

Voter Readiness Survey Report: Uganda General Elections 2026

*Evidence-Based Analysis of Citizen
Preparedness - January 2026*

#UgDecides2026 #VoterReadiness



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Introduction:

Uganda's Electoral Landscape and Historical Challenges

This report presents findings from an independent voter readiness survey conducted by Evidence And Methods Lab ahead of the January 15, 2026 general elections. The survey aimed to provide evidence-based insights into electoral preparedness, barriers to participation, and citizen confidence in democratic processes. Data was collected from 514 respondents across Uganda between January 8-11, 2026, just days before voting commenced.

Uganda's electoral journey has been consistently marked by a complex interplay of political dynamics and institutional weaknesses, leading to persistent challenges that significantly undermine genuine democratic participation. Past election cycles have frequently been characterized by contested outcomes, allegations of irregularities etc. In the 2021 general elections, for example, voter turnout declined to 59.35% from 67.61% in 2016 (Electoral Commission of Uganda, 2021)¹, while international observers noted that the elections 'fell short of international standards' due to arbitrary killings, voter intimidation, and lack of Electoral Commission independence (U.S. Department of State, 2021)² which collectively erode public trust in the democratic process.

These historical contexts have revealed significant barriers preventing effective voter- candidate engagement. Concrete examples include the disruption and limited presence of dedicated public forums for candidates to present their manifestos and for citizens to directly engage with them, often exacerbated by restrictive assembly laws and media environments. The East African Community Election Observer Mission (2021)³ specifically urged the Electoral Commission to 'consider timely accreditation and issuance of accreditation documents to domestic observers to enable effective observation of future elections,' highlighting systemic

¹ Electoral Commission of Uganda. (2021). General Election Report 2021.

² U.S. Department of State. (2021). 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Uganda.

³ East African Community Election Observer Mission (EAC EOM). (2021). Report on the Uganda General Elections 2021.



delays in the accreditation process. Furthermore, limited access to comprehensive and unbiased candidate information, coupled with insufficient civic education, leaves many voters ill-equipped to make informed decisions. Freedom House (2022)⁴ rated Uganda's political rights at 11/40 and civil liberties at 23/60, classifying the country as 'Not Free' and noting that 'civil society and independent media sectors suffer from legal and extralegal harassment and state violence.'

The upcoming 2026 general elections, scheduled to commence on 15 January, therefore represent a particularly critical juncture. With a long-standing political landscape and growing calls for greater accountability and transparency, these elections are seen as a vital opportunity to reassess and potentially enhance the integrity of Uganda's democratic processes. Voters will elect leaders across multiple tiers – from the presidency to members of parliament and local government representatives – underscoring the comprehensive nature of the electoral exercise.

Against this backdrop, a comprehensive voter readiness assessment becomes indispensable. Research indicates that civic education in Uganda has focused primarily on hurried voter education rather than systematic, continuous civic education programs contributing to knowledge gaps about democratic rights and electoral procedures. It is critical for strengthening electoral integrity by identifying and documenting systemic weaknesses, gauging public perception, ensuring that all eligible citizens are adequately informed about their rights and responsibilities, and proactively addressing factors that could lead to apathy or disenfranchisement. Such an assessment is foundational for fostering a more inclusive, transparent, and credible electoral environment.

⁴ Freedom House. (2022). Freedom in the World 2022: Uganda.

Key Historical Challenges

- **CSO Accreditation Barriers**

CSOs faced bureaucratic hurdles and delays in accreditation, limiting voter education and grassroots civic engagement.

- **Limited Voter-Candidate Engagement Platforms**

Lack of structured platforms for citizens to directly engage with candidates and hold them accountable.

- **Information Asymmetries**

Unequal access to accurate electoral information, especially affecting rural and marginalized communities.

- **Civic Education Gaps**

Insufficient voter education programs on democratic rights, electoral procedures, and informed participation.

- **Trust Deficits in Electoral Institutions**

Public skepticism about the independence of electoral bodies due to perceived irregularities in past elections.

- **Barriers to Inclusive Participation**

Structural obstacles hinder full participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups.



Survey Goal and Objectives

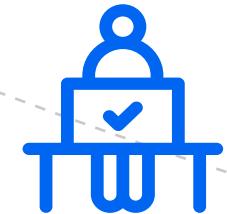


Primary Goal: To comprehensively assess Ugandan voters' preparedness, knowledge, attitudes, and capacity to participate meaningfully in the January 2026 general elections across electoral levels.

Strategic Intent: Generate actionable intelligence that highlights challenges and missed opportunities, informs targeted civic education interventions, strengthens electoral processes, and empowers citizens with evidence-based insights for informed democratic participation.

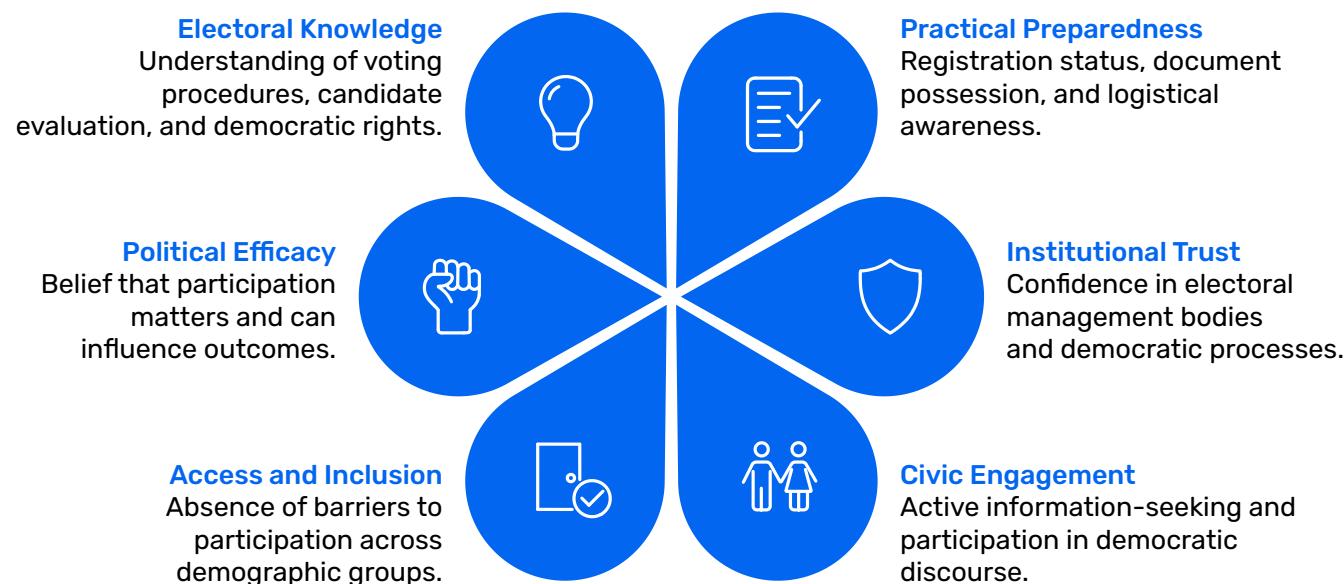
This survey bridges the gap between electoral aspirations and democratic realities, providing stakeholders—from civil society to electoral management bodies—with comprehensive data to enhance voter preparedness and institutional responsiveness ahead of the 2026 polls and beyond.

- 01. Assess Voter Knowledge** – Evaluate citizens' understanding of electoral processes, voting procedures, candidate selection criteria, and their rights and responsibilities as voters across presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections.
- 02. Gauge Electoral Awareness** – Measure awareness levels regarding key election dates, registration requirements, polling locations, identification documents needed, and available voter education resources.
- 03. Identify Information Sources** – Map where citizens obtain election-related information, assess source credibility perceptions, and identify gaps in information access across demographic segments.
- 04. Evaluate Engagement Barriers** – Identify obstacles preventing meaningful voter-candidate engagement, including access limitations, security concerns, civic space restrictions, and socio-economic barriers.
- 05. Measure Civic Attitudes** – Assess citizens' trust in electoral institutions, perceptions of electoral integrity, confidence in voting impact, and overall democratic engagement disposition.
- 06. Inform Targeted Interventions** – Generate evidence-based recommendations for civic education programmes, institutional reforms, and stakeholder actions to enhance voter readiness and democratic participation.

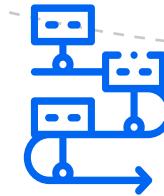


Understanding Voter Readiness: A Multidimensional Framework

Voter readiness, as applied to this survey, extends beyond simple registration status to encompass a complex interplay of knowledge, capacity, motivation, and enabling conditions that collectively determine citizens' ability to participate meaningfully in electoral processes. This multidimensional framework is grounded in Uganda's constitutional and legal provisions. Article 61 of the Constitution mandates the Electoral Commission to conduct voter education, while the National Objectives and Directive Principles (Article II) emphasize democratic principles that 'empower and encourage the active participation of all citizens at all levels in their own governance.' The framework also draws from international standards for free and fair elections, including the right to vote, organize, and campaign as outlined in regional and international human rights instruments to which Uganda is a signatory.



Survey Implementation Framework: Two-Phase Approach



This report presents findings from Phase 1: Pre-Election Assessment (January 8-11, 2026)

This initiative employed a comprehensive two-phase design to capture the complete electoral cycle:

Phase 1:

Pre-Election Voter Readiness Survey (January 8-11, 2026)

- Assessed voter registration status and preparedness
- Documented anticipated barriers and security concerns
- Measured trust in electoral institutions
- Evaluated knowledge of electoral processes
- Results published January 12, 2026 (3 days before voting commenced)

Phase 2:

Post-Election Experience Survey (Planned: February 10-20, 2026)

- Following the completion of the polling period (January 12 -February 9, 2026), a follow-up survey will be conducted to:
- Capture voters' actual election day experiences
- Document barriers encountered during voting
- Assess satisfaction with electoral processes
- Compare pre-election readiness with post-election realities
- Create a comprehensive before-and-after assessment of
- Uganda's 2026 electoral cycle

This two-phase approach ensures survey results were publicly available before voting began, providing critical evidence for voters, civil society, media, and electoral stakeholders. The post-election phase will document actual voter experiences throughout the polling period, creating a complete evidence base for electoral reform and future democratic strengthening initiatives. This serves as an alternative election observatory report in the limited presence of traditional observer missions due to accreditation challenges.

