes dominate what Kenyans say they want. The manifesto race will show who is answering those concerns, which voters they are answering, and whether their promises can survive the test of delivery.

The most important question in Kenya's 2027 election may not be which candidate has the largest political following. It may be whether the candidates understand what voters expect them to do with the power they are seeking.

For many households, the election hinges on immediate economic concerns: food prices, jobs, education costs, taxes and healthcare. These longstanding issues carry particular weight as the incumbent seeks another term and the opposition offers an alternative.

The manifesto contest matters only if it connects political ambition to voters' priorities. A list of promises is not an economic plan, and a slogan is not a delivery framework.

Economy Is Election's Most Difficult Question

TIFA's 2026 surveys offer the strongest evidence of public sentiment nationwide.

A face-to-face survey of 2,013 adults across all 47 counties, conducted May 2–11, found 74 per cent believed Kenya was heading in the wrong direction.

In a June 13–22 survey of 2,048 adults, 44 per cent named unemployment and poverty as the country's biggest problem, while 25 per cent cited inflation, high prices and taxes.

Economic concerns therefore accounted for 69 per cent of responses. Corruption was cited by 19 per cent, and poor leadership by 7 per cent.

These figures measure concerns, not voting intentions. They do not show that respondents will back the opposition, reject the government or support a particular candidate. Dissatisfied voters may remain undecided, or believe the administration deserves more time.

Political actors may interpret dissatisfaction as support for their own positions: the opposition could see its criticism gaining traction, while the ruling coalition could argue its economic programme needs continuity. The surveys establish neither claim.

They do suggest the economy will dominate political debate. Both blocs must explain what they would change or preserve, and how they would fund their proposals.

The June survey also found that 66 per cent felt worse off than before the 2022 election, down from 75 per cent in May.

This shift suggests perceptions can change with economic conditions and warns against treating one survey as a lasting verdict on government performance.

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The incumbent must show that current economic policies are improving household lives. The opposition must explain how its alternative would deliver better results without merely reversing unpopular decisions.

YOUNG VOTERS NEED MORE THAN ASSURANCES THAT CANDIDATES BELIEVE IN THEIR POTENTIAL. THEY NEED TO KNOW HOW THE ECONOMY WILL CREATE OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND ESTABLISHED BUSINESSES AND WELL-CONNECTED INDIVIDUALS.

Jobs Are Not An Abstract Promise For Young Voters

Unemployment and the cost of living are linked but distinct. For households without reliable income, lower inflation may not make rent, food, or school costs affordable.

For young people entering the labour market, finding work may matter more than national growth.

According to Infotrak's end-2025 findings, unemployment was the leading household financial burden (26 per cent), followed by high food prices (25 per cent). Among respondents aged 18–26, 44 per cent cited unemployment as their main burden. For those over 55, school fees led at 26 per cent.

These differences matter: voters have varied economic priorities. A job-seeking young person, a parent paying school fees, a trader facing taxes and a farmer managing production costs may all be dissatisfied, but need different solutions.

Campaign promises on youth empowerment and job creation will face close scrutiny.

Both sides are likely to court young voters, but job pledges must be specific: how many, in which sectors, and by when? How many will be formal and informal? What roles will procurement, industrial policy, investment, training and finance play?

Promising millions of jobs without explaining the assumptions sets a target, not a plan. Voters should be able to distinguish government-created jobs from those expected through private investment and livelihoods supported by training or enterprise programmes.

