

ONLINE SURVEY: YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLITICS IN THE GAMBIA

This survey was conducted online between the 5th and 28th of October
2021

Activista-The Gambia

Online Survey: Young People and Politics in The Gambia

1. Introduction

The Gambia is heading to the polls on December 4th 2021 to elect a new president. This will be the first election in two decades where Yahya Jammeh, who ruled the country for two decades will not be participating. Jammeh's defeat in the 2016 presidential election to incumbent Adama Barrow marked a beginning for the country to consolidate its democracy. Series of reforms projects ranging from constitutional and legal, security sector reform and accountability mechanisms such as truth Commission have been instituted.

Central to the Gambia transition has been the role of youth. Youth have been central to the bringing about regime change through their activism. Their numerical strength as the largest demographic shows that the country is a youthful country with 70% of its population are young people. The IEC also have announced that 58% of the registered voters in the upcoming election are young people between 18-35. This shows that important demographic potential of youth and their participation in the political process can go a long way in deepening democracy and enhancing it.

Objective The Survey

1. To determine the perception of young women and men on partisan politics, and being involve in political party activities
2. To study the voting patterns of young men and women between 18 to 35; and the perception of first-time voters on voting.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVISTA THE GAMBIA

Activista The Gambia is a youth led civil society organization working to promote the rights of young men and women through empowerment, campaign and solidarity. Activista provides unique opportunities for youth to engage in meaningful activities supporting their empowerment and development. Young people often have specific challenges, but they also have many shared experiences. Besides being young, Activistas are also women seeking equality with men, the hungry seeking for food and nutrition security and people demanding for democratic and political space for influencing work. Activista is not about generational conflict but struggles together with others for a fundamental shift in power imbalances based on class, gender, ethnicity and age.

2. Methodology

The online survey collected responses from 232 respondents between the ages of 18-35 distributed across various regions of the Gambia as well as the diaspora. A questionnaire was developed through google forms and the link widely shared through email, social media (Facebook, WhatsApp and

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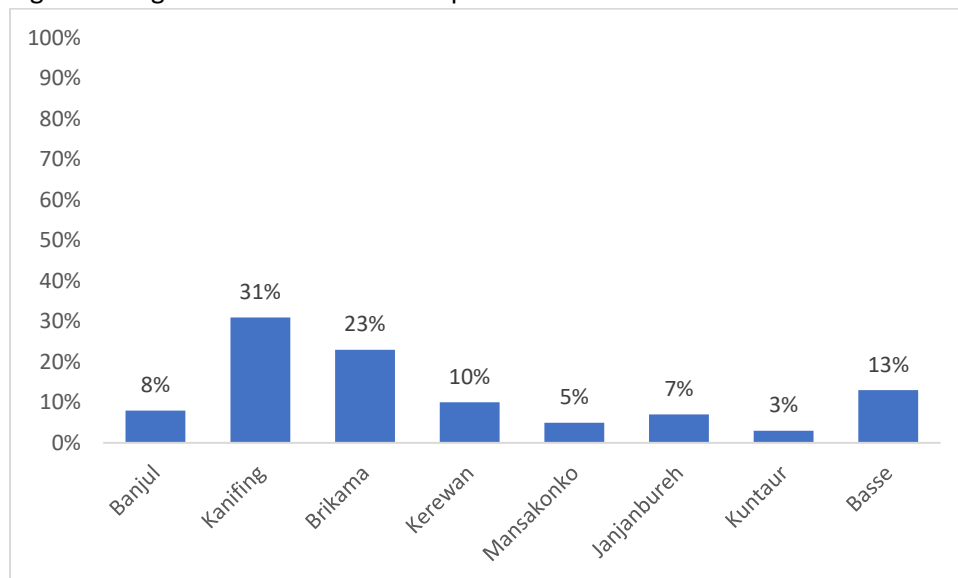
Twitter) to be filled by the targeted groups. WhatsApp in particular was very useful and groups established by young people were targeted.

The data collection phase which was initially set for 10 days was later extended due to the low volume of respondents required. The survey then was extended for an extra 10 days. Though the initial plan was to collect 1500 response we end up collecting only 232.

3. Findings

Demography

Figure 1: Regional Distribution of Respondents



The chart below shows the gender of respondents. Almost 7 out of 10 respondents that filled the survey are men while 33% are women.