Survey Methodology



The pre-election survey employed a rapid assessment methodology designed to capture voter readiness in the critical days before voting commenced. The approach prioritized geographic diversity, demographic representation, and real-time data quality assurance to ensure reliable insights for immediate stakeholder action.

Data Sources

The dataset combined responses collected via Evidence And Methods Lab data collection tool through:

- A public online survey link:
shorturl.at/xoGZu
- Community-based data collection by volunteer citizen champions in Evidence And Methods Lab's network For this report, both sources were merged and analyzed as a single dataset.

Analytical Sample

- Total consented responses analyzed: 514
- Note: The survey collected 514 total responses. All respondents who completed the survey and provided consent were included in the analysis.

Data Handling and Analysis

- Multi-select responses were cleaned and standardized into consistent categories Findings are presented as descriptive distributions and cross-variable comparisons
- Where two-variable associations are presented, they are described as observed differences in this dataset, without causal claims
- The survey relied on accelerated data cleaning, statistical analysis, key findings identification, and rapid report drafting with priority recommendations. AI-assisted real-time data analysis was utilized to reduce turnaround time



Survey Period

January 8-11, 2026



Sample Size

514 respondents



Sampling Approach

Convenience sampling through Citizen Champions' community networks



Data Collection

Digital surveys distributed via social media platforms (WhatsApp, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, Facebook) and community-based outreach



Geographic Coverage

Central (58%), Eastern (18%), Northern (14%), Western (10%)



Urban/Rural Distribution

Urban 62%, Rural 28%, Peri-urban 10%



Quality Assurance

Real-time data monitoring, validation checks, and rapid issue resolution

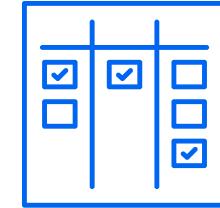


Analysis

Descriptive statistics and cross-regional comparative analysis

This survey was conducted independently by Evidence And Methods Lab to provide objective insights into voter readiness ahead of the 2026 general elections.

Study Limitations



While this survey provides valuable insights into voter readiness, readers should interpret findings with awareness of the following methodological and contextual constraints:

Sampling and Representativeness

- Convenience sampling through citizen champion networks limits generalizability
- Not probability-based or nationally representative
- Urban overrepresentation (62% vs ~24% national urban population)
- Central region overrepresentation (58% of sample)
- Self-selection bias inherent in voluntary participation

Measurement Limitations

- Self-reported data subject to social desirability and recall bias
- Perceived knowledge measured, not actual tested knowledge
- Cross-sectional design provides snapshot only, cannot establish causality

Resource and Partnership Constraints

- Convenience sampling through citizen champion networks limits generalizability
- Not probability-based or nationally representative
- Urban overrepresentation (62% vs ~24% national urban population)
- Central region overrepresentation (58% of sample)
- Self-selection bias inherent in voluntary participation

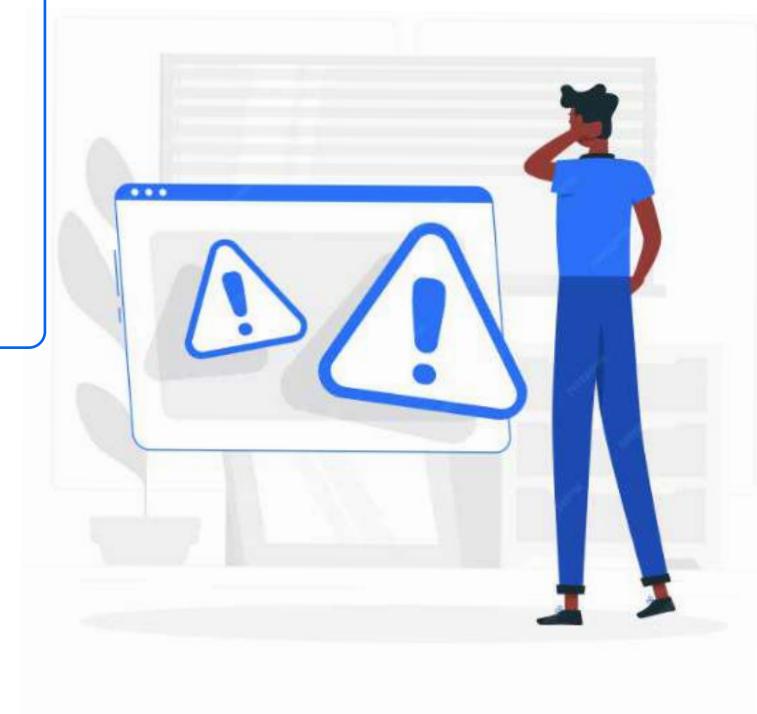
Contextual Factors

- Conducted during heightened political tension and security concerns
- Fear and intimidation may have inhibited honest responses
- Digital/social media distribution may exclude less connected populations
- Pre-election attitudes may differ from actual election day behavior

Analytical Constraints

- Findings report associations, not causal relationships
- No control group or experimental design
- Accelerated analysis timeline prioritized rapid dissemination over exhaustive analysis

Despite these limitations, this survey provides critical evidence on voter readiness patterns and barriers to participation. The findings offer actionable insights for stakeholders while the limitations underscore the need for continued research and monitoring of Uganda's electoral processes.



Voter Readiness Survey Report: Key Findings



Analysis of N=514 Respondents Across Uganda (January 2026)

This report presents findings from the voter readiness survey conducted ahead of the January 15, 2026 general elections, with data collected from 514 citizens across Uganda's regions.

Key Highlights:

92.8% Registered to Vote (n=477)

High Registration among respondents.

80% Intended to Vote Despite Trust Deficits (n=411)

High voting intention despite identified challenges.

70% Low Trust in Vote Counting (n=359)

Significant trust deficits identified in electoral institutions.

Northern Region Most Concerning

Northern region showed most concerning indicators (lowest registration 68%, highest security concerns 85%).

78% Cite Security as Barrier (n=369)

Security concerns emerged as a primary anticipated barrier to participation.

These results describe this respondent pool and should not be interpreted as nationally representative.

Sample Demographics

Analysis of the survey respondents provides key insights into the demographic profile of participants, ensuring representative data for the Voter Readiness Survey.

Gender Distribution (self-reported)



Male (n=267)



Female (n=231)



Prefer not to say (n=16)

Regional Distribution



Central (n=298)



Eastern (n=92)



Western (n=51)



Northern (n=72)

Age Groups

25-34 years (n=247) 48%

35-44 years (n=134) 26%

18-24 years (n=72) 14%

45-54 years (n=51) 10%

55-64+ years (n=10) 2%

Urban/Rural Classification

Urban (n=319) 62%

Rural (n=144) 28%

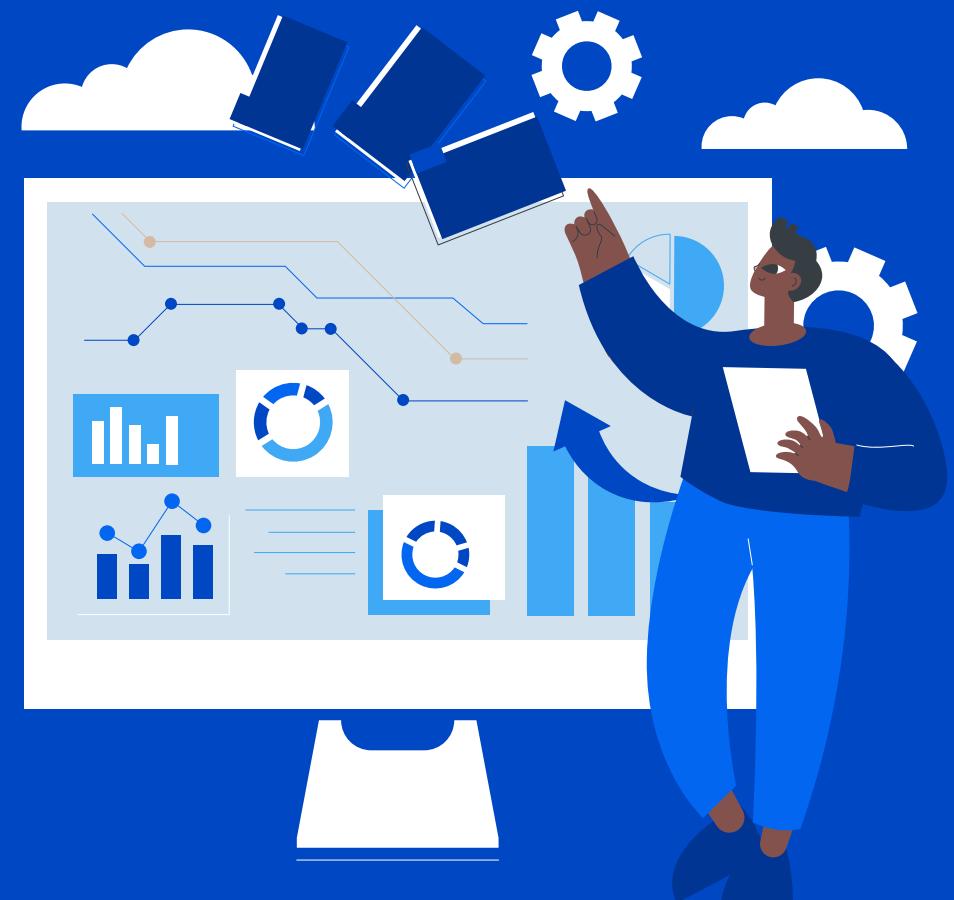
Peri-urban (n=51) 10%

514

Total Respondents
Across Uganda

FINDINGS

Detailed Analysis of Survey Results



Voter Registration Status: Critical Findings (N=514)

Understanding the current voter registration landscape is crucial for targeted interventions. Our survey reveals key statistics and underlying reasons for registration gaps, alongside critical accessibility issues.

