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The geography of decision-making in voters, politicians and spatial dynamics

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Abstract

This article examines the dynamics of voter decision-making during Ghana's 2024 general elections, highlighting a significant shift from traditional identity-based politics toward a focus on economic issues and governance. Using spatial voting theory as a framework, the study analyzes how voters evaluated candidates based on performance and policy preferences. Dissatisfaction with economic conditions, systemic corruption, and minimal engagement with elected representatives heavily influenced electoral outcomes. The findings reveal a growing emphasis on policy commitments over ethnic affiliations, signaling a demand for greater accountability and responsiveness from political leaders. By situating Ghana's electoral dynamics within broader theoretical contexts, this study provides fresh insights into the evolving landscape of African democracies and offers practical implications for enhancing democratic governance. Future research directions are suggested to deepen understanding of these shifts and their impact on voter behavior and political accountability.

Keywords: Elections, government, influence, corruption, constituents, dissatisfaction, engagement, economy, performance, accountability, dynamics, preferences, satisfaction, perception

Introduction

The 2024 general elections in Ghana marked a watershed moment in the country's political history, as the electorate decisively rejected the incumbent government amidst widespread economic dissatisfaction and governance concerns. The election outcomes, spanning all 16 regions, signaled a dramatic departure from the historical norm of identity-based voting, with voters prioritizing policy commitments and economic performance over ethnic loyalties. Notable losses by key Members of Parliament, including K.T. Hammond (Adansi Asokwa) and Ursula Owusu-Ekufu (Ablekuma West), underscored this shift and raised important questions about the drivers of voter behavior in contemporary Ghana.

Voter decision-making in Ghana has traditionally been shaped by ethnic affiliations, personal connections, and clientelism. However, the 2024 elections suggest a significant evolution toward more issue-based voting patterns. Spatial voting theory, which posits that voters make decisions by aligning their preferences with the policy proposals closest to their own, offers a compelling lens through which to understand these changes. This theory not only highlights the growing role of economic grievances, such as inflation, unemployment, and corruption, but also reflects a demand for transparency and accountability in governance.

The implications of this shift extend beyond Ghana, offering insights into the broader trajectory of electoral politics in African democracies. By analyzing the interplay between economic realities, ethnic influences, and governance issues, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the forces shaping voter behavior in emerging democracies. The findings also provide valuable lessons for political parties and policymakers aiming to foster greater trust and engagement with constituents.

This paper explores the key factors that influenced voter behavior in Ghana's 2024 elections, situates these findings within the framework of spatial voting theory, and examines their implications for democratic governance. By addressing questions about the motivations behind voter choices, the role of economic conditions, and the diminishing influence of ethnic identity in politics, this study seeks to enrich the academic discourse on electoral behavior in Africa and beyond.

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Ballots and Belonging: The Ethnic Influence

In Ghana, the evolution of electoral politics suggests that the sociological model can help explain the voting behavior of certain population segments. The ethnic voting theory posits that people tend to act according to the norms and values of their social groups. Voters are likely to support a candidate from their community if they believe that individual will best safeguard their interests (Adjei, 2012) ^[1]. Ethnicity arises from interactions between different groups or societies when they come into contact and create various forms of spatial, political, economic, cultural, and social connections. It reflects how closely the members of a group adhere to shared norms and values (Cohen, 1993) ^[5]. In recent years, the concept of ethnicity has emerged as a key idea in the social sciences. Scholars like Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (1975, p. 5) in their influential work *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* propose that the term "ethnicity" has evolved from referring primarily to minority and marginal groups on the fringes of society those anticipated to assimilate or fade away to encompass significant components of society. In Africa, voting outcomes are largely influenced by factors like ethnicity, personal connections, and clientelism, with ethnicity playing a significant role in shaping political dynamics (Erdmann, 2007) ^[8]. There is a strong sense of unity among members of different ethnic groups when it comes to politics. For instance, in the Ashanti and Oti regions, voters predominantly support their favored political party, the New Patriotic Party and National Democratic Congress. In the 2024 general elections in Ghana, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, the candidate for the New Patriotic Party, received 1,366,800 votes in the Ashanti Region, while his opponent, John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress, garnered 697,076 votes. Conversely, in the Volta Region, Mahama led with 584,234 votes, compared to Bawumia's 56,699 votes (source: <https://citinewsroom.com>). The Ashanti and Volta regions often vote as a unified group, and this pattern of identity-based voting has turned elections in these areas into a reflection of ethnic loyalty (Bratton, Bhavnani & Chen, 2012) ^[4]. Since the establishment of Ghana's Fourth Republic, two main political parties, the NPP and the NDC, have dominated the country's political landscape, each enjoying varying levels of support nationwide. However, there are also smaller parties within the Ghanaian political sphere that, while their impact on the struggle for political power may be minimal, play a crucial role in strengthening democracy (Whitfield, 2009) ^[17]. The voting patterns in the 2008 election followed a similar trend, as evidenced by the fact that Akufo-Addo, the NPP's presidential candidate, received only 14.8 percent of the votes in the Volta Region, while Atta Mills garnered 82.88 percent in that same area. In contrast, in the Ashanti Region, Akufo-Addo achieved 72.4 percent of the votes, compared to Atta Mills' 26.1 percent (Arthur, 2009) ^[2].