Figure 2: Gender of respondents

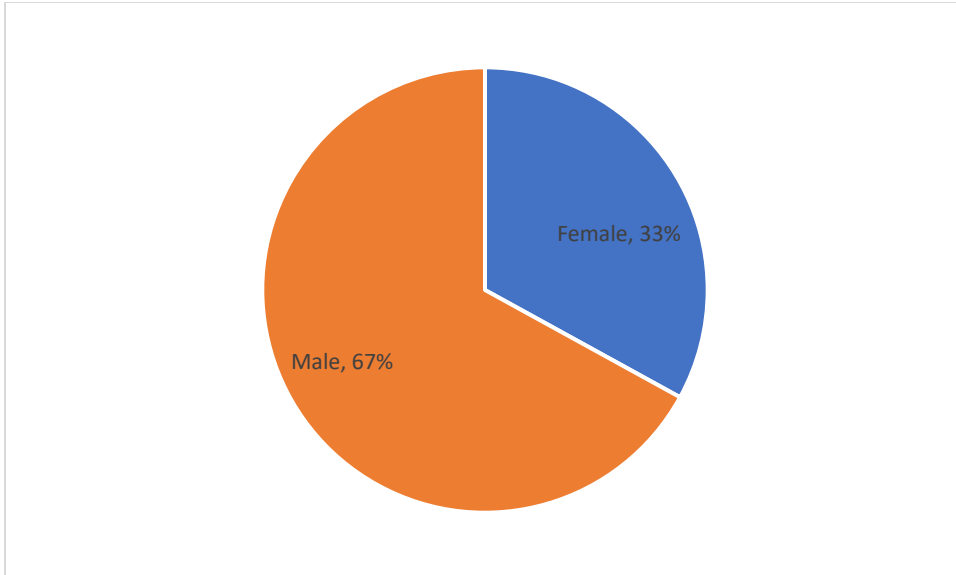
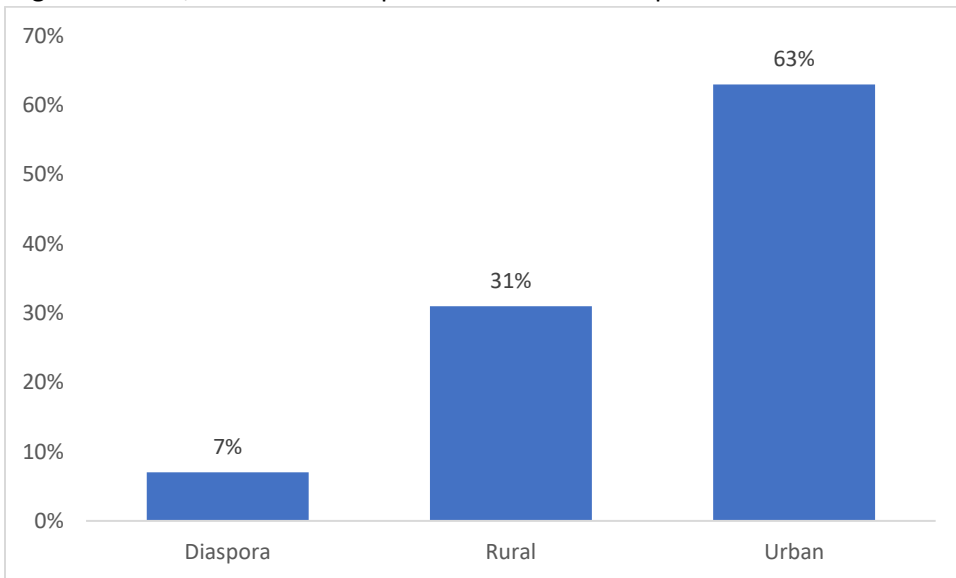