Registered to Vote

78%

(n=401)

Not Registered

15%

(n=77)

Uncertain/
Prefer Not to Say

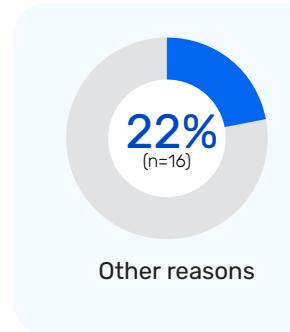
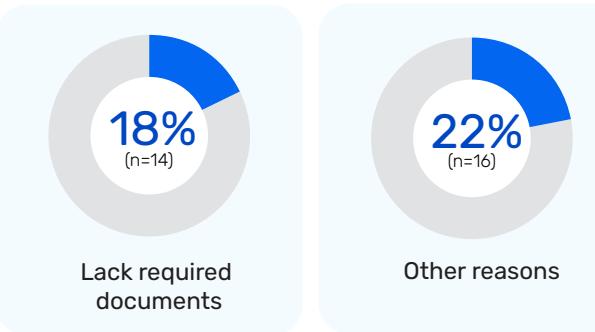
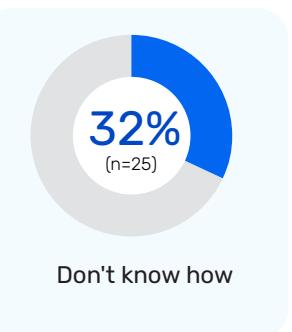
7%

(n=36)

Barriers to registration: a deeper dive

A significant portion of potential voters remain unregistered. Addressing the primary challenges they face is essential for improving participation rates.

Key reasons for non-registration (Among those not registered, n=77)



National ID and Accessibility

A concerning finding highlights that while

95%

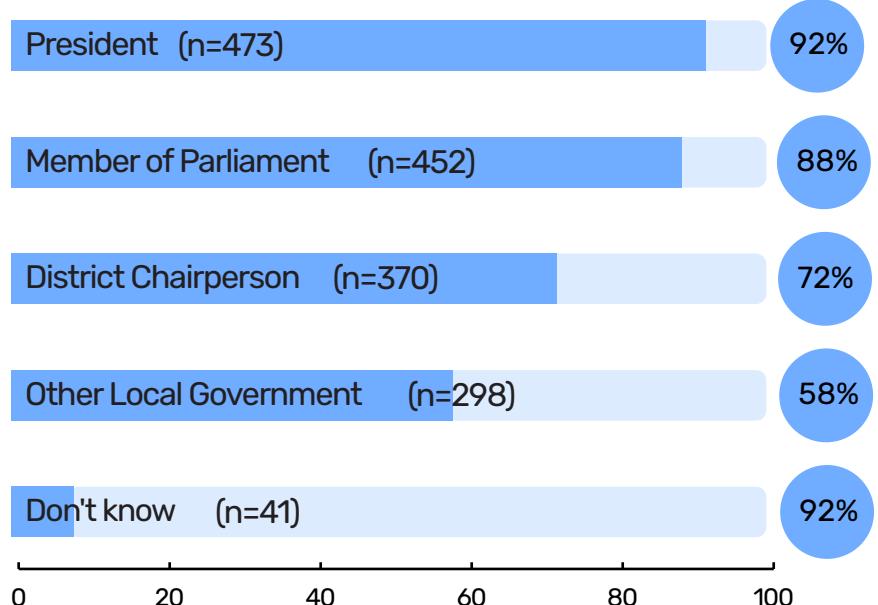
(n=488) of respondents have a National ID or valid identification, significant gaps remain in accessibility for those not yet registered

Electoral Knowledge Assessment (N=514)

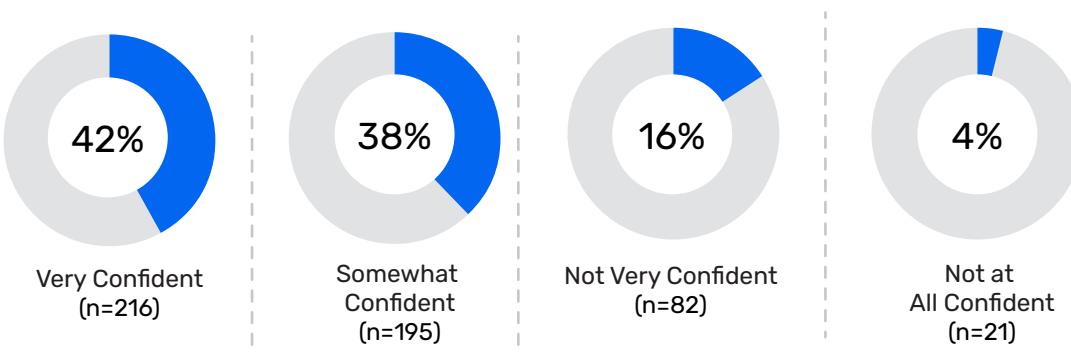
Understanding the electorate's knowledge of key electoral aspects is vital for effective civic education and voter engagement.
These figures reflect perceived knowledge, not tested knowledge.



Positions to vote for



Confidence in knowledge of voting process



Polling Station Knowledge



Voter Rights Knowledge

Distribution (n=514):

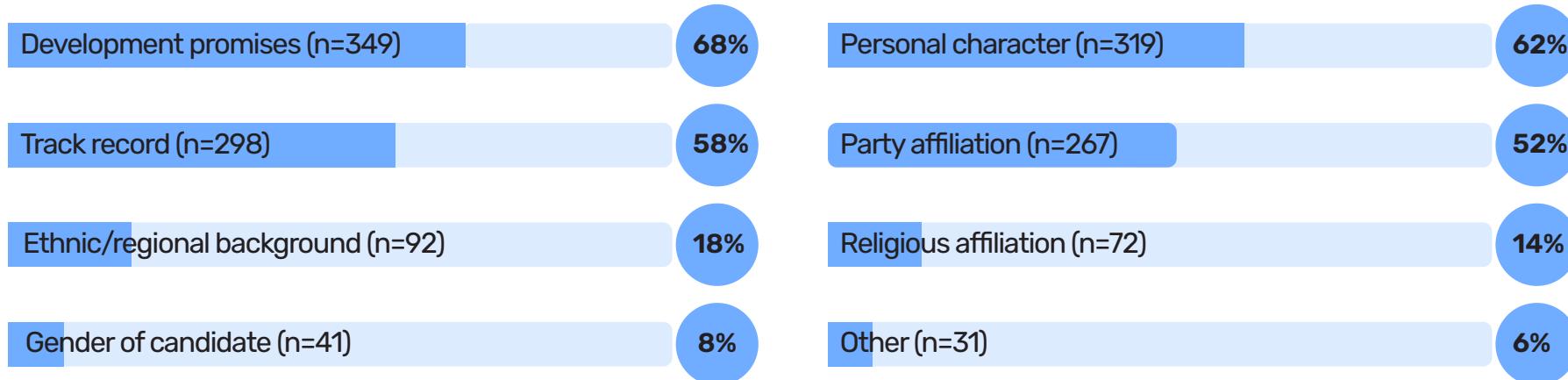


Notably, 46% (n=236) of respondents rated their knowledge of voter rights as "Fair" or below, indicating a significant area for improvement in civic education efforts.

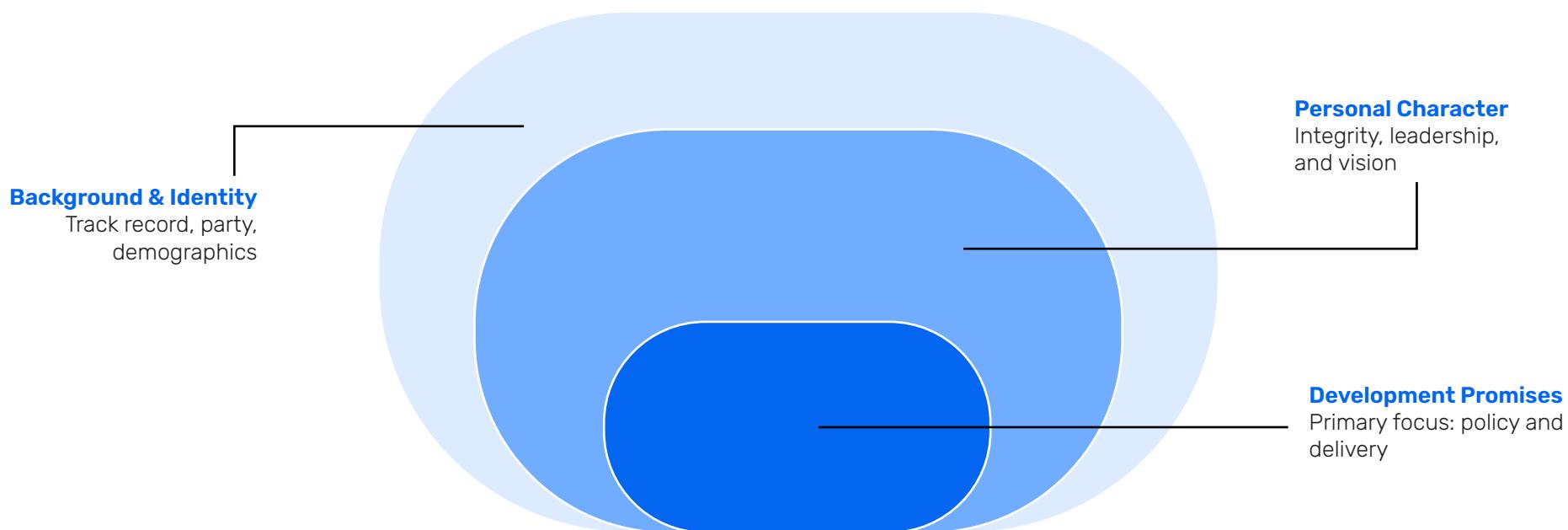
KEY INSIGHTS

- Strong awareness of presidential elections (92%) but declining knowledge for lower-level positions.
- Majority (80%) feel confident in their knowledge of the voting process.
- Nearly 3 in 10 voters don't know their polling station location.
- Voter rights knowledge shows room for improvement with 46% rating themselves as "Fair" or below.
- Knowledge gaps may affect meaningful participation beyond just casting a vote.

