



Citizens' Perception of The 2024 Ghana General Elections

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Table of Contents



Acknowledgments	Page 1
Executive Summary	Page 2
Recommendations	Page 4
Introduction	Page 5
Contextual Analysis	Page 6
Scope and Methodology	Page 9
Findings of the of the Survey	Page 10
Citizens' Participation in Elections	Page 10
Political Parties, Candidates and Manifestoes	Page 12
Electoral Commission	Page 17
Election Security	Page 20
The Judiciary	Page 21
The Media and Election Integrity	Page 22
Recommendations	Page 24
The Electoral Commission	Page 24
The Police	Page 25
The Judiciary	Page 25
The Media	Page 25
Regional Collaboration	Page 26
Conclusion	Page 27
References	Page 28

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Amina Miango is a Nigerian-trained lawyer, chartered mediator, and election expert with over a decade of experience in election administration and management. She has extensive expertise in various aspects of electoral processes, including legal frameworks governing elections both domestically and internationally, election laws on candidates' qualifications, election dispute resolution mechanisms, and the dynamics between legal statutes and electoral procedures. Amina's commitment to upholding the integrity and fairness of electoral processes began at the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), where she collaborated with a diverse range of electoral stakeholders to enhance the electoral process. Currently, she is the project lead for the Election Project at the Center for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID), where she leads initiatives aimed at voter education and advancing electoral transparency, integrity, accountability, and inclusivity.

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a survey that explores various aspects of Ghana's electoral process, focusing on citizens' participation, political parties, the Electoral Commission, election security, the judiciary, and media influence. The survey aimed to assess public perceptions and engagement and identify areas that could enhance democratic processes and election integrity.

Citizens' Participation in Elections: Citizens' involvement in elections is fundamental to a thriving democracy. In Ghana, voter turnout has remained high, with 73.2% of eligible voters participating in recent elections. The 2020 election saw a turnout of 78.89%. 34.3% of respondents in the survey indicated they were first-time voters, with 90.6% of the 1,110 respondents stating that they were registered voters. While 73.7% of respondents expressed their intent to vote, 15.9% indicated they would not participate, and 10.4% were undecided. Despite strong voter engagement, Ghanaians living abroad still do not have voting rights, which remains unresolved despite court rulings.

Political Parties, Candidates, and Manifestoes: Political parties play a central role in Ghana's democracy, with 27 registered parties as of June 2024. However, only 45.7% of survey respondents were very familiar with political parties and their platforms. Many respondents (58.5%) indicated that a party's track record influenced their voting decisions. Thirteen candidates¹, including nine from political parties and four independents, will contest the presidential election, underscoring the importance of multi-party competition in safeguarding democratic values². Manifestoes also play a crucial role, with 61.4% of respondents stating that a candidate's manifesto would influence their vote.

Electoral Commission: The Ghana Electoral Commission (EC) has been instrumental in conducting fair elections since its establishment in 1993. The EC operates independently as mandated by the Constitution. The survey revealed that 85.3% of respondents believe their votes would count, and 61.9% expressed confidence in the EC's ability to conduct free and fair elections. Public trust in the EC is crucial for fostering participation and ensuring that election results reflect the people's will.

1. Candidate of the Ghana Freedom Party Akua Donkor is deceased and the party signified interest in withdrawing from the race.
2. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/strengthening_democracy_by_embracing_a_multi_party_system

The Police and Election Security: The police maintain security during elections. In the 2020 election, over 60,000 security agents were deployed, with the police playing a leading role. The 2024 election also saw the introduction of a toll-free number for public communication with the police. The survey revealed high confidence in the police, with 78.1% of respondents trusting them to secure voters and election materials. However, concerns about potential violence persist, particularly given the heated political climate.

The Judiciary: The judiciary plays a key role in ensuring electoral fairness and upholding democratic principles. However, the increasing involvement of the judiciary in electoral disputes has raised concerns about its perceived impartiality, especially given the executive's role in judicial appointments. A significant portion of respondents (46.6%) expressed a lack of confidence in the judiciary's ability to ensure fair electoral dispute resolution.

The Media and Election Integrity: The media serves as a vital conduit between voters and the electoral process. Despite challenges such as attacks on journalists, Ghana maintains a relatively free press, with a Freedom House rating of 3 out of 4 for media independence. The media plays a crucial role in informing the electorate, holding stakeholders accountable, and combating disinformation. The survey revealed that 43.9% of respondents trust social media for election news, followed by 34.8% trusting television news.

Overall, the findings suggest that while Ghana's electoral process enjoys significant trust and engagement from citizens, challenges remain, particularly in enhancing voter participation among the diaspora, improving trust in the judiciary, and addressing security concerns. These insights will be useful in guiding policy recommendations to strengthen democratic processes in Ghana.

Recommendations

1. Electoral Commission

- To address low levels of civic education, voter apathy, and misinformation, the Electoral Commission must prioritize continuous, comprehensive voter education campaigns.
- Regular public trust surveys should be conducted to assess citizen confidence in the electoral process and identify areas for improvement.

2. The Security

- Strengthening community engagement and enhancing officer training on conflict de-escalation and impartiality is essential.
- Proactive measures such as monitoring inflammatory rhetoric, deploying rapid response teams, and improving intelligence gathering will mitigate risks, especially in areas prone to unrest.

3. The Judiciary

- To enhance judicial independence and transparency, the judiciary should reform the appointment process for superior court judges, ensuring transparency and reducing executive influence.
- Simplified summaries of judgments on electoral disputes should be widely disseminated to increase public understanding and trust in the judicial process.

4. The Media

- The media must adhere to ethical standards of fairness, accuracy, and impartiality, particularly during elections.
- Training programs for journalists on electoral laws and responsible reporting are crucial.

5. Regional Collaboration

- Regional cooperation among West African countries can enhance electoral integrity.
- By building capacity through training, technical assistance, and resource-sharing, countries can collectively improve electoral systems, tackle voter fraud, and enhance voter participation.

1.0 Introduction

Elections are a cornerstone of democracy, providing citizens with the opportunity to express their will and shape the governance of their nations. In West Africa, where democratic governance continues to evolve amidst unique regional challenges, understanding the electorate's perceptions, priorities, and concerns is critical to credible, inclusive, and participatory electoral processes. This Citizens' Perception Survey Report on Ghana's Elections seeks to provide valuable insights into the views and sentiments of the Ghanaian electorate, shedding light on the key issues shaping voter behaviour and electoral participation. In a recent survey, the National Commission for Civic Education identified Education, Employment, Health, Roads & Infrastructure and Economy as the most important developmental needs of Ghanaians³.

For the Presidential elections, the Economic Intelligence Unit (EUI) and Fitchsolutions⁴ have predicted a win for the National Democratic Congress (NDC) whose candidate is a former President, John Dramani Mahama. For a person to be elected President in Ghana, the Constitution provides that a person must score fifty-plus one per cent of the total number of valid votes cast at the election to be declared President. Where no candidate scores fifty-plus one per cent, a second election shall be held for the two candidates with the highest votes within twenty-one days after the previous election⁵. For Parliamentary positions, the candidate with the highest number of votes is declared the winner⁶.