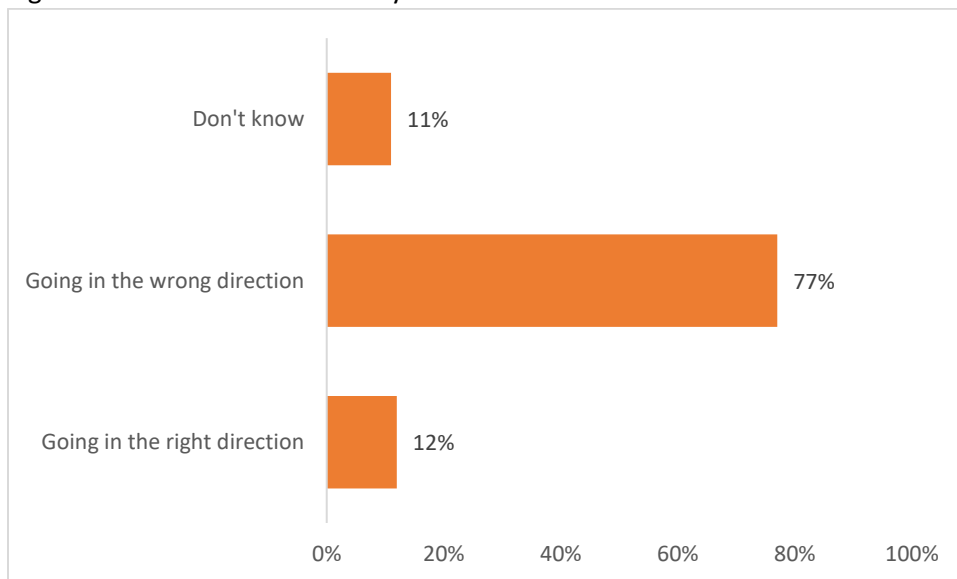
Figure 3: Rural, Urban and Diaspora distribution of respondents



What do young people say about the direction of their country?

Majority of the youth that participated in the survey think the country is heading in the wrong direction. More than two-thirds (77%) say the country is going in the wrong direction, while 12% say the country is going in the right direction. The finding of this survey is in line with the Afrobarometer survey which shows that a majority of Gambians think the country is heading in the wrong direction

Figure 4: Direction of the country



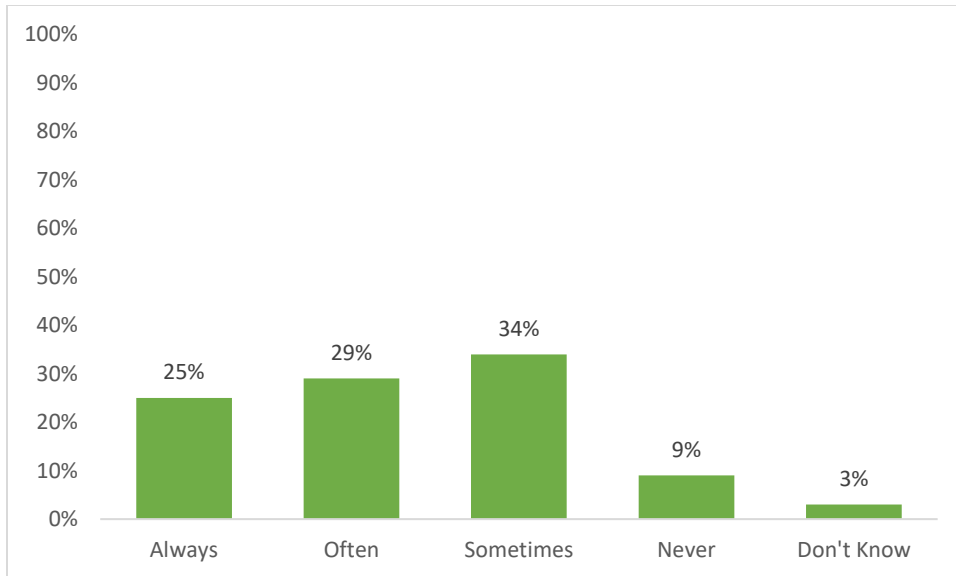
Are youth treated unfairly?

Asked how often are young people treated unfairly in the country by government due to their economic status, 54% of respondents say young people are “Always or Often” treated unfairly in the country. Young people are confronted with the problem of unemployment as well as not well represented in the decision-making process of the country.