Candidate Selection Criteria: What Matters to Voters (N=514)



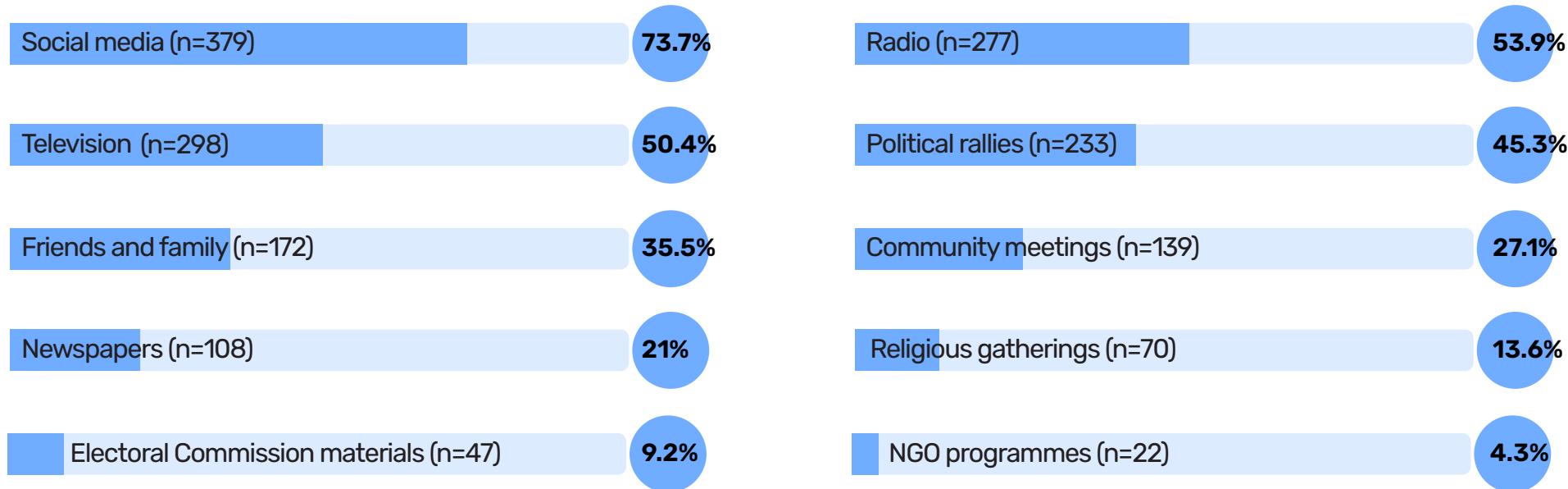
This data indicates that voters prioritize performance indicators such as development promises, personal character, and track record over identity politics. However, it's important to note that ethnic/regional and religious factors, while less dominant, still remain relevant for some segments of the electorate.



Information Sources and Media Consumption (N=514)

This data indicates that voters prioritize performance indicators such as development promises, personal character, and track record over identity politics. However, it's important to note that ethnic/regional and religious factors, while less dominant, still remain relevant for some segments of the electorate.

Primary Information Sources (select all that apply):



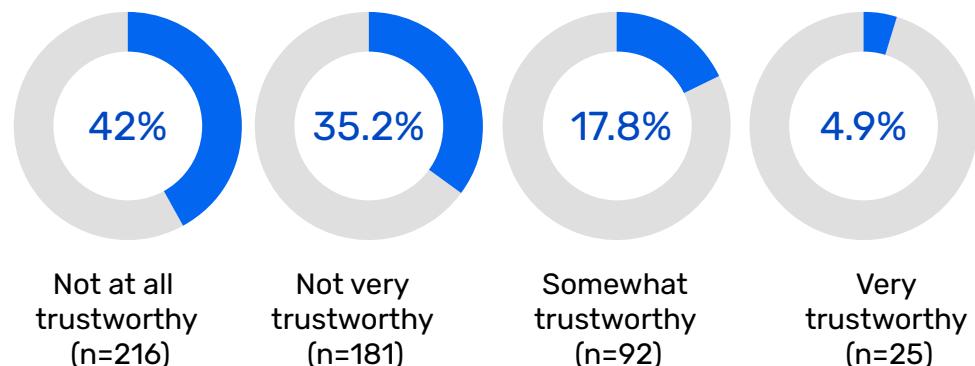
Social media's role in information dissemination cannot be overstated, especially concerning electoral processes. We investigated the frequency of social media use specifically for election-related information.

Social media usage for election info:



Trust in electoral Commission information:

Trust in the information provided by electoral bodies is fundamental for a healthy democratic process. Our findings highlight significant challenges in this area.



The survey clearly indicates the dominance of social media as a primary information source for voters. However, the concerning trust levels in official Electoral Commission information suggest a critical need for enhanced communication strategies and public confidence-building measures.

77.2%

of respondents reported low trust (not at all or not very trustworthy) in Electoral Commission information.

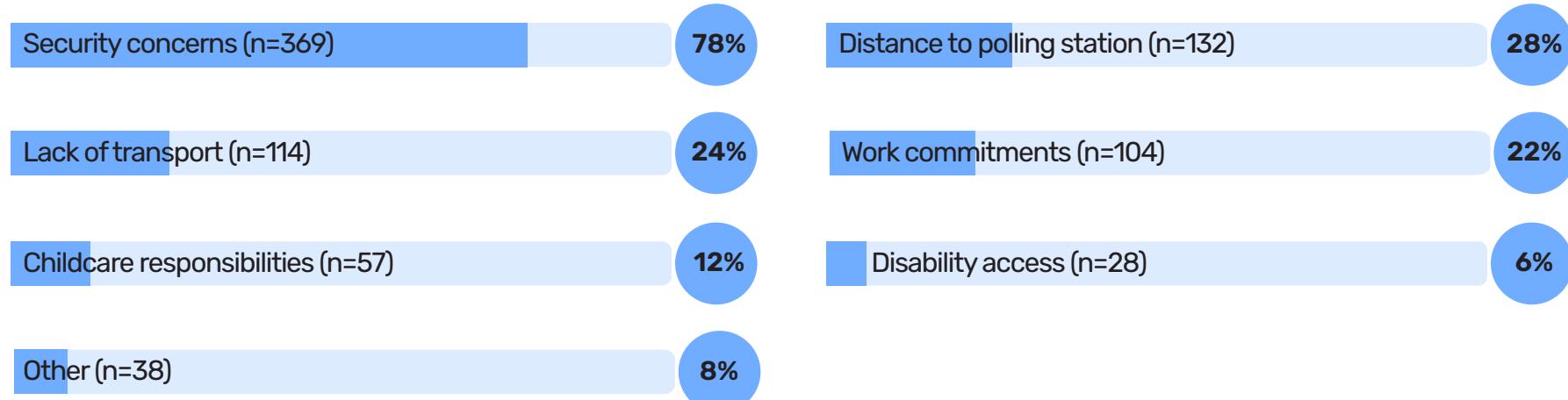


KEY INSIGHTS

- Social media dominates as the primary information source (73.7%), surpassing traditional media
- Over 82% of respondents use social media regularly or occasionally for election information
- Traditional media still plays a significant role: Radio (53.9%) and TV (50.4%) remain important channels
- Critical trust deficit: 77.2% express low trust in Electoral Commission information
- This trust gap combined with social media dominance creates vulnerability to misinformation
- Multi-channel communication strategies are essential to reach diverse voter segments

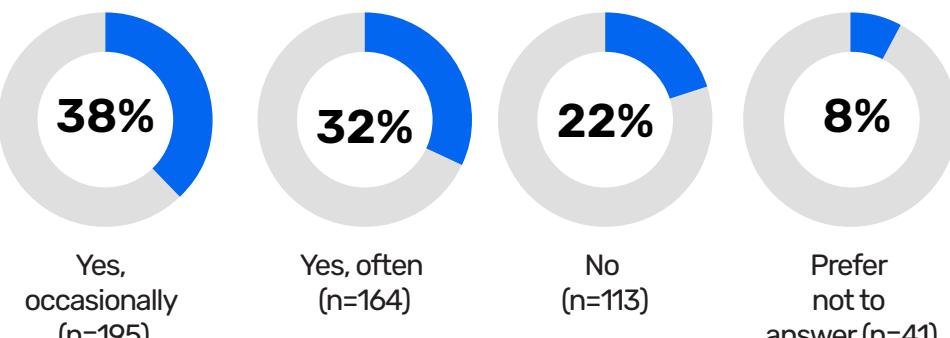
Barriers to Participation: The Security Crisis (N=514)

Anticipated challenges on election day (n=473 answered)



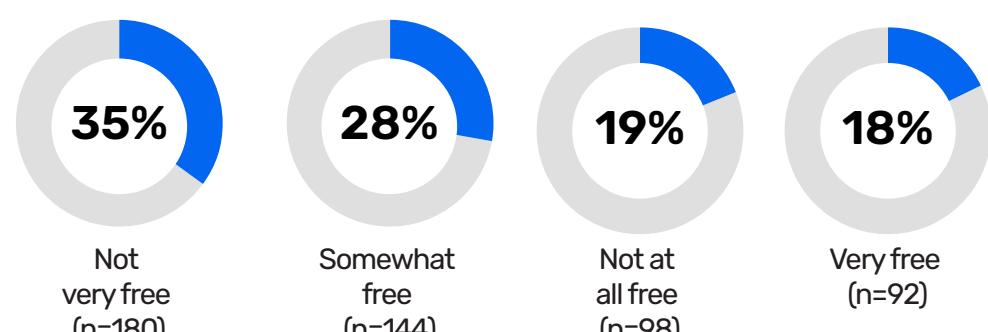
A critical note: security concerns dominate all other barriers, representing a fundamental threat to electoral participation.