Theoretical Ripples: Unraveling Consequences

Theoretical beliefs differ from other types of beliefs in that they are conceptual, explanatory, and predictive (Gelman and Legare 2011; Gopnik and Meltzoff 1998) ^[9, 11]. In this article, the authors will use spatial voting theory, focusing on explanatory beliefs, which offer reasonable causal explanations for events and outcomes. For instance, a statement such as "the President lost due to citizens' dissatisfaction with the economy" suggests underlying

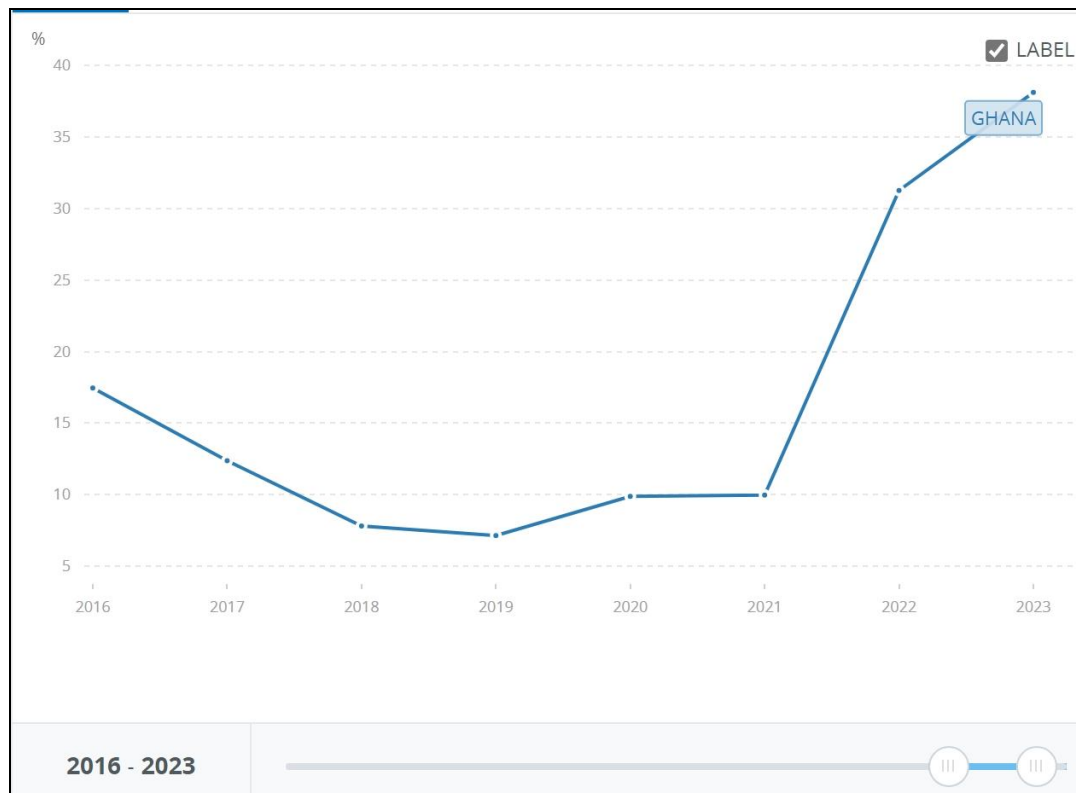
theories related to voting behavior. The New Patriotic Party (N.P.P)'s Minister for Communication, Ursula Owusu, as reported by Ghana Web on September 25, 2011, "heralded her presence unto the Ghanaian political landscape through her vulgar and notoriety by being verbally aggressive, insulting anyone who doesn't share in her opinion". This Member of Parliament for Ablekuma West believed her constituents had a long-term perspective and were more inclined to consider long-term (Sheffer, Loewen, and Lucas 2023) ^[13], contributing to her loss in the just-ended general elections in Ghana.