Figure 5: Treated Unfairly by government

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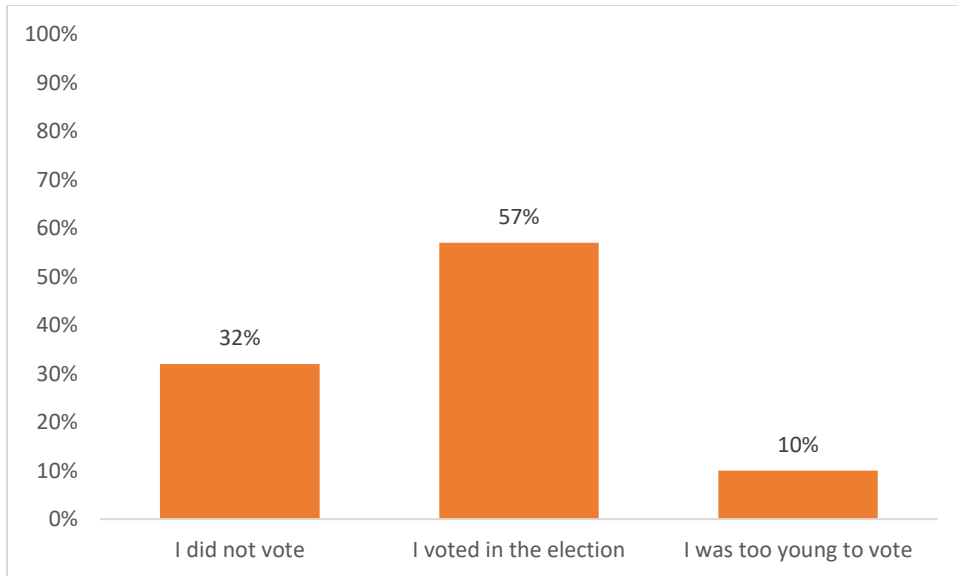
Youth Participation and Engagement

This section looks at the extent to which youth participate and engage with key personnel. The first section looks at their participation in the last election and then this is followed by understanding who they engage with.

Voted in the Last National Election

During the last national election 57% of the youth respondents said they voted. 32% said they did not vote while 10% say they were too young to vote.

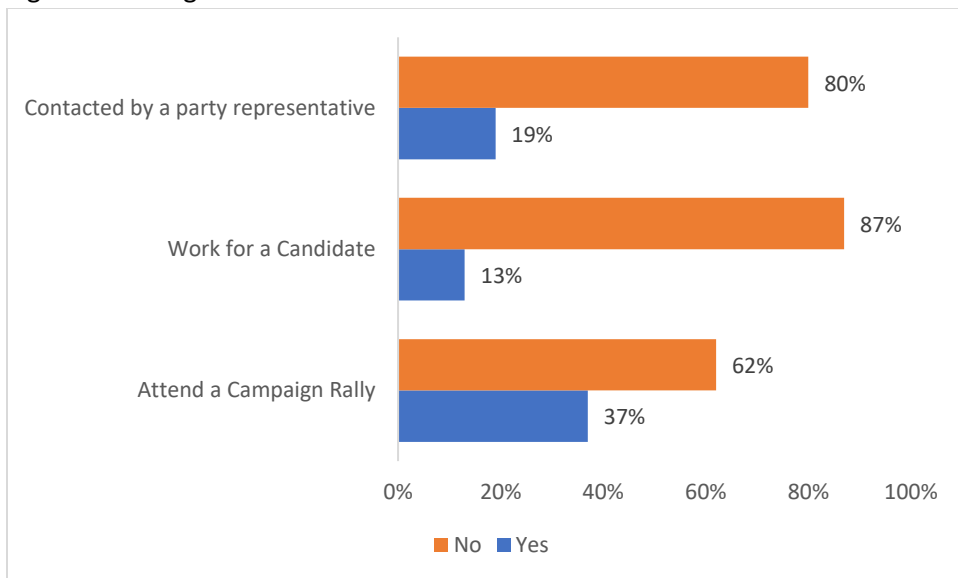
Figure 6: Voted in the last national election



Whether they have been contacted by a party representative during the last election, only 19% of the youth respondents said yes while 80% said no.

Similarly, only very few youths work for political candidates. 13% of the respondents said they worked for a candidate. However almost four out of 10 (37%) of the respondents said they attended a campaign rally.