In Ghana, the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development's (CJID) work underscores its dedication to empowering citizens and ensuring their voices are heard in the democratic process. By conducting this survey, CJID provides evidence-based insights that inform policy decisions, electoral reforms, and advocacy campaigns, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and resilient electoral system. CJID has spearheaded efforts to improve transparency, foster inclusion, and enhance the credibility of elections across the subregion through initiatives such as election observation, policy advocacy, civic education, public opinion research, and to sanitise the election information ecosystem through its DUBAWA programs. This report reflects the organisation's ongoing commitment to supporting democracy not only in Ghana

3. <https://www.nccegh.org/publications/view/167-2024+PRESIDENTIAL+AND+PARLIAMENTARY+ELECTIONS+MATTERS+OF+CONCERN+TO+THE+GHANAIAN+VOTER.pdf>

4. <https://www.fitchsolutions.com/bmi/political-risk/opposition-ndc-poised-victory-ghanas-december-2024-election-18-11-2024>; <https://country.eiu.com/Ghana/ArticleList/Updates/Politics>

5. Article 63

6. https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/vc/annex/vcy/vcy_gh

but across the West African subregion, as part of its broader mission to enhance good governance, civic engagement, and the protection of human rights. As Ghana prepares for another critical election cycle, we hope this report serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders, including policymakers, electoral bodies, civil society organisations, and the public, to understand and address the concerns of citizens, ensuring that elections truly reflect the will of the people.

1.1 Contextual Analysis

On 7th December 2024, 18,774,159 Ghanaians will go out to 40,976 polling stations to elect a new president and 276 members of Parliament, in the 9th General election since the return to democracy in 1992. Ghana has established a reputation of stability in the sub-region as a democratic state, with peaceful elections and transition of power from one elected government to another. The Economist Intelligence Unit ranks Ghana as the only flawed democracy in the West African sub-region above other countries ranked as authoritarian or hybrid regimes. Despite falling 2 points from 2020 and 2021 when it had a 6.50 and 2022 with 6.43 points, Ghana scored high points in having a stable electoral process and is ranked number 6 in Sub-Saharan Africa and 65 worldwide. Ghana also ranks high on Freedom House's Global Freedom ranking with an 80 over 100 score and is termed 'free'. Yet this election is like no other, there has been an increase in democratic regression across the region through military coups in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, with Burkina Faso sharing a border with Ghana to the North.

There is also the problem posed by post-COVID economic challenges, with the rise in the cost of goods that have affected Ghana as it has affected multiple countries across the world with the World Bank reporting that over 850,000 people were pushed into poverty in Ghana in 2022. In 2022 and 2023, Ghana defaulted on servicing its international debts after the rise in servicing costs; however, the government was able to agree with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to restructure the same. With rising unemployment at 3.56% in December 2023 from 3.52% in December 2022¹³, the economy tops the list as one of the most important issues in this election.

7. <https://ec.gov.gh/>

8. Flawed democracies experience free and fair elections despite encroachments on media freedom. While they also respect civil liberties, they encounter governance issues, potentially having an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation. – Page 66 Democracy Index, 2023 : Age of Conflict

9. 8.33 points out of 10

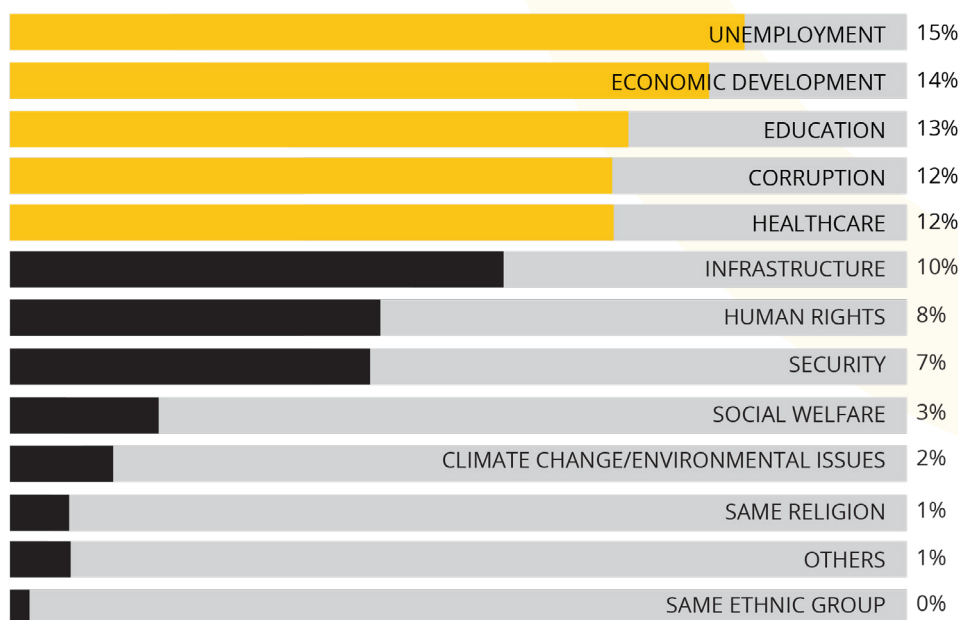
10. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ghana>

11. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/07/19/ghana-economy-expected-to-recover-its-potential-by-2025-says-world-bank-report>

12. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ghana-agrees-debt-restructuring-deal-with-official-creditors-ghana-finance-2024-01-12/>

13. <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/ghana/unemployment-rate#:~:text=Ghana%20Unemployment%20Rate%20increased%20to,an%20average%20rate%20of%205.22%25>

What are the top five issues influencing your vote in the upcoming elections?



The two major candidates in this election are former President John Dramani Mahama, defeated by Nana Akufo-Addo in 2016, and the current Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia. Nana Akufo-Addo, the 80-year-old soon-to-be ex-president of the Republic of Ghana, came into power in January 2017 and concludes the second of two terms allowed for presidents by the Constitution of Ghana. Akufo-Addo and the New Patriotic Party came into power in 2017, after defeating the incumbent President John Dramani Mahama, the first time an opposition party had defeated an incumbent President and got a majority in the first round. In total, twelve (12) presidential candidates¹⁴ including the serving Vice President and former President are contesting in the presidential elections, 276 members of parliament will also be elected for a four-year term as provided by the Ghanaian Constitution. Despite having 9 political parties¹⁵ contesting with multiple independents, the upcoming election will see the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) vying to achieve what has been deemed “breaking the eight,” a reference to Ghana’s historical

14. One party withdrew after the death of their candidate though they are still on the ballot.

15. <https://ec.gov.gh/>

trend of alternation between the NPP and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) every eight years since the Fourth Republic began in 1992. Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia symbolises continuity and a promise to build on President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's legacy. On the other hand, the opposition NDC, led by former President John Dramani Mahama, is campaigning for a return to power. Mahama is positioning himself as the candidate of change, leveraging public dissatisfaction with the government's handling of economic challenges.

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana forms the foundation for electoral jurisprudence along with the Representation of the People Act, 1992 (P.N.D.C.L 284) as amended, Presidential Elections Law, 1992 (P.N.D.C.L 285) as amended, Electoral Commission Act, 1993 (Act 452) as amended, Political Parties Act, 2000 (Act 574), Representation of the People (Parliamentary Constituencies) Instrument, 2004 (C.I. 46), Public Elections (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (C.I. 126), Public Elections Regulations, 2020 (C.I. 127), among others¹⁶. The credibility of Ghana's Electoral Commission (EC) will be under scrutiny in this election. Recent controversies over voter registration processes and allegations of bias have heightened public tension¹⁷.

The youth, who make up a significant portion of the electorate¹⁸, are expected to play a decisive role. Their concerns—ranging from job creation to education and affordable living—are shaping the priorities of political campaigns. Meanwhile, the demand for greater inclusion of diaspora Ghanaians in the electoral process remains a pressing issue, highlighting the need for innovative mechanisms to engage this influential demographic¹⁹.