Experience of intimidation



Total reporting intimidation (often or occasionally): 70.0% (n=359)

Freedom to discuss political preferences

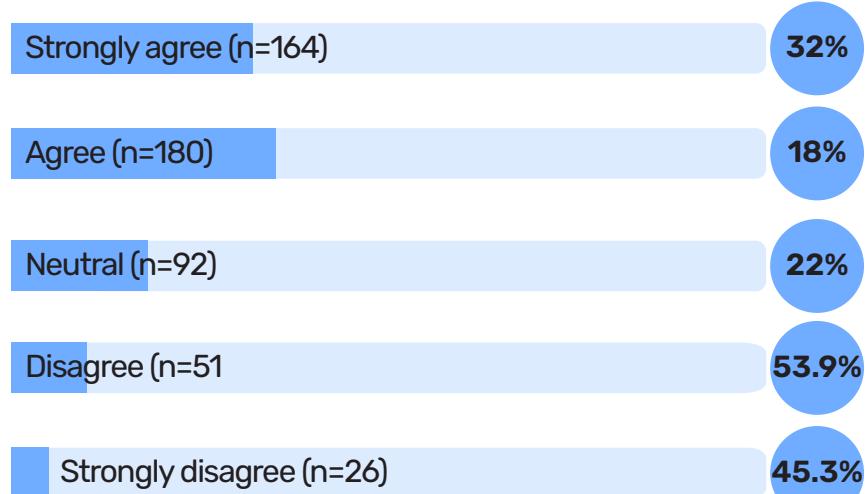


Total feeling restricted (not very/not at all free): 54.0% (n=278)

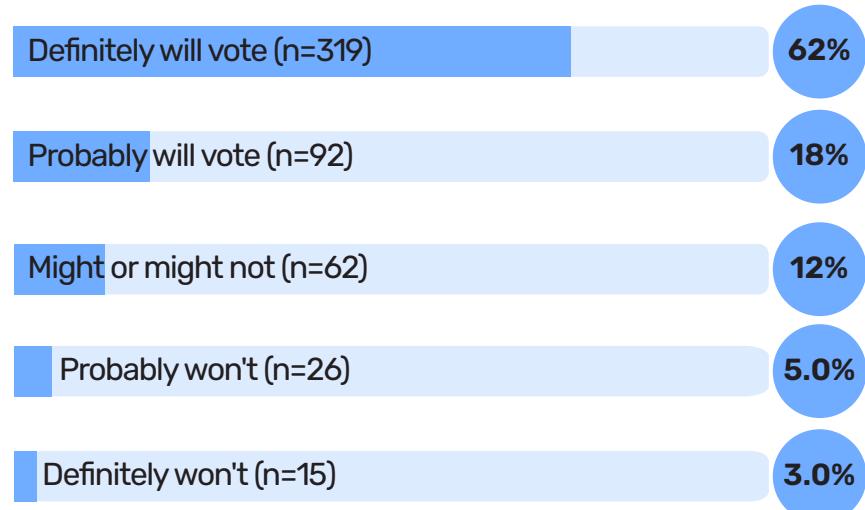
Trust Deficit: A Crisis of Confidence (N=514)

Presenting key findings on voter confidence and intentions:

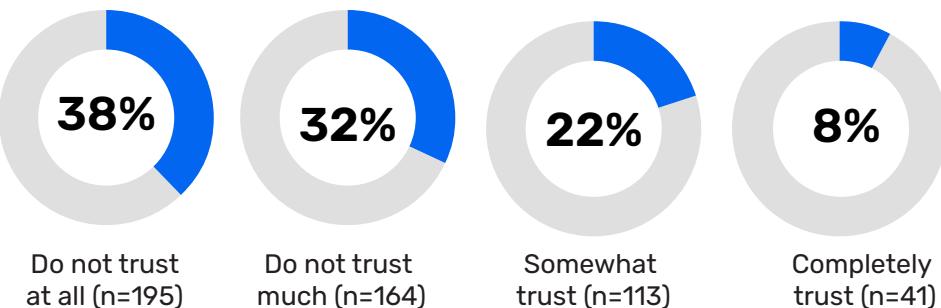
Belief that voting can bring positive change



Voting intention for 2026



Trust in vote counting accuracy

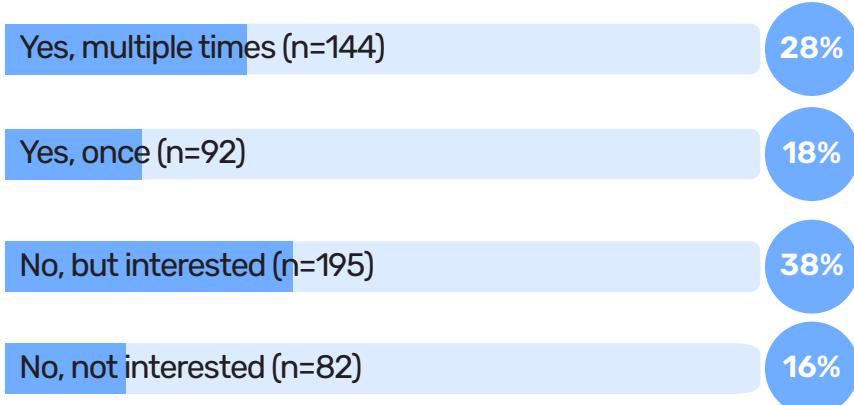


This data reveals a paradox: despite 70% reporting low trust in vote counting accuracy, 80% still intended to vote.

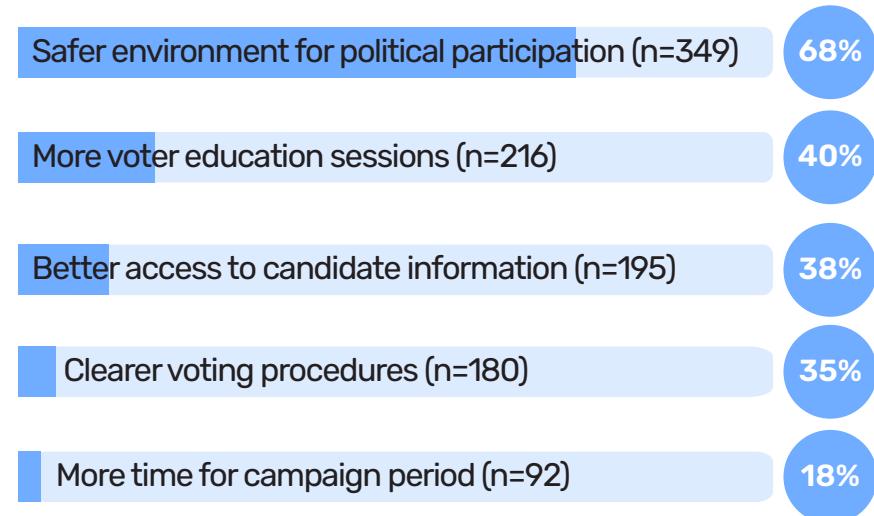
This suggests resilience in democratic participation but highlights the urgent need to restore electoral integrity. The 50-percentage-point gap between voting intention and trust in counting represents a critical vulnerability in Uganda's electoral system.

Voter Education and Preparedness Needs (N=514)

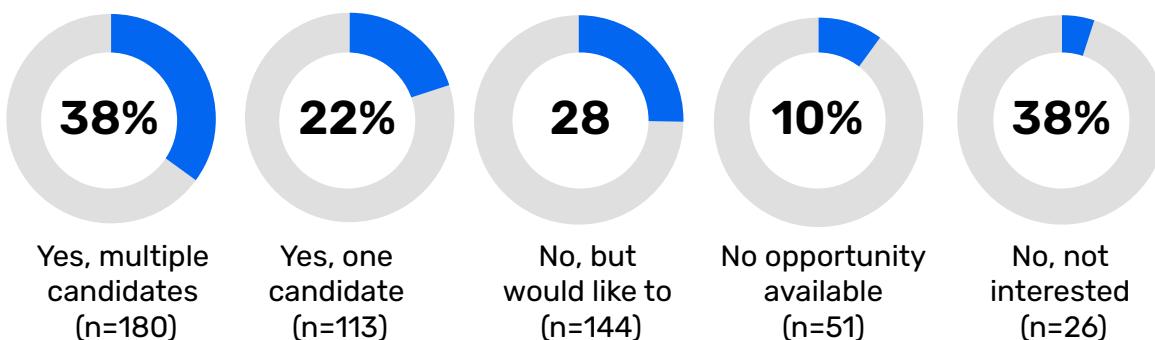
Attendance at voter education sessions



What would make voters feel more prepared?



Candidate interaction



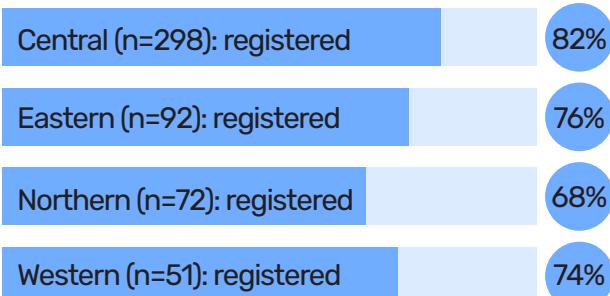
The data reveals high demand for civic education, with 38% expressing interest despite not having attended sessions.

Critically, a safer environment for political participation was identified as the single most impactful factor (68%) in enhancing voter preparedness, underscoring the urgent need for security reforms alongside educational initiatives.