Figure 7: During Last National Election



Youth Engagement with Key Leaders

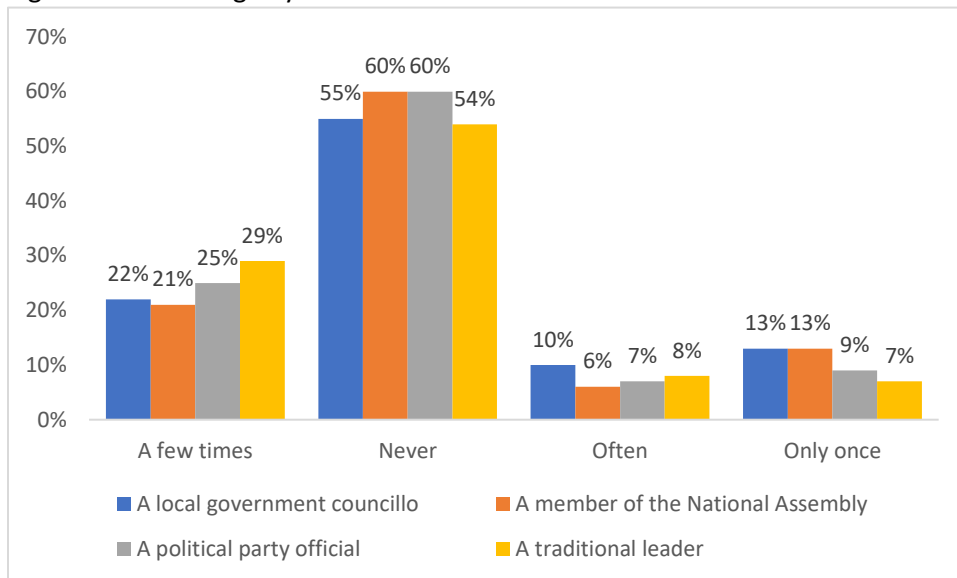
Asked whether they have contacted key leaders during the past year to discuss about some important problem or to give them their views as a youth, majorities of the youth said they never

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contacted a local government council (55%), a member of National Assembly (60%), political party representative (60%) and traditional leader 55%.

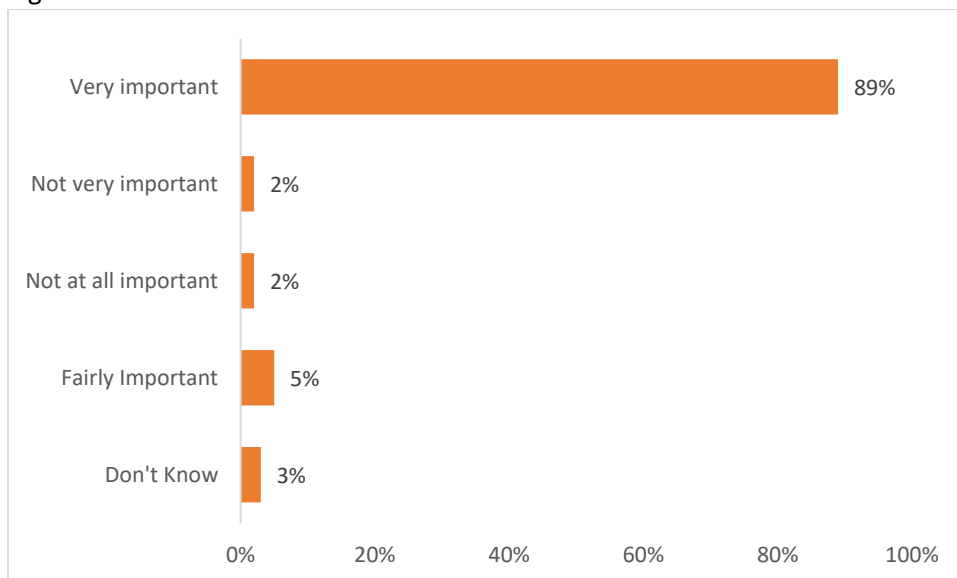
Figure 8: Contacting Key Leaders



Does it Matter who wins the next election?

When asked whether it is important who win the election, a large majority 89% youth said its “Very important”. This shows that youth are aware of the transformative power of their votes as an important instrument to choose leaders.