Ghana's 2024 presidential election is poised to be a landmark event. It will test the nation's democratic resilience while addressing pressing economic and governance issues that resonate both locally and internationally. Ghana remains a key partner for Western governments and organizations advocating for democratic governance in Africa. The 2024 election will undoubtedly attract significant global attention. Ghana's 2024 presidential election is more than a contest between 12 candidates; it is a test of the nation's ability to uphold democratic values in the face of economic challenges and political polarization. As Ghanaians head to the polls, the stakes are high—not just for the country, but for the broader West African region. The election's outcome will shape Ghana's path in addressing pressing national issues while reinforcing its position as a

16. <https://www.thecommonwealth-ilibrary.org/index.php/comsec/catalog/download/277/274/2157?inline=1>

17. <https://www.theafricareport.com/360419/ghana-controversy-over-voter-register-as-opposition-ndc-raises-red-flags/>

18. <https://www.theafricareport.com/364989/ghanas-gen-z-voters-poised-to-sway-december-election/>; <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1193170/registered-voters-in-ghana-by-age/>; https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/Election%20FAQs%20Ghana_Dec.%202024_4.pdf

19. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/It-is-troubling-Ghanaians-in-Diaspora-unable-to-vote-Union-petitions-presidential-candidates-1953466>

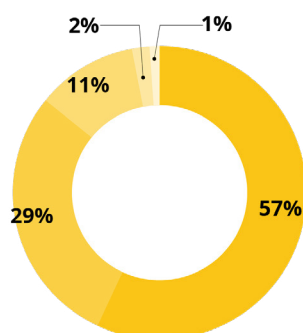
model of democracy on the continent.

2.0 Scope and Methodology

The survey was carried out for one month with a reasonable spread across 11 of the 16 regions in Ghana. Data was collected from 1,110 respondents made up of 55.3% men and 44.7% women aged 18 and above. The survey made use of a mixed data collection approach, using online and offline data collectors to get more inclusive data. The findings will guide strategies to enhance voter education, improve information dissemination, and provide a foundation for stakeholder engagement. Twenty-seven questions were asked of the respondents across diverse subject matters such as demographic information, voter registration status, educational and employment status, understanding of basic concepts in elections and general knowledge of elections, election security, perception of the police, judiciary and the Electoral Commission, as most important issues in the elections.

Ghana has a population of 34,690,243 people²⁰ with 18,774,159 registered voters²¹. In calculating the sample's representativeness, an analysis was conducted to determine the optimal sample size. With a confidence level of 95% using the number of registered voters, at least 385 responses were needed to ensure the real value was within $\pm 5\%$ of the measured value. The survey collected 1,110 responses (registered voters' population ~18.7 million). If we were to use the general population to determine the sample size, a population ~34.6 million) we would need 385 responses, also. The respondents cut across urban and rural areas, with 87.9% from urban areas and 12.1% from rural areas. This indicates that the majority of the respondents in the survey are from urban areas. 57% of respondents were aged 18 to 24, 29% were aged 25 to 34, 11% were aged 35 to 44, 2% were 45 to 54 and 1% were aged 55 and above.

How old are you?



18 - 24 YEARS 25 - 34 YEARS 35 - 44 YEARS 45 - 54 YEARS ABOVE 55 YEARS

20. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ghana-population/>

21. <https://ec.gov.gh/>

3.0 Findings of the Survey

3.1 Citizens' Participation in Elections

Participation in elections and other civic activities is the responsibility of every citizen, especially in democracies. Participating in governance starting with elections is a way for citizens to create a relationship with the government and drive change²². While citizens' participation goes beyond elections, voting in elections is the foundation for every active citizen seeking to participate²³. The average voter turnout in Ghana's elections stands at 73.20%. With a history of fair voter participation and a stable electoral process, it is no surprise that Ghanaians consistently engage in the electoral system. The highest voter turnout to date occurred during the 2004 Presidential election, which saw an impressive 85.6% turnout, with 10,296,970 registered voters. In comparison, the 2020 Presidential election had 17,027,941 registered voters, with 78.89% (13,432,857) of them casting their votes.

Election turnout data from 2000 to 2020²⁴

Source: IFES

Election For	Date	Votes	Registered Voter	Turnout
Ghanaian Presidency	2020-12-07	13,432,857	17,027,941	78.89
Ghanaian Parliament	2018-12-27	1,855,458	2,208,858	84.0
Referendum	2018-12-27	1,855,458	2,208,858	84.0
Ghanaian Parliament	2016-12-07	10,029,923	15,712,499	63.83
Ghanaian Presidency	2016-12-07	10,781,917	15,712,499	68.62
Ghanaian Parliament	2012-12-07	11,225,188	14,158,890	79.28
Ghanaian Presidency	2012-12-07	11,246,982	14,158,890	79.43
Ghanaian Presidency	2008-12-28	9,094,364	12,472,758	72.91
Ghanaian Parliament	2008-12-07	8,549,978	12,472,758	68.55
Ghanaian Presidency	2008-12-07	8,671,272	12,472,758	69.52

22. <https://www.ndi.org/what-we-do/citizen-participation>

23. Joshua A. Douglas, The Foundational Importance of Participation: A Response to Professor Flanders, 66 OJIL. L. R. 81 (2013)

24. <https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/83/>

11 | Citizens Perception of the 2024 Ghana General Elections

Ghanaian Parliament	2004-12-07	8,728,429	10,354,970	84.29
Ghanaian Presidency	2004-12-07	8,813,908	10,296,970	85.6
Ghanaian Presidency	2000-12-28	6,459,003	10,698,652	60.37
Ghanaian Presidency	2000-12-07	6,605,084	10,698,652	61.74
Ghanaian Parliament	2000-12-07	6,633,306	10,698,652	61.74

According to (Douglas, 2013), voting is the most fundamental right in a democracy as it affirms governance through the free choice of the citizens. In Ghana, voting is a fundamental right for all citizens who meet specific legal requirements²⁵, ensuring that eligible individuals can participate in the democratic process. The process of voter registration is governed by the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana²⁶. The requirements for registering to vote in Ghana, like in most democracies, are designed to establish the identity and eligibility of potential voters and to ensure that the electoral process is fair, transparent, and inclusive. These requirements are clearly defined by the Constitution of Ghana. Article 42 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana provides that **“Every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda.”** In 2020, the voter register had 17,027,941 and it has risen to 18, 774,159, 10.25% made up of first-time voters who have just turned 18 or are just registering to vote for the first time.

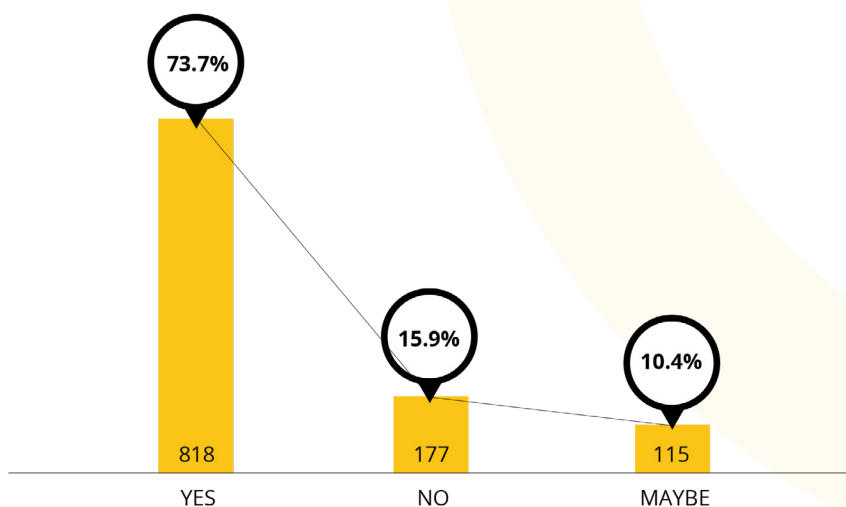
A total of 18,774,159 voters are set to cast their ballots on 7th December, including 131,478 special voters—comprising security personnel, media representatives, and Electoral Commission officials—who will vote before election day due to their special duties²⁷. Ghanaian law also allows voting by proxy, which involves a voter who is unable to vote as a result of illness, being overseas or some form of unavailability appointing a proxy, usually a person who is qualified to vote on their behalf. According to survey data, 34.3% of respondents (381) indicated they were first-time voters. Additionally, 90.6% of those who participated in the survey confirmed that they were registered voters. 73.7% of respondents indicated their intention to vote on election day, 15.9% stated they would not participate, and 10.4% remained undecided.