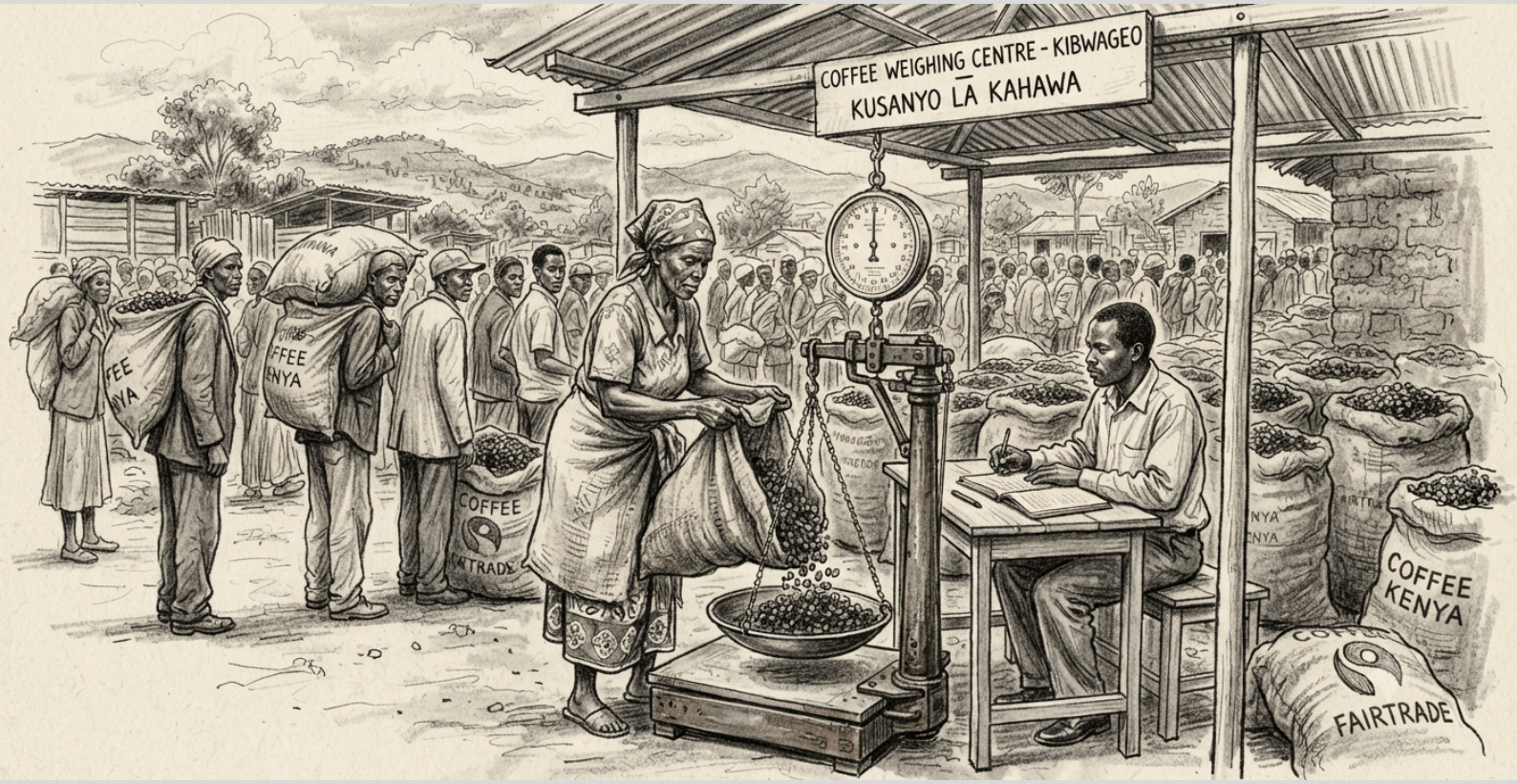
Entrepreneurship pledges also need scrutiny. Credit and training help, but do not guarantee customers. Small businesses also need predictable taxes, affordable energy, reliable infrastructure and consumers with spending power.

Young voters need more than assurances that candidates believe in their potential. They need to know how the economy will create opportunities beyond established businesses and well-connected individuals.

Taxes, Trust And The Cost Of Government

Taxation is an issue neither bloc can resolve with slogans alone. TIFA's June 2026 findings gave taxation the lowest performance rating among sectors assessed under the broad-based government. Infotrak's end-of-2025 survey found corruption was the most cited driver of the cost of living (31 per cent), followed by taxes (26 per cent) and government policies (16 per cent).

These findings highlight two concerns: the burden of raising public revenue and how government uses the money it collects.



This is more complex than promising tax cuts. The government needs revenue for public services, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and security.

Parties promising cuts must specify which taxes they would change, what spending they would reduce and how they would fund remaining commitments.

Those advocating stable or higher revenue must show that funds are used efficiently and the burden is shared fairly.

Any tax proposal's credibility depends on its spending plan. Tax cuts without replacement revenue or spending reductions are incomplete; so are higher-revenue plans that ignore waste, corruption and poor services.