Figure 9: Who wins the next election

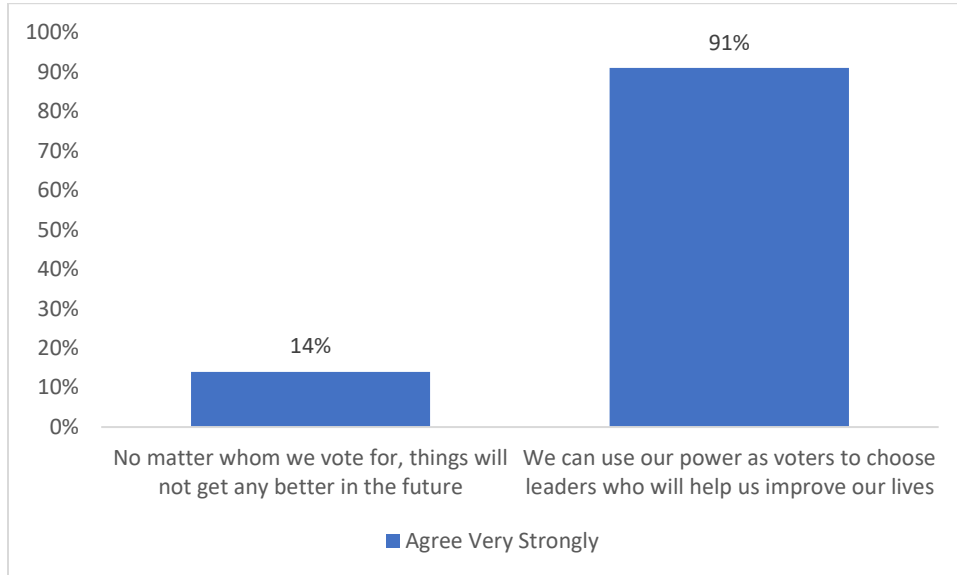


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A large majority of youth (91%), believe that they can use their power as voters to choose leaders who will help improve their lives. Only 14% Agree very strongly that things will not get better in the future no matter whom they vote for. This shows a solid believe in the power of their votes.

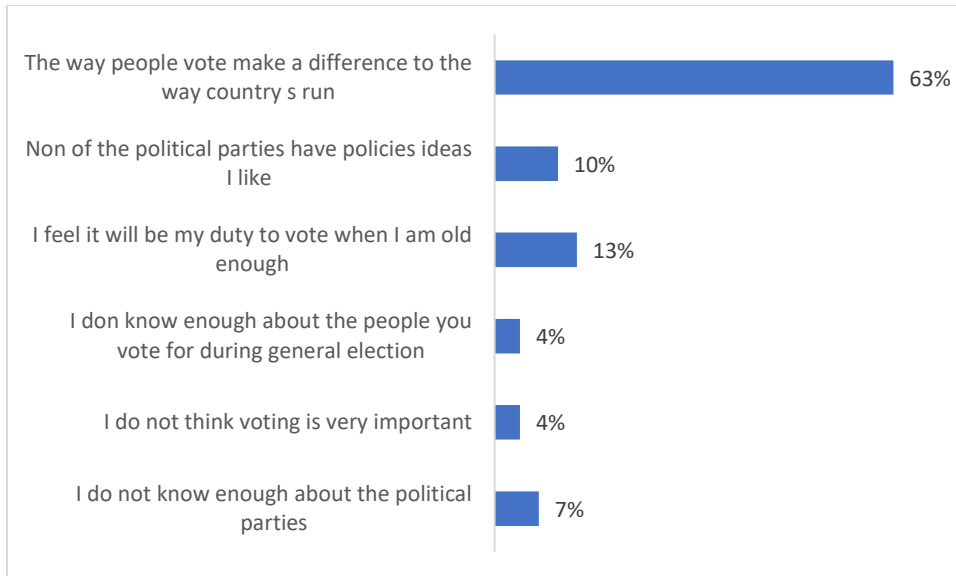
Figure 10: Use Vote to improve lives



The way people vote

One reason that have been largely cited before as reason why young people do not turnout to vote is the fact that young people do not think election make a difference. However, majority of our respondents think that the way people vote make a difference to the way country is run. Hence, 63% believe that their votes do make a difference the way this country is run. 10% of the respondents say none of the parties have ideas or policies they like while 13% claim that it will be their duty to vote when they are much older.