In spatial voting theory, it is generally assumed that each voter possesses a set of policy preferences that can be effectively represented in a simplified, low-dimensional space, often described as a left-right spectrum. Political candidates and parties compete by presenting their own sets of policy proposals, and voters evaluate these proposals to choose the candidate or party whose ideal point is closest to their own within this latent space (Downs, 1957) ^[6]. Research on "lay theories" in politics shows a strong connection between political behavior and policy attitudes among both the public and political leaders (Kertzer and McGraw 2012; Rad and Ginges 2019) ^[12, 15]. For example, politicians who view their constituents as focused on policies rather than identities tend to allocate more time to policy-related activities (Lucas, Sheffer, and Loewen 2024) ^[13]. Additionally, those who believe their constituents have a long-term perspective are more inclined to consider long-term implications when making decisions that involve trade-offs (Sheffer, Loewen, and Lucas 2023) ^[13]. Furthermore, recent studies indicate that when politicians believe voters will hold them accountable for past actions, they invest more time and effort into understanding public opinion (Soontjens and Walgrave 2021) ^[16]. This highlights the significance of politicians' underlying beliefs, which shape "psychological worlds" (Dweck 2012, 39) ^[7] that influence their expectations and guide their behavior. The current developments in Ghana's 2024 general elections run contrary to Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels's (2016) concept of democratic realism. Achen and Bartels contend that voters are generally unable to make decisions based on calculations of spatial proximity. Instead, the majority of voters rely on enduring group identities and vague, short-term evaluations of their well-being when making choices. There is no denying the fact that ethnicity plays an undercurrent role in Ghana's politics, as evidenced in the just-ended 2024 general elections. However, voters' sets of policy preferences significantly influenced their decisions to support specific candidates. These preferences guided voters in choosing candidates whose proposed policies aligned closely with their values and interests.

Highlighting Essential Issues

The New Patriotic Party's struggle to combat soaring inflation, rising unemployment, and a weakening cedi left many Ghanaians frustrated with their economic direction, and alongside rampant corruption and governance issues, the electorate sent a clear message by voting the ruling party out of power. This certainly meant that voters, in the context of Ghana, were generally seen as having a set of policy preferences that could be captured in a simplified way. They evaluated candidates based on their promises and chose the one whose ideals aligned most closely with their views the spatial voting theory dynamic.

Inflation and Consumer Prices



Source: International Monetary Fund, International Financial Statistics and data files.

A comparison of inflation and consumer price trends shows that the annual rate skyrocketed from 17.5% in 2016 to a staggering 38.1% in 2023. Although the New Patriotic Party achieved notable success during its first term from 2016 to 2020, inflation and consumer prices rose significantly, distorting the costs of goods and services. This situation raised concerns among citizens about the current administration, particularly in the year leading up to the country's general elections. On October 2, 2023, it was reported that Ghana's consumer inflation rose after a five-month slowdown, primarily driven by increasing food prices. The inflation rate climbed to 21.5% year-on-year in September, up from 20.4% in August. According to Ghana's government statistician, Samuel Kobina Annim, this increase was largely attributed to a significant 3 percentage point rise in food inflation, highlighting the ongoing economic challenges faced by the country ^[1]. Likewise, the cedi experienced a decline of more than 60% in value against the US dollar from 2022 to 2024, further increasing the cost of living.

Impacts of financial sector recapitalization

The recent overhaul of the financial sector has incurred significant costs. Between 2017 and 2021, the government's recapitalization efforts totaled 7.1% of GDP, which increased the fiscal deficit and national debt. Banks, which held approximately 40% of their assets in government securities, experienced substantial losses related to the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP), amounting to C16.3 billion (approximately US\$1.5 billion) in impairment charges in 2022 (Bank of Ghana, 2023). As a result, the banking sector reported an aggregate loss of C8 billion (around US\$696 million), with only six out of 23 banks achieving profitability that year. By December 2022,

the effects of the DDEP had significantly diminished half of the banking system's regulatory capital, resulting in an average capital adequacy ratio that fell below the mandatory requirement of 13%. Domestic banks, both state-owned and private, faced particular challenges due to their heightened exposure to public debt and lower capital buffers. Despite these setbacks, there is a positive development: robust profits since early 2023 have facilitated a recovery in capital, increasing the average capital adequacy ratio to 13.9% by December 2023 and 13.6% by February 2024. Nevertheless, some banks struggle to meet the 13% requirement and require additional capital to rectify this shortfall. Moreover, the proportion of nonperforming loans has escalated, rising to 20.7% in December 2023, compared to 16% in December 2022, and further increasing to 25.7% by April 2024.