25. Article 42 of the 1992

26. Article 45 of the Constitution of Ghana.

27. <https://ec.gov.gh/summary-of-2024-certified-voter-register/>

Will you be voting on election day?



Although the Constitution places no restrictions on the residency of potential voters, Ghanaians living abroad have yet to participate in elections. Despite the significant interest from the Ghanaian diaspora—a vibrant and politically engaged community—efforts to enable their voting rights have not materialised. Over the years, court rulings have mandated the Electoral Commission to facilitate voting for citizens abroad, but these directives remain unimplemented²⁸.

3.2 Political Parties, Candidates and Manifestoes

Political parties are fundamental to Ghana's democracy, playing critical roles in the organization of elections, governance, and representation. Since transitioning to constitutional rule in 1992, Ghana has developed a multiparty system, marked by vibrant political contestation and periodic peaceful transitions of power. Article 55 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana grants and guarantees the right to form political parties. Political parties in Ghana operate within a legal framework established by the Constitution and Political Parties Act, of 2000 (Act 574). The Act states that Political parties are formed to sponsor candidates for elections and conduct civic and voter education, among other functions²⁹. This law mandates parties to have a national character, prohibiting them from being founded on ethnic, religious, regional, gender, or professional grounds³⁰.

Political Parties³¹ are expected to register with the Electoral Commission. Most

28. https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Court-clears-Ghanaians-in-diaspora-to-vote-in-2020-610657#google_vignette

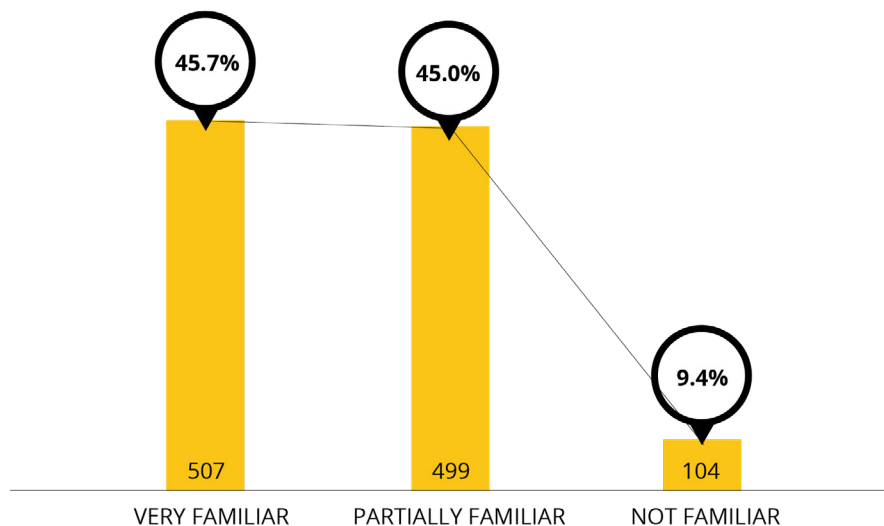
29. Section 1, Parties Act, 2000 (Act 574).

30. Section 3, Parties Act, 2000 (Act 574).

31. Section 4, Parties Act, 2000 (Act 574).

political parties maintain well-organized structures comprising national, regional, and constituency branches. Political parties rely mostly on membership dues, donations, and state subsidies which focus more on allotting time and space on state-owned media organisations for political parties to campaign and carry out other activities³². As of June 2024, the Electoral Commission of Ghana stated that there are 27 registered political parties in Ghana. Political parties tend to limit their communication with citizens to election periods when they are seeking votes. Unsurprisingly, only 45.7% of respondents reported being very familiar with political parties and their platforms for the 2024 elections, while 45% indicated partial familiarity, and 9.4% admitted to being unfamiliar.

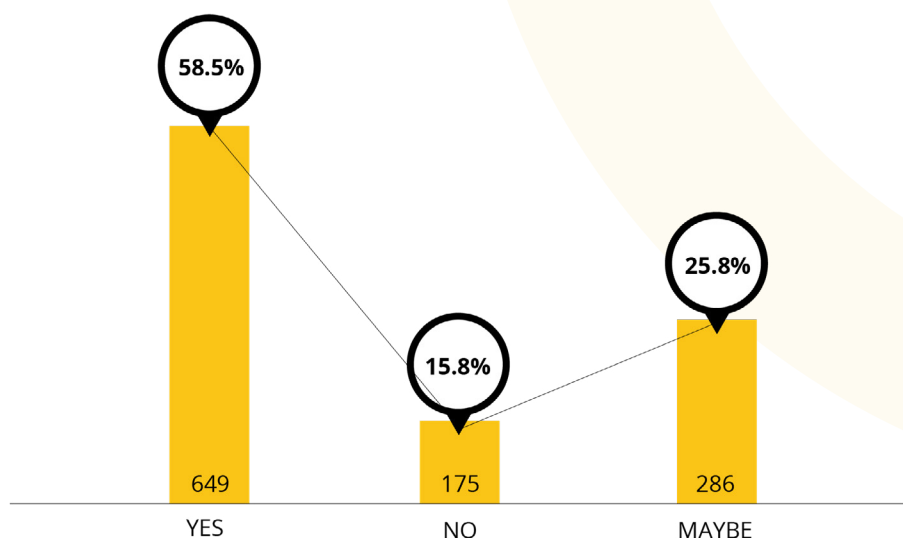
How familiar are you with the political parties and their platforms for the 2024 election



Political party track record was one of the issues raised in the survey, with 58.5% of respondents saying a party's record will determine whether they vote for that party, 15.8% answered No to the question, with 25.8% of respondents saying maybe.

32. Owusu-Mensah, Isaac, Emmanuel Debrah, and Enock Mathapoly-Codjoe, 'The State of Political Party Development in Ghana', in Thomas Poguntke, and Wilhelm Hofmeister (eds), *Political Parties and the Crisis of Democracy: Organization, Resilience, and Reform* (Oxford, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 22 Aug. 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198888734.003.0025>, accessed 1 Dec. 2024.

Will a political party’s track record determine your willingness to vote?



Thirteen candidates were cleared to contest in the presidential elections, with 9 sponsored by political parties and four running as independents. However, the candidate of the Ghana Freedom Party, Akua Donkor, passed away, leading the party to withdraw from the elections though it remains on the ballot³³. According to the Constitution, an individual may contest for the presidency if they are nominated through a document signed by themselves and at least two registered voters from each district assembly’s jurisdiction. The nomination must be submitted to the Electoral Commission by the designated nomination day. Additionally, the presidential candidate is required to nominate a running mate to serve as Vice President.

