

Ghana Center for Democratic Development
Accra, Ghana
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News release

Ghanaians fully prepared for the 2016 polls and express optimism in the ability of the Electoral Commission to conduct a free and fair polls

As Ghana's upcoming seventh Parliamentary and Presidential elections approaches, findings from a pre-election survey conducted by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) reveal Ghanaians are prepared for the upcoming polls, with an absolute majority intending to vote in the December 7 poll and expressing optimism in the ability of the election management body (Electoral Commission) to conduct free and fair polls and perform its duties as a 'neutral body guided by law'. The authority of the Electoral Commission as the official body mandated to announce the electoral results is also unquestioned.

The findings also show an overwhelming endorsement for the ballot box as the preferred means of selecting officials with a solid majority of Ghanaians asserting that elections empowers them to remove non-performing and non-effective leaders from office. Notwithstanding this optimism in the efficacy of the vote, Ghanaians also express concerns about the credibility of the electoral system. A quarter of Ghanaians believe their vote is not secret, nearly a third are skeptical about the vote being counted after the polls, and a large minority believe it is very/somewhat likely that the wrong vote tally would be announced.

Looking ahead to the 2016 polls, most Ghanaians prefer to have free and fair elections even if their preferred candidate does not emerge as winner with large majorities also expressing optimism that the upcoming polls will be 'completely free and fair' or 'free and fair with minor problems'. Survey responses also indicate that most Ghanaians will not engage in unlawful actions if the elections does not reflect the popular will, but will rather seek electoral redress in court.

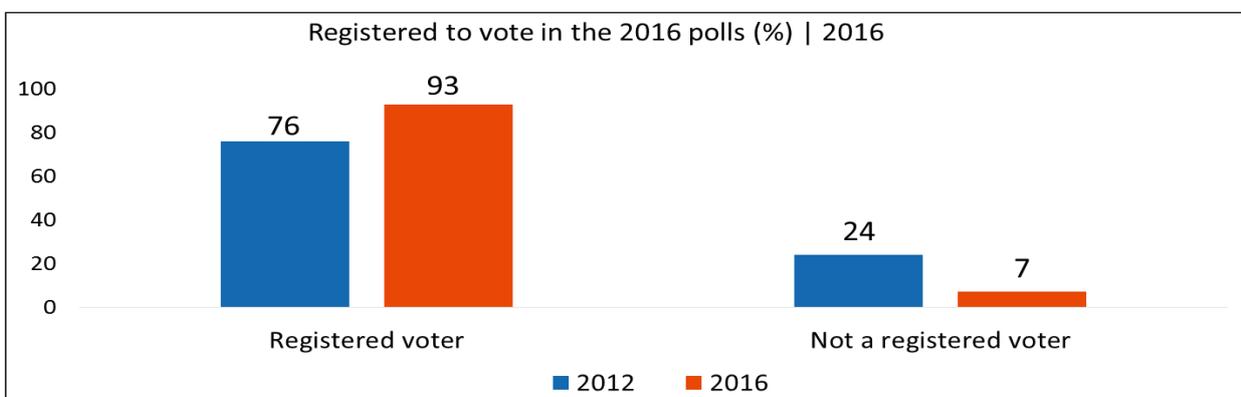
Key findings

- There is a high level of awareness about the upcoming 2016 elections among the Ghanaian public. Most Ghanaians know the location of the polling station where they will be voting (97%); that they have to show a biometric ID card in order to vote (96%), possess official biometric ID card (94%), and that they will be voting to select MPs and a President (90%).

- The radio remains the main source of information for the electorate about the upcoming elections. Most electorates obtain their information on the 2016 polls from private radio (46%), government radio (37%), private TV (36%), and government TV (33%). Ghanaians also rely heavily on informal sources of news such as friends/neighbours/co-workers (26%), family members (22%) and community meetings (17%).
- More than nine in ten Ghanaians (93%) claim to be registered and express an intention to vote (76%) in the upcoming elections. This compares favourably with 2012 where 76% of Ghanaians had done same.
- Ghanaians express a strong preference (79%) for a completely free and fair elections and are confident that the 2016 polls will be 'completely free and fair' or 'free and fair with minor problems' (77%). A solid majority believe the Electoral Commission will perform its duties as a 'neutral body guided by law' (63%).
- Ghanaian assessments of the preparedness of key state institutions implicated in the 2016 polls vary. Eight in ten Ghanaians perceive the Army and the Police as 'very' or 'somewhat' prepared for the upcoming polls.
- Ghanaians express some concerns about the electoral system. Seven in 10 Ghanaians (71%) believe they enjoy vote secrecy, but a quarter of the population thinks otherwise. Sixty-three percent deem the prospect of their votes not being counted unlikely, but nearly a third remain skeptical, while a large minority (46%) believe it is very/somewhat likely that the wrong vote tally would be announced.
- On vote buying, most Ghanaians abhor vote buying and believe it is 'wrong and punishable' for a candidate to buy and for a citizen to sell vote. But a quarter and less than 1 in 5, respectively, condone vote-selling and vote-buying. They deem it 'wrong but understandable' or 'not wrong at all'.