Unemployment Rate

Unemployment trends are important signs of a country's economic health and social stability. In Ghana, the unemployment rate increased from 8.4% in 2020 to 15.7% in 2024. Interestingly, low unemployment rates can sometimes hide significant poverty, while high unemployment can occur even in economically developed countries. In places without unemployment benefits, people often take unstable jobs just to get by, while in countries with good social support, workers can afford to wait for better opportunities. However, ongoing high unemployment indicates deeper problems in the system. Youth unemployment is a major issue, as young people today face uncertainty when trying to enter the job market, leading to frustration that affects both individuals and their communities. Those who are unemployed or underemployed find it harder to help their country grow, have less money to

spend, and often cannot push for changes in their situations. This ultimately made the Ghanaian citizens, who are very concerned with their preferred preferences, vote against the party in government.

Systemic corruption

Concerns about systemic corruption and favoritism, along with claims of financial mismanagement, contributed to a negative narrative that overshadowed any government accomplishments. The Forum for Development and Accountable Governance (FDAG)’s comparative analysis of governance metrics showed that Ghana's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score decreased from 43 in 2020 to 37 in 2024, indicating rising worries about corruption in the public sector. Moreover, trust in government institutions, as indicated by Afrobarometer surveys, plummeted from 56% in 2018 to only 31% in 2024, highlighting significant discontent with the ruling party.

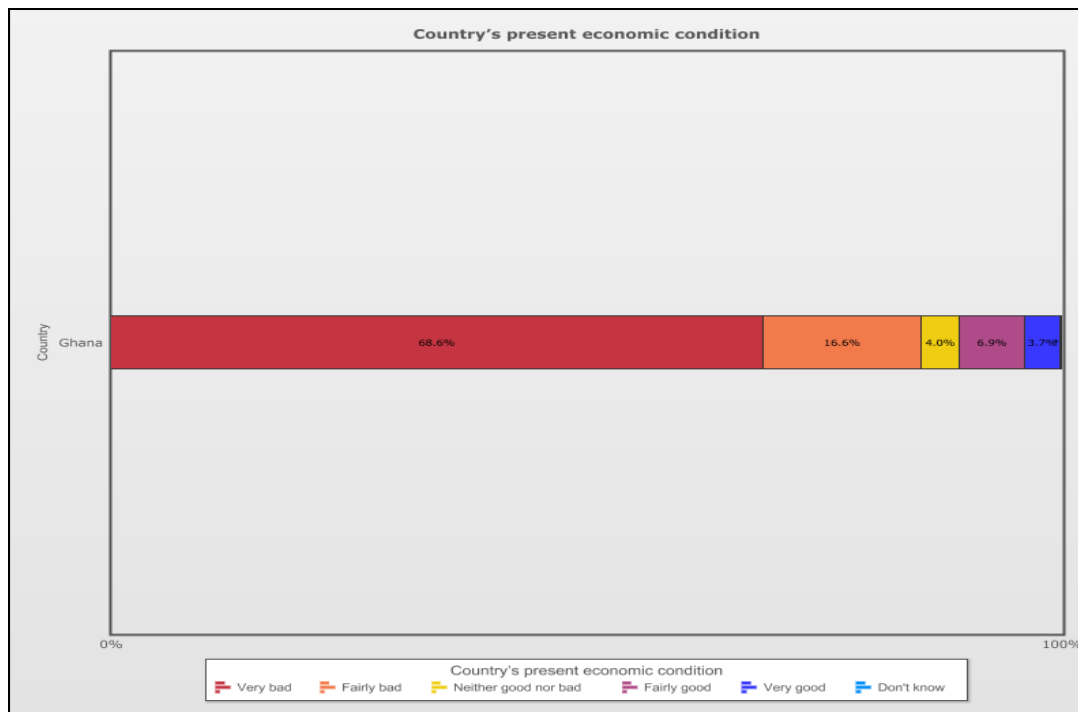
Methodology

This research article incorporates data from Afrobarometer, a pan-African research network conducting public attitude surveys, to enrich the analysis of voters selecting parties based on their preferred policies or their motivations to see their political side win and the opposing side lose. By integrating Afrobarometer data, this study gained a deeper

understanding of the geography of decision-making in voters, politicians, and spatial dynamics and how it influenced their choice of candidate selection in the 2024 general elections. The official Afrobarometer website provides access to survey datasets, reports, and other resources. In the article, data was sourced from various rounds of surveys conducted in Ghana, typically involving around 2,369 respondents via the Afrobarometer Online Data Analysis Tool by generating tables to aid my analysis. The specific years of Afrobarometer data used for the timeframe of the article were mainly R9 indicating 2021/2023, the periods closer to the general elections in Ghana to enable the authors to determine factors leading to the significant defeat of the incumbent government?