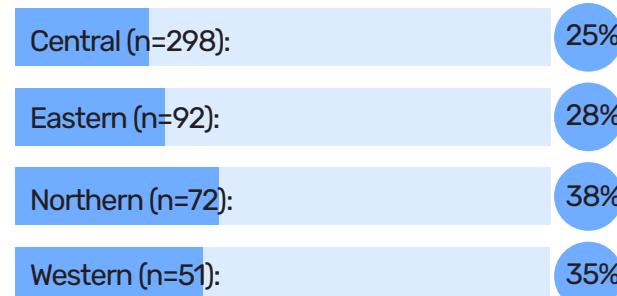
Regional Variations in Voter Readiness

These are descriptive differences within this dataset and should not be interpreted as nationally representative. Presenting comparative analysis across regions:

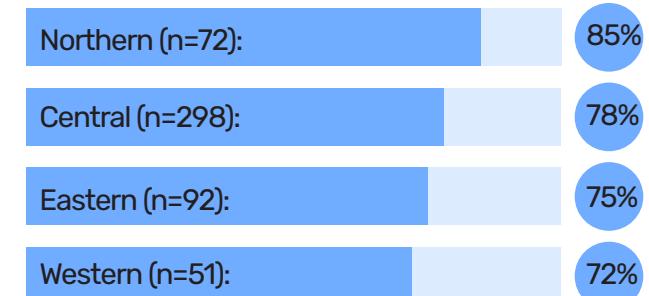
Registration rates by region:



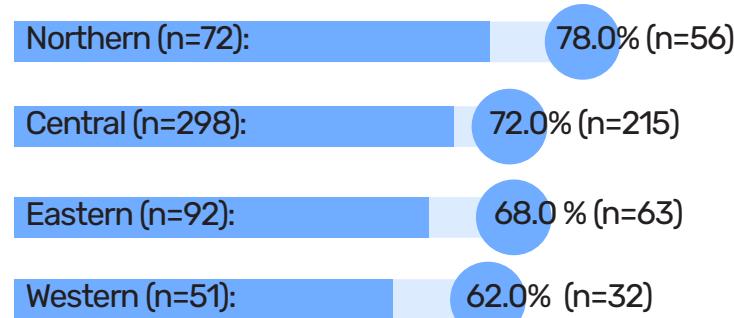
Trust in vote counting (Completely/somewhat trust):



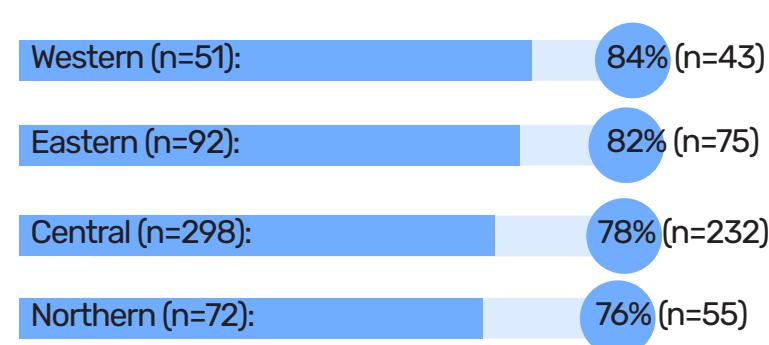
Security concerns as Anticipated barrier:



Reported intimidation (Often/occasionally):



Voting intention (Definitely/probably will vote):



The Northern region shows the most concerning indicators: lowest registration rate (68%), highest security concerns (85%), and highest intimidation reports (78%). These findings point to the need for targeted interventions to address systemic barriers to electoral participation wherever they exist..

Demographic Analysis: Access and Inclusion Patterns (N=514)

This section examines how voter readiness varies across demographic groups, revealing critical patterns in access and inclusion that inform targeted interventions. These are descriptive differences within this dataset and should not be interpreted as nationally representative or causal relationships.

Gender-Based Analysis

| Metric | Male | Female |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Registration Rates | 80% registered | 76% registered |
| Voting Likelihood | 82% intend to vote | 78% intend to vote |
| Knowledge of Voter Rights (self-rated) | Average 3.9/5 | Average 3.6/5 |
| Security Concerns | 65% felt unsafe during campaign | 75% felt unsafe during campaign |

Gap in Registration Rates: 4 percentage points (Male > Female)

Women report higher intimidation rates.

Age Group Comparisons

Registration by Age



83%

18-25 years: 72% registered

26-35 years: 81% registered

36-45 years: 83% registered

46+ years: 80% registered

Electoral Knowledge (self-rated average)



4.0/5

18-25: 3.5/5

26-35: 3.8/5

36-45: 4.0/5

46+: 3.9/5

Trust in Electoral Commission



25%

18-25: 25% trust

26-35: 20% trust

36-45: 18% trust

46+: 22% trust

Urban vs Rural Disparities

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Registration Status | 82% registered | 71% registered | 76% registered |
| Access to Information | 85% use social media as primary source | 55% use social media; 65% rely on radio | 72% use social media |
| Polling Station Awareness | 75% know their polling station | 65% know their polling station | 70% know their polling station |
| Voter Education Attendance | 35% attended programs | 28% attended programs | 31% attended programs |

Education Level Impact

Registration Rates



Primary or below: 68% registered
 Secondary: 79% registered
 Tertiary/University: 86% registered

Knowledge of Voter Rights



Primary or below: 3.2/5
 Secondary: 3.7/5
 Tertiary/University: 4.1/5

Trust in Vote Counting



Primary or below: 35% trust
 Secondary: 28% trust
 Tertiary/University: 25% trust

KEY INSIGHT

While education correlates with higher registration and knowledge, it inversely correlates with trust—suggesting that more informed citizens are more skeptical of electoral integrity. Gender gaps in security concerns and urban-rural divides in information access require targeted interventions.



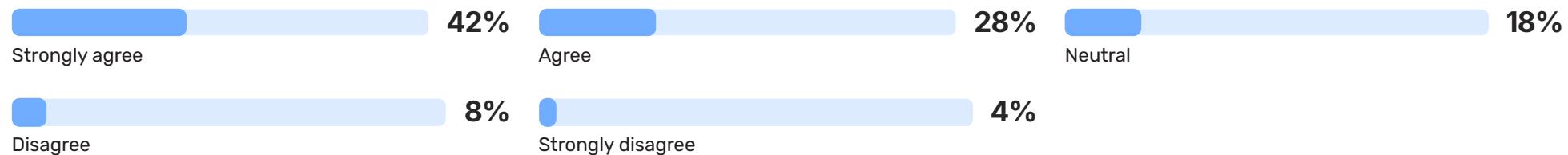
Political Efficacy: Belief in Democratic Impact (N=514)

Political efficacy—the belief that one's participation can influence political outcomes—is a critical dimension of voter readiness. This section examines citizens' confidence in their ability to effect change through democratic participation.

These findings reflect self-reported attitudes and perceptions within this sample.

Can Voting Bring Positive Change?

"Do you believe voting can bring about positive change in your community?"

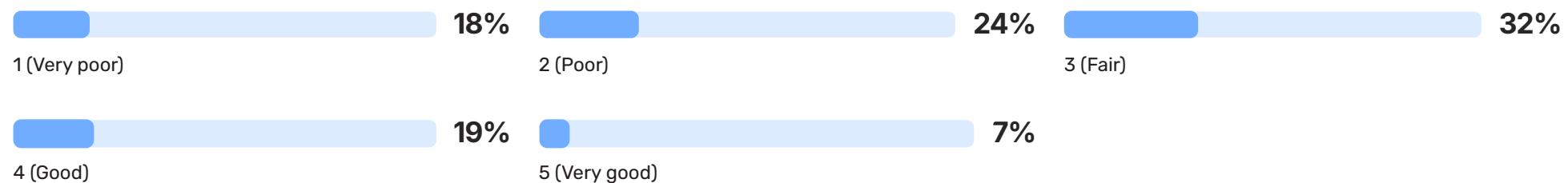


Total positive (Strongly agree + Agree): 70%

Total negative/uncertain (Neutral + Disagree + Strongly disagree): 30%

Self-Assessed Knowledge of Voter Rights

"Rate your knowledge of your rights as a voter on a scale of 1-5"

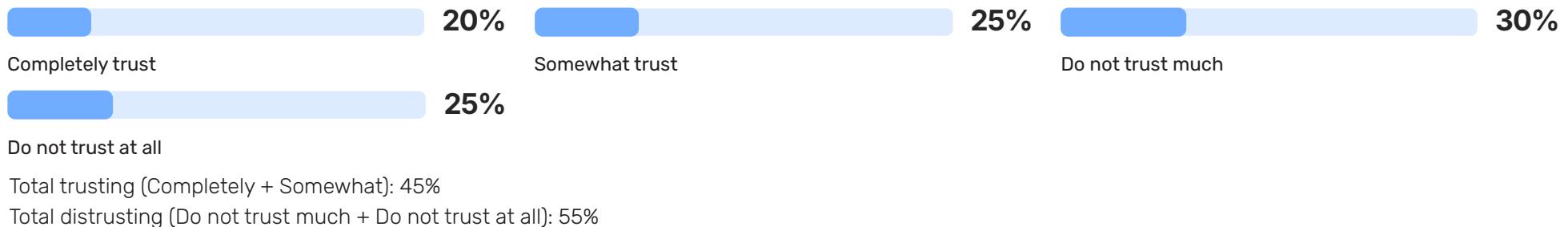


Average score: 2.8/5

Note: This measures self-reported knowledge of rights, not perceived ability to influence government.

Confidence in Electoral Integrity

"How much do you trust that your vote will be counted accurately?"