Candidate	Party
Mahamudu Bawumia	New Patriotic Party (NPP)
John Dramani Mahama	National Democratic Congress (NDC)
Alan John Kwadwo Kyerematen	Independent Candidate
Christian Kwabena Andrews	Ghana Union Movement (GUM)

33. <https://ec.gov.gh/death-of-2024-presidential-candidate-madam-akua-donkor/> <https://www.pulse.com.gh/news/politics/ghana-freedom-party-withdraws-from-2024-elections-due-to-founder-akua-donkors-death/b6ehfk6>

Daniel Augustus Lartey Jnr	Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP)
George Twum-Barima-Adu	Independent Candidate
Nana Kwame Bediako	Independent Candidate
Akua Donkor	Ghana Freedom Party (GFP)
Hassan Abdulai Ayariga	All People's Congress (APC)
Kofi Akpaloo	Liberal Party of Ghana (LPG)
Mohammed Frimpong	National Democratic Party (NDP)
Nana Akosua Frimpomaa	Convention People's Party (CPP)
Kofi Koranteng	Independent Candidate

The presence of multiple candidates in an election is not merely about offering voters a diverse range of choices; it is also a crucial safeguard against the emergence of a one-party state. When multiple candidates and political parties actively contest for power, they create a competitive political environment that fosters accountability and transparency. This competition prevents any single party from monopolising power, thereby preserving the democratic principles of pluralism and representation. Moreover, the existence of multiple candidates ensures that a broad spectrum of ideas, policies, and ideologies is presented to the electorate. This diversity encourages public debate and empowers citizens to make informed decisions based on their priorities and values. It also provides opportunities for minority voices and underrepresented groups to participate in the political process, contributing to a more inclusive and balanced governance structure. In addition, the presence of multiple contenders acts as a check on the ruling party by challenging its policies and decisions, compelling it to remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. This dynamic can lead to better governance, as parties and candidates strive to win public trust through innovative solutions and effective leadership. Without this competition, there is a risk of political stagnation, complacency, and authoritarian tendencies, which can undermine democratic institutions and erode citizens' freedoms. Ultimately, competitive elections with multiple candidates are a cornerstone of democracy, ensuring that power remains accountable, governance is inclusive, and the political landscape reflects the diversity and complexity of society³⁴.

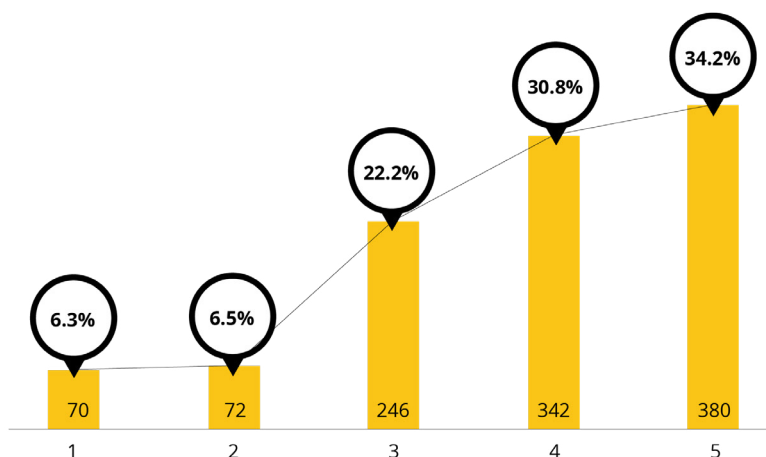
Manifestoes, much like candidates themselves, serve as critical blueprints that outline the vision, policies, and goals of individuals or political parties seeking election. They provide citizens with a comprehensive understanding of what the candidates intend to achieve if given the mandate to govern. In legal terms, a manifesto can be likened to

34. Huntington, Samuel P. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*; Dahl, Robert A. (1971). *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*

an offer in a contractual agreement. When voters endorse a candidate by casting their votes, and that candidate is subsequently elected, the manifesto effectively becomes a documented representation of a social contract between the elected official and the electorate. This implied agreement establishes a framework of accountability, with the manifesto functioning as a benchmark against which the performance of the elected official is measured. It encapsulates the promises made during the campaign, translating aspirations into tangible goals and actionable policies. By articulating these commitments, manifestoes empower voters to make informed decisions while also holding elected leaders accountable to their stated objectives, ensuring that governance reflects the will and needs of the people. Expanding beyond a mere campaign tool, manifestoes play a vital role in improving democratic engagement. They serve as a bridge connecting citizens to the policymaking process, enabling public discourse and critique of proposed agendas. Furthermore, they contribute to transparency by laying out clear, measurable outcomes that can guide both governance and civic oversight throughout the elected term³⁵.

In assessing potential voters' understanding of candidates' manifestos, 64.2% reported having a very good understanding, while 6.3% felt they had a very poor understanding. Based on the data collected from respondents, the majority of voters demonstrated a clear grasp of the candidates' promises. This insight will be valuable in evaluating the candidates' performance once elected. The promises made by candidates include creating jobs, reducing the cost of living, strengthening democratic governance, promoting inclusion, combating corruption, and improving education, among others.

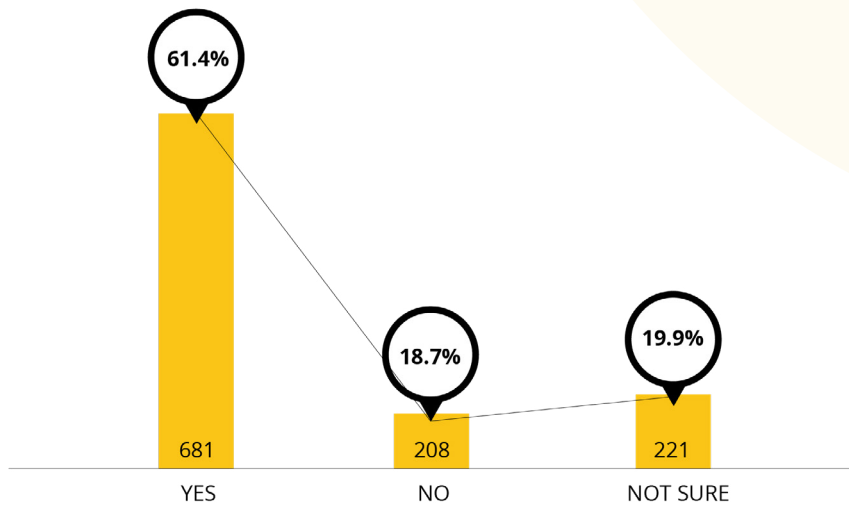
How would you rate your understanding of the candidate's manifestos?



35. Beetham, D. (1991). *The Legitimation of Power*. Macmillan.; Locke, J. (1690). *Two Treatises of Government*.

A large number of respondents also stated that manifestos will be a major deciding factor in voting for a candidate. 61.4% stated yes to the question 'Will candidates' manifestos influence who you vote for?', with 18.7% saying the manifesto will not influence who they will vote for and 19.9% saying they are not sure.

Will candidates' manifestos influence who you vote for?



3.4 Electoral Commission

Before 1968, elections in Ghana were managed by the Minister of Local Government. Then in 1968, Ghana's Electoral Commission was created as an interim institution, until it became permanent in 1971. After several military interventions, the present Commission came into existence in 1993 through the provision of Article 43(1) of the Constitution of Ghana with the mandate to compile the register of voters, demarcate electoral boundaries for national and local elections, conduct and supervise elections and referenda and educate the people on the electoral process and its purpose, among other things³⁶. The Constitution also provides for the independence of the Commission stating that it shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority³⁷.