The election should move beyond whether Kenyans pay too much tax. The key questions are what services citizens should receive, what they should cost, and how the next administration will show public money is spent as intended.

One National Election, Different Regional Pressures

National surveys offer a broad picture but can obscure regional differences.

Infotrak's supplied material shows cost of living ranked highly nationwide, with reported proportions ranging from 36 per cent in Nairobi to 46 per cent in Western Kenya in September 2025.

Economic pressures vary by location and livelihood. Urban households face housing, transport, food, and utility costs differently from rural households that rely on agriculture or informal trade.

Insecurity and access to markets, health facilities, schools and infrastructure also shape views of government performance.

Political blocs cannot rely on a single national manifesto to resonate equally across regions. A credible programme must address local conditions without making competing regional promises, and it must clarify county governments' role.

Since devolved institutions deliver many everyday services, national candidates should not claim sole credit for local gains or blame counties for every failure.

Manifestos should specify national government commitments, county responsibilities and how the two levels will work together.

Manifesto Race Has Begun, But Evidence Is Not Yet Public

UDA and ODM have formed a ten-member team to draft a joint manifesto. The opposition calls itself an alternative government and promises a common political direction, but the available material does not detail either side's policies or proposals.

It is therefore too early to judge whether they address voters' top concerns; speeches and campaign statements cannot replace a published, scrutinizable programme.

The UDA–ODM manifesto must explain how the partners reconcile their interests and priorities, and whether their approach to jobs, taxes, public spending and services would change.

The opposition must likewise show that its parties can agree on priorities, identify necessary resources and explain how its proposals differ from the government's.

POLITICAL BLOCS CANNOT RELY ON A SINGLE NATIONAL MANIFESTO TO RESONATE EQUALLY ACROSS REGIONS. A CREDIBLE PROGRAMME MUST ADDRESS LOCAL CONDITIONS WITHOUT MAKING COMPETING REGIONAL PROMISES AND CLARIFY COUNTY GOVERNMENTS' ROLE.

Voters should be able to compare both programmes on jobs, living costs, taxes and revenue, healthcare, education, corruption and spending accountability.

Promises must be measurable: job targets need a baseline and timeline; cheaper healthcare requires a financing and implementation plan; and tax cuts must be reconciled with the cost of public services.

Delivery Record Cannot Be Separated From Promises

The election will also serve as a referendum on the administration's record, though voters will weigh more than policy performance.

The government must defend its tax, spending, housing, healthcare and employment decisions. The opposition must explain what it would change, and why voters should trust it to deliver.

The Chronicle will judge neither side by campaign claims. Assessing delivery requires primary evidence, including official inflation, labour-market, Treasury, health-sector and audit data, plus documented outcomes.

Promises require the same scrutiny. Assess each manifesto commitment by its cost, timeline, responsible institution and measurable outcome. Clarify dependencies on county governments, private investment or Parliament.

THE GOVERNMENT MUST DEFEND ITS TAX, SPENDING, HOUSING, HEALTHCARE AND EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS. THE OPPOSITION MUST EXPLAIN WHAT IT WOULD CHANGE, AND WHY VOTERS SHOULD TRUST IT TO DELIVER.

This matters especially in healthcare and housing, where announcements and enrolment figures may suggest progress without showing access, quality, affordability or implementation.

Debate should focus less on projects announced and more on what has changed for intended beneficiaries.

Five Questions Every Candidate Should Answer

Between now and August 2027, candidates should be asked to move beyond broad declarations and address five practical questions:

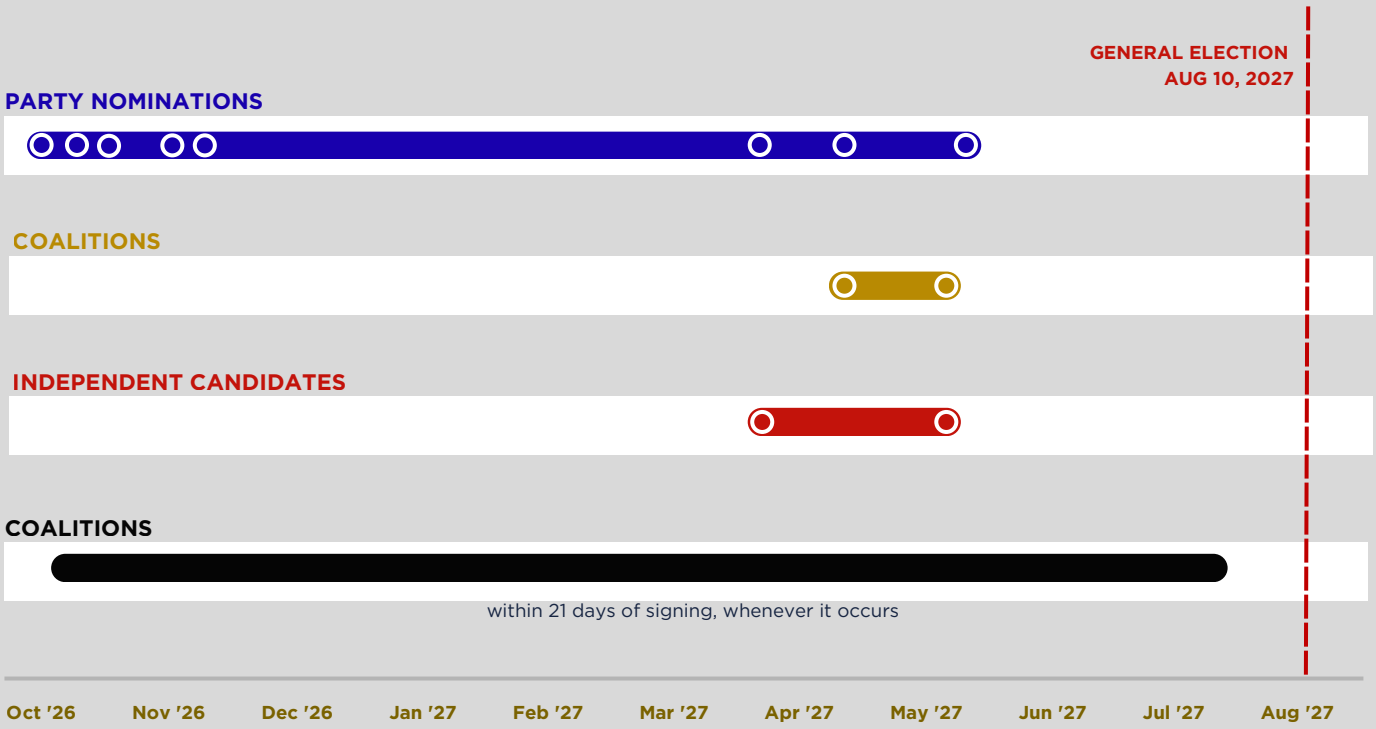
1. **Jobs:** *What is your plan for youth employment, how many jobs do you expect it to support or create by 2030, and what evidence supports that target?*
2. **Taxes:** *Which taxes would you reduce, retain, or introduce, and how would you replace any lost revenue?*
3. **Corruption:** *What would you do in your first 100 days to reduce corruption, and which measurable indicators would show whether your plan is working?*
4. **Public services:** *How will you finance and improve healthcare and education, and what should citizens expect to change within your first two years?*
5. **Accountability:** *What will you do differently from the people whose record you criticise, and how will voters be able to measure your performance?*

These questions are not a substitute for a manifesto. They test whether the manifesto contains a credible plan. The central issue for 2027 is not whether politicians can identify the problems facing the country. The surveys suggest that voters have already done that.

The question is whether the people seeking office can explain how they intend to solve those problems, what their proposals will cost, and how the public will know whether they have succeeded.



THE ELECTIONS CALENDAR



KEY DEADLINES AT A GLANCE

- **Oct 7–15 2026**
  Party signatories submitted to ORPP
- **Oct 30 2026**
  Nomination rules certified by ORPP
- **Nov 6 2026**
  Certified nomination rules filed with IEBC
- **Mar 16–23 2027**
  Party membership lists submitted to ORPP
- **Mar 23 – May 82027**
  Independent candidate symbol & status window
- **Apr 12 2027**
  Certified membership registers filed with IEBC
- **Apr 12 2027**
  Coalition political party registration due
- **May 8 2027**
  Resignation deadline for independent candidates
- **9 May 2027**
  Pre-election coalition confirmation due
- **12 May 2027**
  Party member register + assets/liabilities statement due
- **Rolling**
  Merger agreements due within 21 days of signing

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