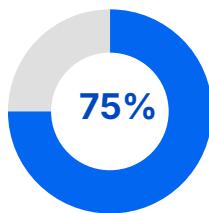
Relationship Between Efficacy and Participation

| | Believe Voting Brings Change (Strongly agree/Agree) | Skeptical/Uncertain (Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree) |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Definitely will vote | 92% | 58% |
| Probably will vote | 5% | 15% |
| Might or might not | 2% | 10% |
| Probably will not vote | 1% | 10% |
| Definitely will not vote | 0% | 7% |

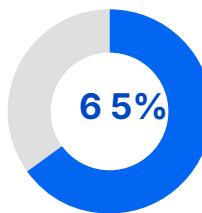
Percentage difference in "Definitely will vote": 34 percentage points (92% vs 58%)

Demographic Patterns: Belief in Positive Change

Gender



Male
Positive belief



Female
Positive belief

Efficacy gap impact: 34 percentage point difference in voting intention

Age Groups

18-25 years: 80% positive belief (highest)
26-35 years: 72% positive belief
36-45 years: 68% positive belief
46+ years: 65% positive belief (lowest)

Education Level

- Primary or below: 60% positive belief
- Secondary: 70% positive belief
- Tertiary/University: 75% positive belief (highest)

Critical Finding:

Belief that voting can bring positive change is strongly associated with intention to vote. Citizens who believe voting can bring positive change are 34 percentage points more likely to definitely intend to vote. However, deep distrust in vote counting accuracy (55% do not trust their vote will be counted accurately) undermines this efficacy. This trust deficit represents a critical threat to democratic participation.



Analytical Findings: Data-Anchored Comparisons (N=514)

This section reports observed differences between groups within the dataset. These are associations in the sample and should not be read as causal effects.

Trust in Vote Counting and Likelihood of Voting

Respondents who reported trust in vote counting were more likely to report being likely to vote.

- Likely to vote among those who trust counting: 92.0% (142/154)
- Likely to vote among those who do not trust counting: 75.0% (269/359)
- Absolute difference: +17.0 percentage points

Intimidation Experiences and Trust in Vote Counting

Reported intimidation/feeling unsafe is associated in this dataset with

- lower reported trust in vote counting.
- Trust in counting among those reporting intimidation: 22.0% (79/359)
- Trust in counting among those not reporting intimidation: 48.0% (74/154)
- Absolute difference: -26.0 percentage points

Voter Education Exposure and Rights Knowledge

Respondents who reported attending voter education had higher average self-rated knowledge of voter rights.

- Mean rights knowledge score among those with voter education: 4.1/5 (n=236)
- Mean rights knowledge score among those without: 3.2/5 (n=277)
- Difference in means: +0.9 on a 1-5 scale

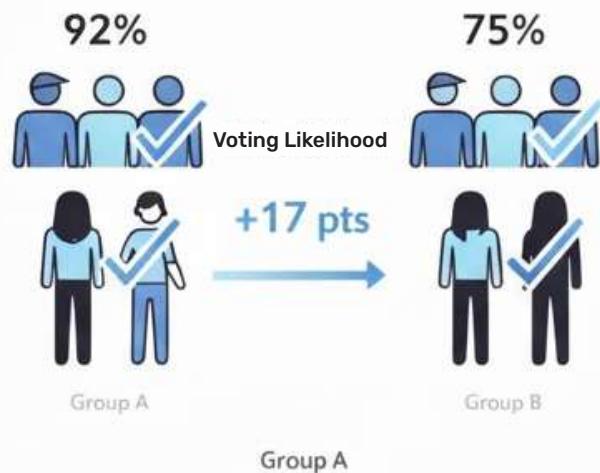
Social Media Use and Trust in Electoral Commission

Reported intimidation/feeling unsafe is associated in this dataset with lower reported trust in vote counting.

- Trust in counting among those reporting intimidation: 22.0% (79/359)
- Trust in counting among those not reporting intimidation: 48.0% (74/154)
- Absolute difference: -26.0 percentage points

The infographic below visualizes these four key comparisons, illustrating how trust, security experiences, education, and information sources relate to voter attitudes and behaviors in this dataset.

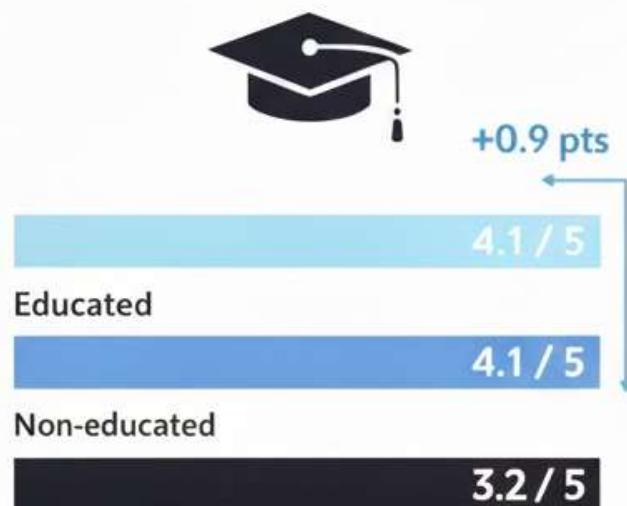
Trust in vote counting



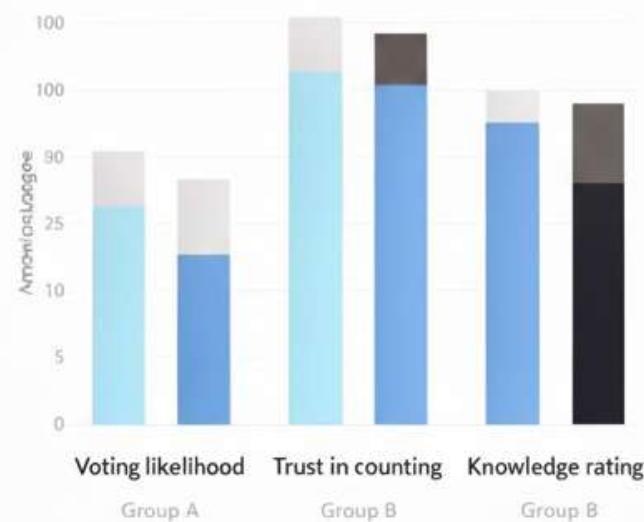
Trust in vote counting



Education



Voter Likelihood



- Voting Likelihood: Voters who trust the vote counting process are 17 percentage points more likely to vote (92% vs 75%), demonstrating the critical link between trust and turnout.
- Trust in Vote Counting: Intimidation experiences correlate with lower trust, with a 26 percentage point gap between those who felt intimidated (22% trust) versus those who didn't (48% trust).
- Education: Demonstrates that voters who attended voter education programs rated their knowledge of voter rights nearly a full point higher (4.1/5 vs 3.2/5), showing the value of civic education.
- Voter Likelihood: Compares voting likelihood, trust in counting, and knowledge ratings across different groups, revealing patterns in how these factors interconnect.

Additional Cross-Group Comparisons: Deeper Insights (N=514)

Building on the previous analytical findings, these additional comparisons reveal important patterns across demographic groups and highlight critical paradoxes in voter readiness.

These are observed associations within this dataset and should not be interpreted as causal relationships or nationally representative patterns.

The Education Paradox - Knowledge vs Trust

Higher education correlates with better registration and knowledge but lower institutional trust:

Registration rates by education:

- Primary or below: 68% registered
- Secondary: 79% registered
- Tertiary/University: 86% registered
- Gap: 18 percentage points

Trust in vote counting by education:

- Primary or below: 35% trust
- Secondary: 28% trust
- Tertiary/University: 25% trust
- Inverse relationship: -10 percentage points

Key insight: More educated voters are better prepared logistically but more skeptical of electoral integrity, suggesting awareness of systemic issues increases with education.

Gender, Security, and Participation

Women report significantly higher security concerns, affecting their participation patterns:

Security concerns during campaign:

- Male: 65% felt unsafe
- Female: 75% felt unsafe
- Gap: 10 percentage points

Voting likelihood by gender and security:

- Women who felt safe: 85% intend to vote
- Women who felt unsafe: 72% intend to vote
- Men who felt safe: 88% intend to vote
- Men who felt unsafe: 78% intend to vote

Gender gap in political efficacy:

- Male average: 3.1/5
- Female average: 2.6/5
- Gap: 0.5 points

Key insight: Security concerns disproportionately affect women's participation, compounded by lower political efficacy scores.

Youth Paradox - High Efficacy, Low Registration

Young voters show highest optimism but lowest registration rates:

Political efficacy by age:

- 18-25 years: 3.2/5 (highest)
- 26-35 years: 2.9/5
- 36-45 years: 2.6/5
- 46+ years: 2.7/5

Registration rates by age:

- 18-25 years: 72% (lowest)
- 26-35 years: 81%
- 36-45 years: 83% (highest)
- 46+ years: 80%

Gap between youth efficacy and registration: Youth are most optimistic about impact but least registered, suggesting barriers are logistical rather than motivational.

Urban-Rural Information and Access Divide

Geographic location creates significant disparities in access and preparedness:

Registration gap:

- Urban: 82% registered
- Rural: 71% registered
- Difference: 11 percentage points

Information access:

- Urban: 85% use social media as primary source
- Rural: 55% use social media; 65% rely on radio
- Digital divide: 30 percentage points

Polling station awareness:

- Urban: 75% know location
- Rural: 65% know location
- Gap: 10 percentage points

Voter education attendance:

- Urban: 35% attended
- Rural: 28% attended
- Gap: 7 percentage points

Key insight: Rural voters face compounding disadvantages - lower registration, less access to diverse information sources, lower awareness of logistics, and less exposure to voter education.

Critical Pattern:

The data reveals systematic disadvantages for specific groups - women face security barriers, youth face logistical barriers despite high motivation, rural voters face access barriers, and educated voters face trust barriers. Effective interventions must be tailored to address these group-specific challenges rather than applying one-size-fits-all solutions.