Charts

Figure 1: Registered Voter | 2012 and 2016 |

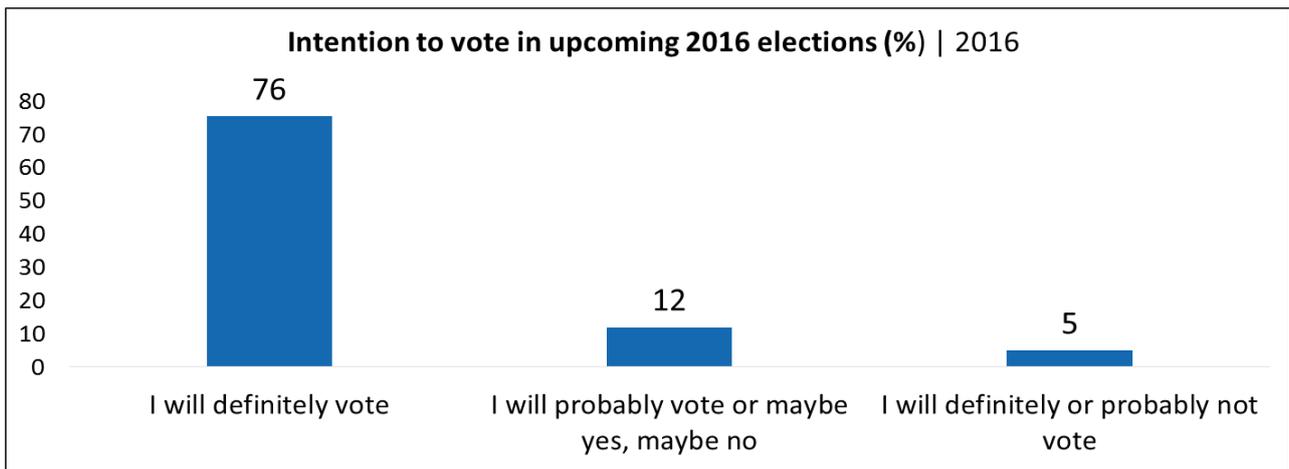


Respondents were asked: In talking to people about elections, we often find that some people were unable to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. By looking at public records kept by election

officials, we can get an accurate report of how many people actually voted in the 2012 elections in this area. Of course, these public records do not say who you voted for. Part of our study will involve checking these records against the survey reports. Which of the following statements best describes you in the 2012 elections?

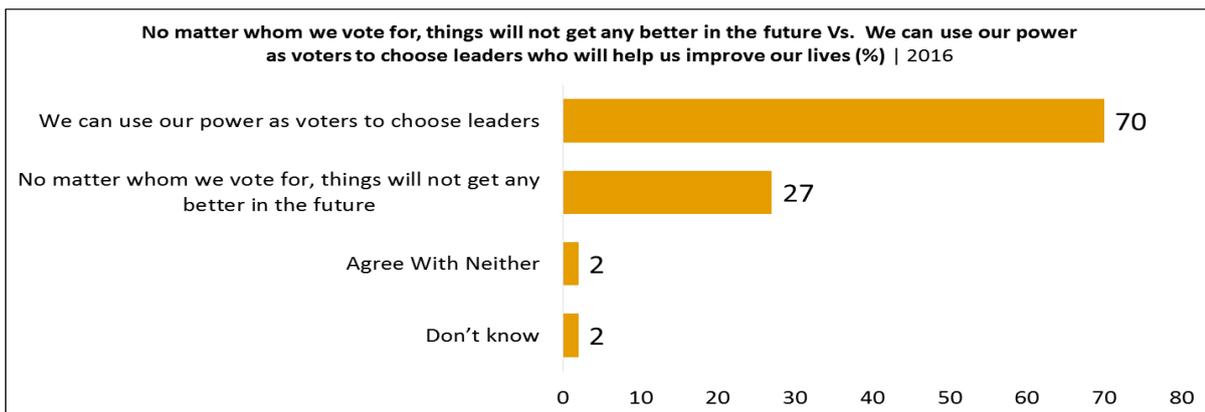
Respondents were asked: As you know, Ghana will hold new national elections in 2016. Again, we find that some have not yet registered because they have not had the time, did not know where to register, or did not have the correct documents. By looking at public records kept by election officials, we can get an accurate report of how many people are actually registered. Of course, these public records do not say which party you support. Part of our study will involve checking these records against the survey reports. Which of the following statements best describes your current status ahead of the 2016 elections?