Figure 11: The way people vote



Trust in the IEC and the 2021 Presidential Election

The IEC has recently come under public scrutiny and public trust in their capacity to deliver untainted election has been questioned. Although the commission has mattered the art of running election, some decisions within a liberalize and deepening democratic culture have been found to be problematic. Within this year alone, IEC has faced several court cases from civil society and more recent from two political parties whose nominations were rejected by the commission. Both Citizen Alliance and Gambia Moral Congress were vindicated by the High Court put the credibility of the commission into question. We asked respondents several questions relating to their confidence in the institution, their integrity, the new voter list and the competence of the institution to deliver free and fair election on 4 December 2021.

In terms of confidence in the Independent Electoral Commission as an institution, 40% of respondents say they have “a little confidence”, 24% says a lot of confidence while 29% and 6% say they have moderate or no confidence at all in the commission respectively.

Between May and July 2021, the commission registered new voters as part of the general registration. However, the process without controversy due to accusations or allegations of minors registering as well as controversy for the IEC to appoint the Mayor of Banjul to provide attestation to would be voters. This decision was challenged in court by two civil society groups and a counselor in Banjul. The courts ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. When asked about their confidence in the integrity or quality of the newly compiled voter register, 44% of respondents say they have little trust while 22% says they trust the voter register.

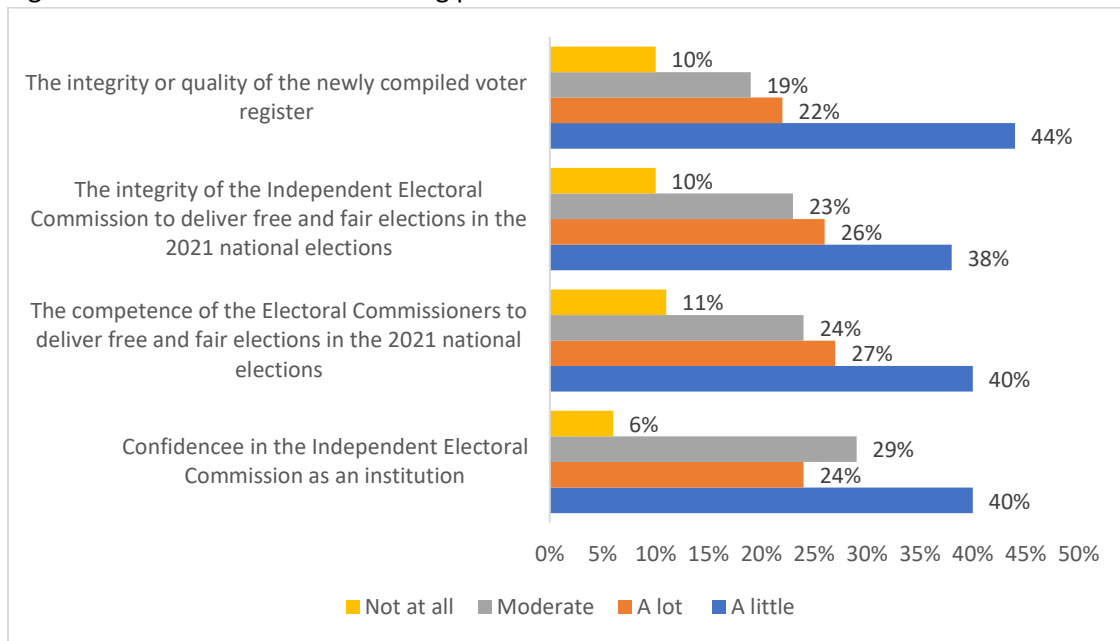
Whether they have confidence in the competence of the IEC to deliver free and fair elections in the 2021 presidential election, only 27% of respondents say they have a lot of confidence in the commission while 40% say only a little confidence on the competence of the commission to

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deliver free and fair election. Similarly in terms of the integrity of the commission, 26% have a lot of confidence while 38% say a little.

Figure 12: Trust in the IEC and Voting process



Source of Political News

Social media (85%) and Internet (83%) are the main source of political news for the youth. Private television stations and private newspapers are also good source of news for young people. However, critical institution such as the Independent Electoral Commission, National Council for Civic Education and even civil society organizations have not been considered helpful for news.

Figure 13: Source of Political News