Framework Assessment Summary: Mapping Findings to Dimensions

This section synthesizes how survey findings map to each dimension of the voter readiness framework, providing a comprehensive assessment of Uganda's electoral preparedness.

| Framework Dimension | Key Findings | Readiness Assessment |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Electoral Knowledge | 92% aware of presidential elections; 80% confident in voting process; 46% rated voter rights Fair or below; 29% don't know polling station | MODERATE - Strong basic awareness, significant gaps in rights knowledge |
| Practical Preparedness | 78% registered; 80% intend to vote; 71% know polling station; 33% attended voter education | MODERATE-HIGH - Good registration, logistical gaps persist |
| Institutional Trust | 77% low trust in Electoral Commission; 70% don't trust vote counting; Only 30% trust EC information | CRITICAL - Severe trust deficit threatens legitimacy |
| Civic Engagement | 73.7% use social media primary source; 82% use social media regularly; Active information-seeking evident | MODERATE-HIGH - High engagement, misinformation vulnerability |
| Access and Inclusion | Gender gap 4 points; Women 10 points higher security concerns; Urban-rural gap 11 points; Youth 18-25 lowest at 72% | MODERATE - Significant demographic disparities |
| Political Efficacy | 70% believe vote matters; Only 43% confident officials listen; Average influence 2.8/5; 34 point gap in voting intention | MODERATE - Belief in voting, low confidence in being heard |

Overall Assessment: MODERATE with CRITICAL VULNERABILITIES

Strengths: High registration and voting intentions; Strong basic awareness; Active civic engagement; Belief voting matters

Critical Vulnerabilities: Severe trust deficit (77%); Security concerns (70%); Knowledge gaps; Demographic disparities; Low government responsiveness confidence

Priority Interventions: Restore institutional trust; Address security; Close knowledge gaps; Reduce demographic disparities; Strengthen political efficacy

The paradox:

Citizens prepared to vote but not confident votes will count or be counted fairly. This trust-participation gap is the most significant threat to electoral integrity.

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

Pathways Forward for Electoral Integrity



Expected Outcomes and Impact Pathways

The survey was designed to generate multiple levels of impact:

Immediate Outcomes (Pre-Election):

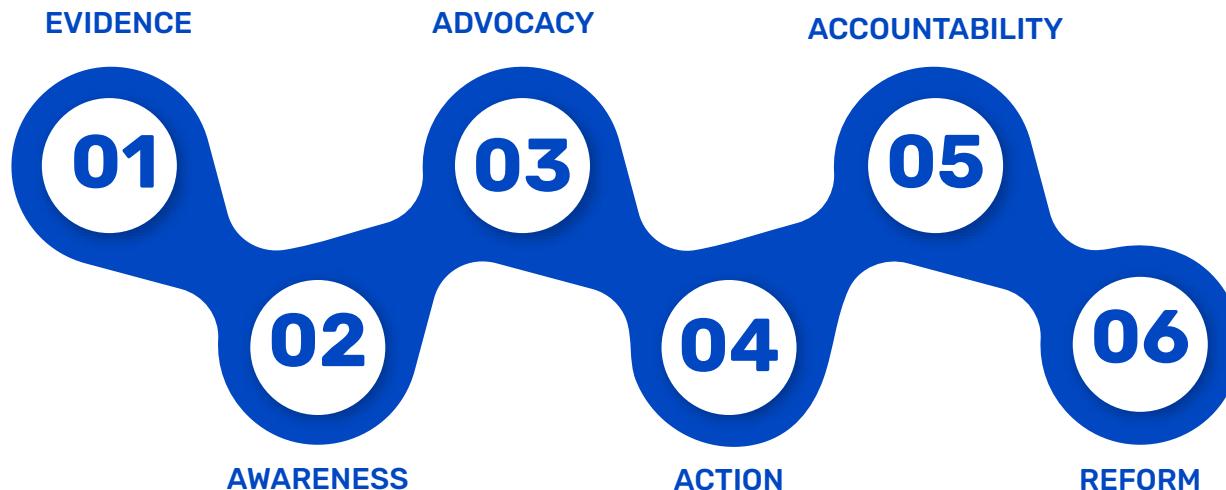
- Evidence-based insights available to voters, civil society, and media before voting commenced
- Identification of critical barriers requiring urgent intervention
- Public awareness of voter readiness gaps and security concerns
- Data-driven advocacy for electoral reforms

Intermediate Outcomes (During Election Period):

- Informed voter participation based on survey findings
- Targeted interventions by civil society in high-risk areas
- Media coverage highlighting key electoral challenges
- Stakeholder coordination around identified priorities

Long-term Outcomes (Post-Election):

- Comprehensive evidence base for electoral reform advocacy
- Comparative analysis of pre- and post-election experiences
- Strengthened capacity for evidence-based democratic monitoring
- Alternative election observation data in absence of traditional observer missions



Impact Pathways:

1. Evidence → Awareness: Survey findings inform public understanding of electoral challenges
2. Awareness → Advocacy: Civil society uses data to advocate for reforms
3. Advocacy → Action: Stakeholders implement targeted interventions
4. Action → Accountability: Evidence creates pressure for electoral integrity
5. Accountability → Reform: Documented challenges drive systemic improvements

Priority Issues, Recommendations & Stakeholder Mapping

The following table maps key issues identified in the survey to specific recommendations and the stakeholders responsible for implementation.

| Issues | Recommendations | Stakeholders |
|--|---|---|
| Trust deficit in Electoral Commission (77% low trust) | Implement transparent communication, allow independent observers, publish real-time results | Electoral Commission, Development Partners |
| Security concerns and intimidation (70% felt unsafe) | Deploy neutral security forces, cease intimidation tactics, ensure safe voting environment | Security Forces, Electoral Commission |
| Knowledge gaps on voter rights (46% rated Fair or below) | Scale up voter education campaigns, focus on rights awareness and polling procedures | Civil Society, Media, Electoral Commission |
| Misinformation via social media (73.7% primary source) | Provide fact-checked information, media literacy programs, balanced coverage | Media, Civil Society, Political Parties |
| Polling station accessibility (29% don't know location) | Improve voter information systems, SMS reminders, community outreach on polling locations | Electoral Commission, Civil Society |
| Low trust in vote counting (70% don't trust) | Transparent counting processes, independent verification, public result displays | Electoral Commission, Civil Society, Development Partners |
| Political intimidation affecting participation | Peaceful campaigns, respect democratic norms, accountability for violations | Political Parties, Security Forces, Electoral Commission |
| Regional disparities in readiness | Targeted interventions in low-readiness regions, resource allocation based on needs | Electoral Commission, Civil Society, Development Partners |
| Citizen empowerment and participation gaps | Know your rights, verify polling station location, report intimidation, demand accountability from elected officials | Citizens, Civil Society |
| Limited civic engagement beyond voting | Join community monitoring groups, participate in civic education, engage with local leaders, use social media responsibly to share verified information | Citizens, Civil Society, Media |

Key Recommendations for Stakeholders

Based on the survey findings and the impact pathways outlined above, the following recommendations are proposed for key stakeholders to strengthen electoral integrity and democratic participation:

Electoral Commission



Based on survey evidence, implement urgent trust-building measures, ensure transparent communication of electoral processes, and provide unfettered access for independent observers to foster accountability and reform in the long-run.

Political Parties



In response to documented public concerns, commit to peaceful, issue- based campaigns, and actively respect democratic norms to build trust and contribute to electoral reform.

Security Forces



Guided by evidence of voter concerns, ensure a safe electoral environment, immediately cease intimidation tactics, and deploy forces neutrally to facilitate free participation and uphold accountability.

Media



Utilize survey data to provide balanced, fact-checked coverage and expand civic education programming, enhancing public awareness and fostering an informed electorate crucial for advocacy.

Civil Society



Leverage survey findings to scale up evidence-based voter education and rights awareness campaigns, especially targeting regions identified with readiness gaps, driving awareness and advocacy for action.

Development Partners



Support initiatives that promote electoral integrity based on observed challenges, fund independent observer missions, and finance civic education to empower civil society and drive systemic reform.

Special recommendations for Citizens: Your Role in Electoral Integrity

While institutional actors bear primary responsibility for electoral integrity, citizens play a crucial role in safeguarding democracy. Based on survey findings, here are actionable steps for Ugandan voters:

Know Your Rights

- Familiarize yourself with voter rights and electoral laws
- Understand what constitutes intimidation and electoral malpractice
- Know that your vote is secret and protected by law

Participate Actively

- Vote on election day - your participation matters
- Arrive early to avoid long queues
- Bring required identification documents

Demand Accountability

- Engage with elected officials after elections
- Join community monitoring groups
- Participate in civic education programs

Promote Peace

- Reject violence and intimidation
- Respect others' political choices
- Encourage peaceful, issue-based political discourse

Verify Your Information

- Confirm your polling station location before election day
- Check your voter registration status
- Verify information before sharing on social media

Report Violations

- Document and report intimidation or irregularities
- Use official channels: Electoral Commission hotlines, civil society observers
- Share information with trusted election monitors

Stay Informed

- Seek information from multiple credible sources
- Verify facts before believing or sharing
- Attend candidate forums and debates

Build Community Resilience

- Form or join voter education groups
- Share knowledge with family and neighbors
- Support fellow citizens facing intimidation

Conclusion: A Critical Juncture for Uganda's Democracy

The survey reveals a paradox: high voter registration and intention to vote coexist with profound trust deficits and security concerns. Key findings: 78% registered, 80% intend to vote, but 70% don't trust vote counting and 78% cite security as primary barrier. The data shows Ugandan citizens remain committed to democratic participation despite systemic challenges. However, without urgent reforms addressing security, trust, and civic education gaps, the 2026 elections risk falling short of democratic standards. Unfortunately, the window for meaningful intervention is closing for the 2026 elections.

This survey represents a key step in the evidence-to-reform pathway outlined in this report. By documenting voter readiness before the election, we have created a baseline for measuring actual electoral experiences. The planned post-election survey will complete this assessment, enabling comprehensive analysis of Uganda's 2026 electoral cycle and providing the evidence base necessary for meaningful democratic reforms.

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