Figure2: Prepared/Intention to vote | 2016 |



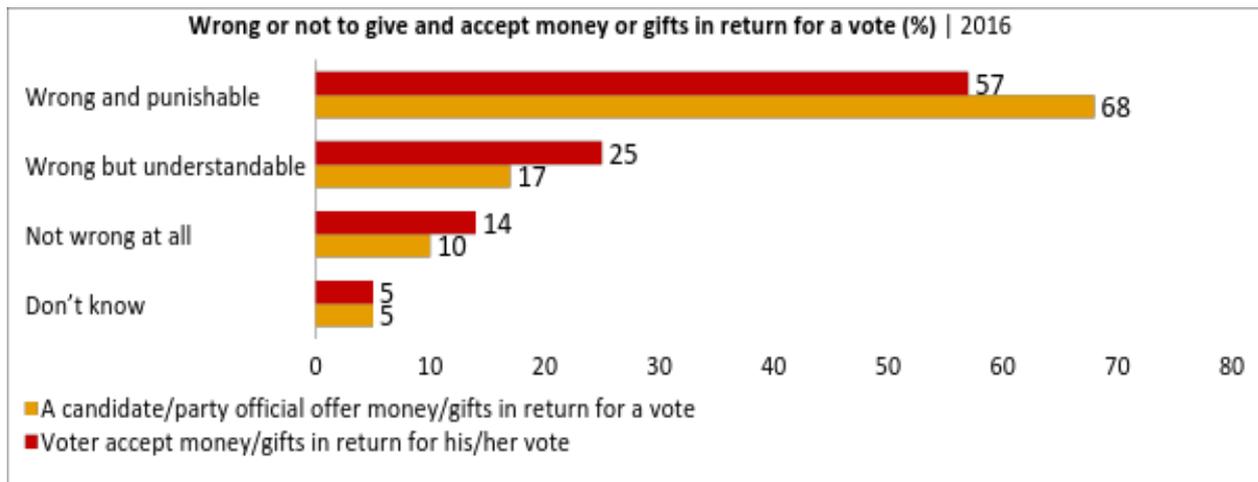
Respondents were asked : How likely are you to vote in the 2016 elections?

Figure3: Opinions on the power of the ballot box | 2016 |



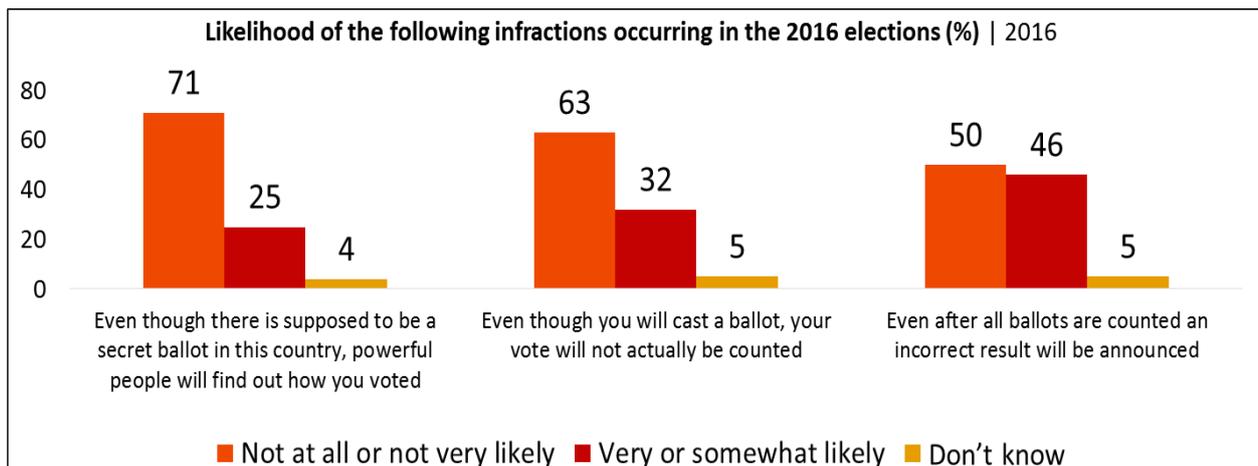
Q15. Statement 1: No matter whom we vote for, things will not get any better in the future. Statement 2: We can use our power as voters to choose leaders who will help us improve our lives.

Figure 4 (a): Opinions on Vote buying | 2016 |



Respondents were asked ; Do you think it is not wrong at all, wrong but understandable, or wrong and punishable for (a) A candidate or party official to offer money or gifts in return for a vote? (b) A voter to accept money or gifts in return for his or her vote?

Figure 4 (b): Opinions on Vote secrecy | 2016 |



Respondents were asked : In your opinion, how likely will the following things happen in the 2016 elections?

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