36. Article 45 of the Constitution of Ghana
37. Article 47 of the Constitution of Ghana

The Ghanaian Electoral Commission is composed of seven members, which is made up of a chairman, two Deputy Chairmen and four members. The President appoints the members of the Commission in consultation with the Council of State³⁸. To be qualified for appointment, members of the Commission have general qualification requirements with specific terms and conditions of service spelt out depending on the position. For a person to be qualified to be a member of the commission, they have to be qualified to be elected members of parliament. The Chairman of the Commission has the same terms and conditions of service as a Justice of the Court of Appeal; the Vice Chairmen has the terms and conditions of the Justice of a High Court, and the four members shall be paid allowances to be determined by the parliament. The Chairman and Vice Chairmen are prohibited from holding other public offices while they hold office³⁹.

The Ghanaian Constitution explicitly guarantees the independence of the Electoral Commission, ensuring that it operates as an autonomous institution free from external interference. According to constitutional provisions, in the performance of its functions, the Electoral Commission shall not be subject to the direction, control, or influence of any individual, group, or authority. This framework is designed to uphold the principles of impartiality and fairness, which are critical to the credibility and integrity of Ghana's electoral process. By insulating the Commission from undue political or external pressures, the Constitution aims to foster public trust in its ability to manage elections transparently and efficiently. This independence extends to all aspects of its mandate, thereby ensuring that electoral outcomes are solely determined by the will of the people⁴⁰.

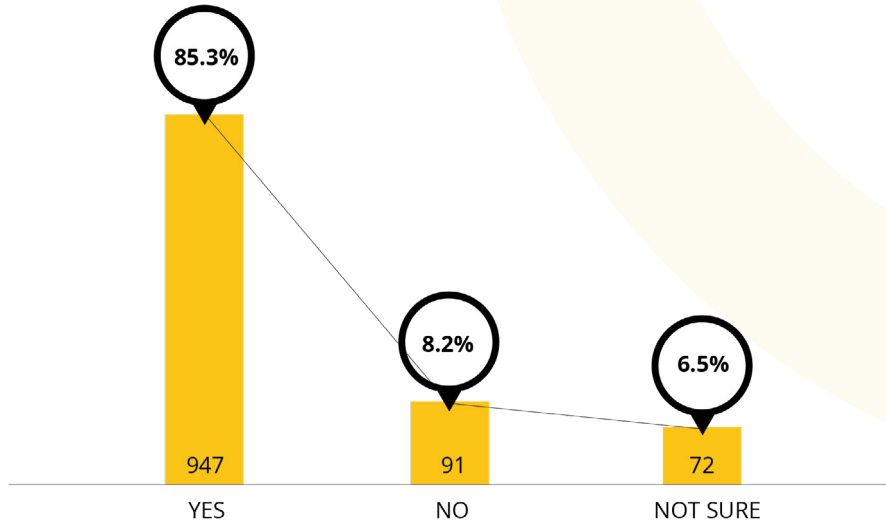
In a similar survey in Nigeria by the CJID for Edo and Ondo Governorship elections, lack of trust in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was a major reason citizens gave for non-participation in the electoral process, as they stated that they did not believe that their votes will count. In this survey, however, 85.3% of respondents believe that their votes would count with 61.9% of the respondents stating that they are somewhat confident and very confident of the Electoral Commission's ability to conduct free and fair elections. This is an important perception as it encourages voters to come out to vote and goes a long way in ensuring that election results are generally accepted as the will of the people

38. Article 70 of the Constitution of Ghana

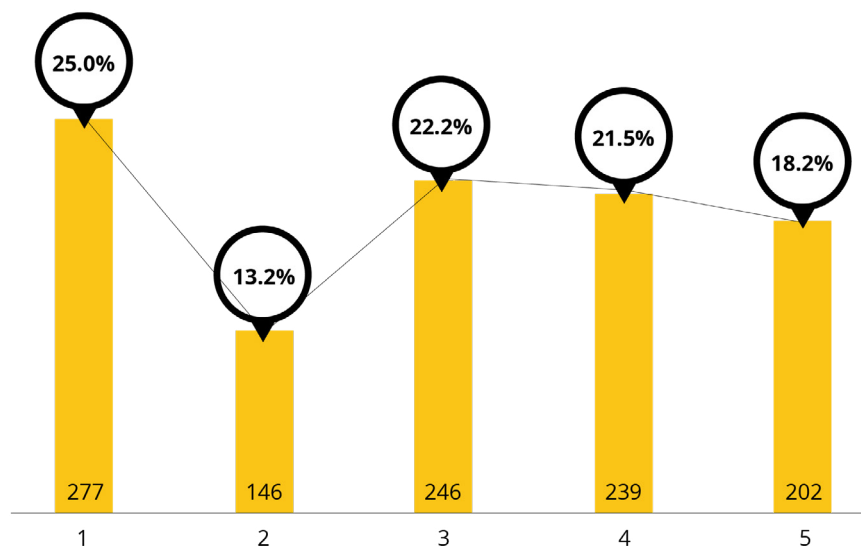
39. Article 44 of the Constitution of Ghana

40. Article 46.

Do you believe your vote will count?



How confident are you in the electoral commission's ability to conduct free and fair elections?

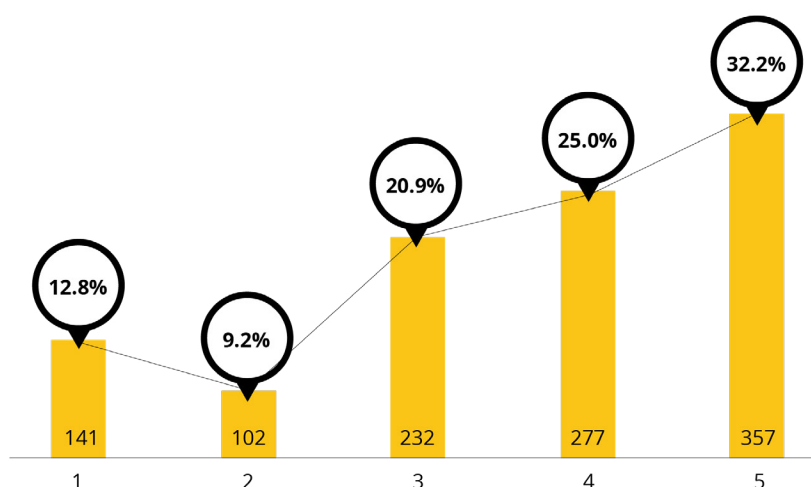


3.5 Election Security

In Ghana, the police play a crucial role as the main security agency in charge of ensuring elections safety, security, and integrity. While other security agencies are usually mobilised, their roles are merely complementary to the police. In 2020, over 60,000⁴¹ security agents were deployed for the election. In the 2024 election, the police provided a toll-free number to enable the public to communicate effectively with the police.

The police in Ghana are generally seen as playing a significant role in ensuring free and fair elections. The effectiveness of the police during elections generally influences public trust in the electoral process. The respondents in the survey indicated confidence in the police to secure voters and election materials on election day. While questions were not asked on their perception of the police as partisan, 78.1% stated that they are confident in the police protecting the process an indicator of trust in the police in all ramifications. In the 2020 elections, 8 persons were killed, there is apprehension that there may be a breakout of violence because of the behaviour and utterances of the two major contenders despite the signing of a peace treaty by candidates⁴². A survey conducted by the National Commission for Civic Education found that 99.1% of respondents expressed a reluctance to participate in election-related violence. However, 0.9% of respondents indicated a willingness to engage in such violence. Among those willing to engage, a significant proportion (29.8%) were aged between 30 and 39 years, while the least willing group (4.8%) were individuals under 20 years old.

How confident are you in the police's ability to secure voters and voting materials on election day?



41. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/foreign/africa/424643-ghana-to-deploy-over-62000-security-personnel-during-december-presidential-election.html?tztc=1>

42. <https://afripoli.org/ghanas-december-2024-elections-put-the-resilience-of-the-countrys-vaunted-democracy-to-the-test>

3.6 The Judiciary

The judiciary is not only charged with pronouncing on the validity of the election of candidates but also on basic rights found in any democracy such as the right to vote and to participate. In *Tehn-Addy v. the Electoral Commission*⁴³, the Supreme Court of Ghana per Acquah JSC (as he then was) stated that “every sane Ghanaian citizen of eighteen years and above, had the right under article 42 of the 1992 Constitution to be registered as a voter. The exercise of that constitutional right of voting was indispensable in the enhancement of the democratic process and it could not be denied in the absence of a constitutional provision to that effect.” There is a whole electoral jurisprudence founded on judgments of the court on issues of elections.

Article 64 of the Constitution stipulates that the validity of a presidential election in Ghana can be contested by a citizen of the country. Such a citizen may submit a petition to the Supreme Court within twenty-one days following the declaration of the election result in question. In emerging democracies, the judiciary plays a crucial role as a key stakeholder in elections, often being tasked with determining the legitimacy of elections conducted by the electoral commission. Like Presidential elections, the law provides for a process for challenging the election of a person as a member of parliament in Ghana to be filed within twenty-one days⁴⁴. The Constitution⁴⁵ provides that the High Court has jurisdiction to hear petitions concerning Parliamentary elections and Section 17 of the Representation of the People Law, 1992 provides that the people with the locus standi to file such a petition are persons who lawfully voted or had a right to vote in that election, a person claiming to have had a right to be elected, a person alleging to have been a candidate at the election and lastly a person claiming to have had a right to be nominated as a candidate in the election⁴⁶.

The problem with the increased involvement of the judiciary in deciding electoral and political cases is that it chips at the image of the judiciary as a fair and objective arbiter. So where the judiciary conforms to legal principles without recourse to popular sentiments, it is often seen as lacking credibility, especially since the executive - usually the President appoints superior court judges⁴⁷. It is little wonder that 46.6% of respondents do not have confidence in the judiciary’s ability to uphold democratic principles and ensure a fair electoral dispute process.

43. [1996-97] SCGLR 589

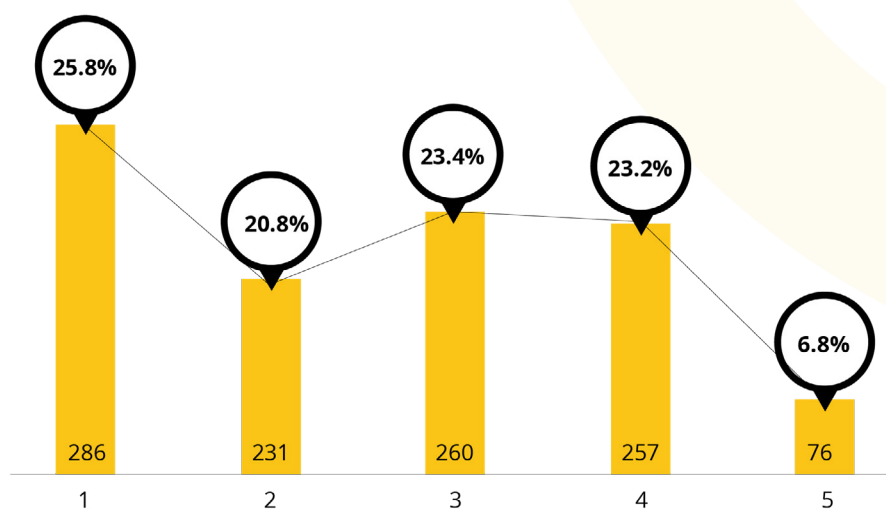
44. Section 18 Representation of the People Law, 1992

45. Section 99, Constitution of Ghana, 1992; Telfer, Joel, Elections on Trial: A Critical Review of the procedure for Challenging Parliamentary Elections in Ghana (April 12, 2024). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4792394> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4792394>

46. <https://judicial.gov.gh/jsweb/index.php/jsg-services/libraryservices/statute-on-elections/387-representation-of-the-people-law-1992-pndcl-284>

47. Appiah-Thompson, C., Jose, J. (2023). The Role of Traditional Authorities in the Promotion of Electoral Justice and Peacebuilding in Ghana. In: Kilonzo, S.M., Chitando, E., Tarusarira, J. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Religion, Peacebuilding, and Development in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36829-5_1, accessed 1 Dec. 2024.

How confident are you in the judiciary's ability to uphold democratic principles and ensure a fair electoral dispute process?



3.7 The Media and Election Integrity

Threats to media freedom remain a persistent issue in many parts of the world with Journalists covering elections often facing intimidation, harassment, or even physical violence. Ghana seems to be doing well in ensuring media freedom, with an impressive 3 out of 4 score on Freedom House's free and independent media score. Despite attempts to uphold freedom rights, there have been instances where journalists were attacked by private citizens and security agents in the course of doing their jobs. In May 2023, a journalist was attacked by two people and they were both arrested and made to pay a fine⁴⁸.

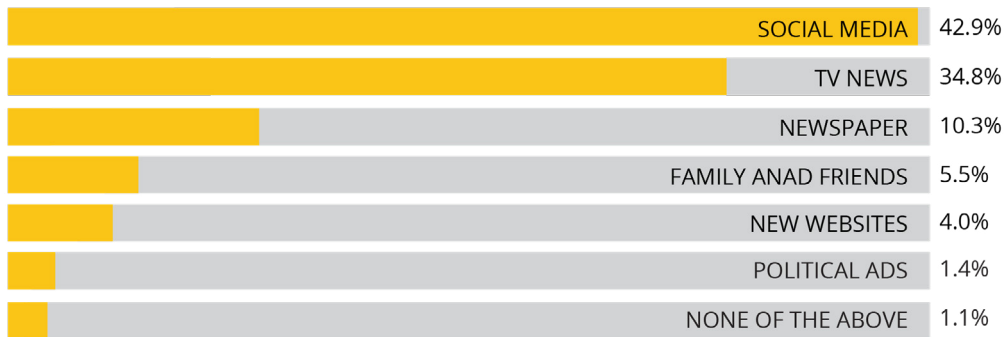
Central to the integrity of the electoral process is the role of the media, which acts as a bridge between the electorate and the electoral system. The media plays an indispensable role in upholding election integrity by informing, educating, and empowering voters. Through its role as an information disseminator, the media ensures that voters are equipped with knowledge about electoral processes, candidates, policies, and outcomes. A well-informed electorate is critical to making choices that reflect the will of the people. For example, news reports, interviews, and debates give citizens access to diverse perspectives, allowing them to assess candidates and political platforms

48. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ghana>

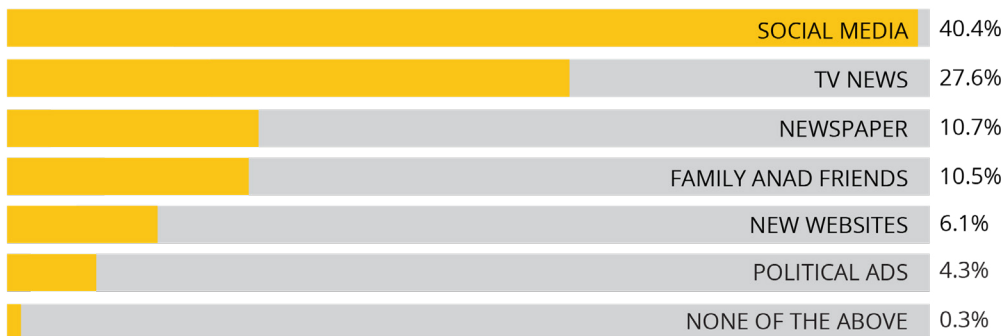
critically. Additionally, the media acts as a watchdog, holding electoral stakeholders accountable. Investigative reporting can expose electoral malpractice, including voter suppression, ballot tampering, and corruption. Such accountability measures deter potential violations and build public trust in the electoral system. The media also plays a critical role in countering disinformation and misinformation.

Election disinformation is not a new concept but the advent of technology makes it a lot easier to spread thereby affecting the integrity of elections. In an era marked by the proliferation of fake news and deepfakes, credible media organisations provide fact-based reporting that helps voters distinguish between truth and falsehood. Where voters increasingly trust social media to provide them with election information, the media must ensure that whatever information voters get is not only credible but also beneficial to the electoral process. 42.9% of respondents stated that they trust social media more for news on the elections, followed by 34.8% who trust television news, 10.2% trust newspapers, 5.5% trust family and friends, 4.0% trust news websites and 1.4% for political ads.

Which sources do you trust for election information?



Which sources do you get your information on elections?



4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Electoral Commission

In many African countries, low levels of civic education often lead to voter apathy, misinformation, and reduced turnout. To strengthen voter education electoral commissions must prioritize continuous and comprehensive education campaigns that reach all citizens. This includes educating the public about voter registration procedures, how to cast a ballot, the significance of each election, and the role of electoral institutions. Voter education should also address issues such as the importance of voting freely without intimidation and the impact of one's vote on national and local governance.

In an increasingly digital world, technological innovation is central to ensuring the integrity, transparency, and efficiency of elections. Leveraging technology can greatly enhance the functioning of electoral commissions, improve voter registration accuracy, and provide real-time election results to the public. Additionally, building capacity for electronic voting systems can improve the efficiency and transparency of the election process. In countries with limited infrastructure, mobile technology can be used to facilitate voting, making the process more accessible for citizens in remote areas. Real-time reporting of election results via online platforms and mobile apps can also enhance transparency and reduce the potential for electoral fraud or manipulation.

Public trust is the cornerstone of any democratic system, and without it, election outcomes can be questioned, leading to unrest or disengagement from the political process. Regular surveys and assessments of public confidence in the electoral process are crucial for understanding the electorate's perceptions and addressing any concerns. Electoral commissions should conduct public trust surveys to assess how citizens perceive the integrity and transparency of the elections. These surveys can identify areas where the electoral process may be perceived as flawed or biased and allow the electoral commission to address these issues proactively. By gathering data on public sentiment, commissions can take corrective actions, such as improving voter education, addressing allegations of fraud, or enhancing transparency in the electoral process.

Public trust surveys should be conducted at multiple stages of the electoral cycle, including pre-election, during the election, and post-election. This comprehensive approach ensures that electoral commissions are continuously aware of public perceptions and can make timely adjustments to improve the election process and enhance credibility.

4.2 The Police

The Ghana Police Service plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety, security, and integrity of elections, and its effectiveness greatly influences public trust in the electoral process. To enhance its performance during the 2024 elections, the police should strengthen community engagement by expanding the toll-free number initiative, setting up election liaison committees, and providing real-time information updates. Enhancing officer training on conflict de-escalation, impartiality, and high-risk area management is crucial, as is a visible yet non-intimidating presence at polling stations to deter violence. Proactive measures such as monitoring inflammatory rhetoric, deploying rapid response teams, and improving intelligence gathering can mitigate risks of violence, especially in areas prone to unrest. Building public trust through transparent operations, accountability for violence, and independent reporting will reinforce confidence in the police. Engaging youth, particularly the demographic most susceptible to participating in violence, through targeted outreach and volunteer programs, alongside leveraging technology for surveillance and reporting, will further secure the process. Finally, close coordination with the Electoral Commission, civil society organisations and other stakeholders will ensure a peaceful, credible election, ultimately safeguarding Ghana's democracy.

4.3 The Judiciary

Extensive institutional reforms to enhance judicial independence could be done through an overhaul of the appointment process for superior court judges. Such process can be reviewed to ensure transparency and minimize executive influence. Mechanisms such as involving civil society organisations, legal practitioners, and opposition political parties could be explored. Public declarations of assets by judges before and after their tenure could bolster perceptions of neutrality and accountability. The judiciary is often that third arm of government that is shrouded in mystery. There should be enhanced public engagement and transparency. This could be done by the Judiciary prioritizing the timely and transparent communication of its decisions on electoral cases. Simplified summaries of judgments in electoral disputes could be disseminated widely to foster understanding and acceptance. Continuous engagement in proactive outreach programs to educate citizens about the judiciary's role in elections can help demystify processes and address misconceptions.

4.4 The Media

To mitigate these challenges and enhance the media's role in elections, several strategies must be adopted. First, adherence to ethical standards is paramount. Media organizations must uphold principles of fairness, accuracy, and impartiality, ensuring

that their reporting serves the public interest rather than political agendas. Capacity building for journalists is another critical intervention. Training programs on electoral laws, data analysis, and responsible reporting equip journalists with the tools needed to cover elections competently and ethically. Promoting media literacy among the public is equally important. Educating citizens to critically evaluate information sources helps reduce the impact of fake news and propaganda. Civil society organizations, schools, and government initiatives can play a role in building a more discerning electorate.

4.5 Regional Collaboration

No single country has all the answers when it comes to running successful elections, and regional collaboration can be a powerful tool for improving electoral practices across the sub-region. Countries in West Africa can learn from each other's successes and challenges, share best practices, and develop regional strategies for addressing common electoral issues. Regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) can play a significant role in shaping collaboration between electoral commissions. These organizations can facilitate forums where electoral officials from different countries exchange knowledge, discuss challenges, and develop joint strategies for improving electoral integrity. Additionally, regional cooperation can help build the capacity of electoral commissions by providing training, technical assistance, and funding for infrastructure improvements. By sharing resources and expertise, West African countries can strengthen their electoral institutions and work together to address common challenges such as voter fraud, political interference, and low voter turnout.

5.0 Conclusion

As Ghana heads into its 2024 general elections, the political landscape is shaped by several pressing factors—economic instability, political polarization, and a dynamic electoral environment. Ghana’s reputation as a stable democracy in a region marred by military coups and democratic regression remains intact, but the challenges of navigating economic turbulence and ensuring a fair, transparent election process are critical for maintaining that status. Ghana’s 2024 elections come at a time of heightened regional instability, with countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso under military takeovers, raising concerns about the future of democracy in West Africa. Despite this, Ghana remains a beacon of democratic stability, with peaceful transitions of power since its return to democracy in 1992. The upcoming elections will not only determine the next president and members of parliament but will also serve as a litmus test for the country’s democratic resilience in the face of significant economic challenges.

Economic issues are central to the election, with rising unemployment, inflation, and public dissatisfaction over the handling of debt and poverty exacerbated by post-COVID impacts. The outcome of this election will likely hinge on how well the candidates, particularly Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia and former President John Dramani Mahama, address these pressing concerns. Bawumia’s campaign promises to build on President Akufo-Addo’s legacy of economic reforms, while Mahama’s push for a return to power is rooted in his vision for change amidst public dissatisfaction with the current government’s economic management. Political engagement remains high, with over 18.7 million registered voters, including a significant number of first-time voters. While voter turnout has historically been strong, the key issues of unemployment, education, and economic hardship are likely to influence the decision-making process. Additionally, the lack of participation from the Ghanaian diaspora, despite their growing interest, remains a point of contention. Credible elections are a multi-stakeholder endeavour and collaboration. Governments, media houses, civil society, the police, and even citizens must work together to address the issues that affect the conduct of credible elections.

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