Ghana’s present economic condition

Ghana	
Category	Total
Very bad	68.6%
Fairly bad	16.6%
Neither good nor bad	4.0%
Fairly good	6.9%
Very good	3.7%
Don't know	0.2%



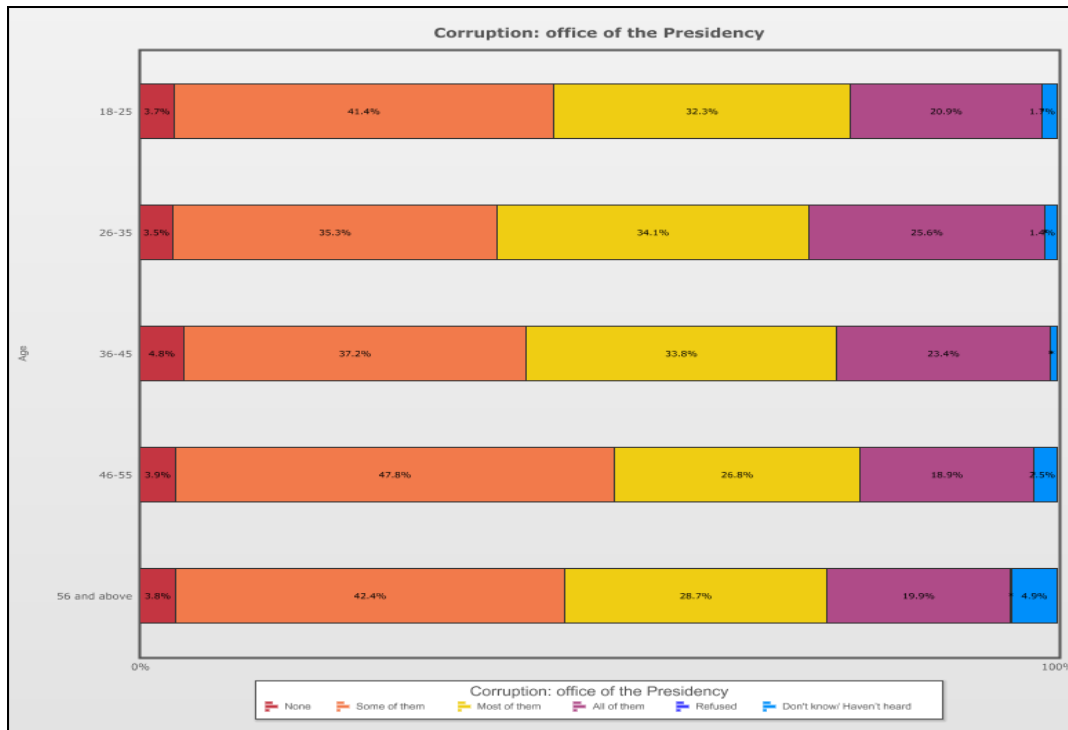
Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool.

Recent survey data reflecting public sentiment about Ghana's economic condition indicates significant dissatisfaction among the population, with a total of 2,369 respondents participating in the survey. The responses categorize public opinion into five distinct levels of satisfaction regarding the economy: A substantial majority, 1,622 individuals (68.6%), perceive the economic situation as very poor, suggesting widespread concern about economic conditions. An additional 394 respondents (16.6%) view the economy as fairly bad, leading to over 85% expressing negative sentiments. Conversely, only 94 individuals (4.0%) feel neutral about the economic situation,

while 163 respondents (6.9%) consider it fairly good, and a mere 87 (3.7%) believe it is very good, highlighting a significant gap between positive and negative perceptions. A negligible number of 5 respondents (0.2%) are unsure about their views. This overwhelming negativity (85.2% rating the economy as “very bad” or “fairly bad”) indicates a crisis in public confidence regarding economic management, likely tied to issues such as inflation, unemployment, and corruption. Given the recent elections, this prevailing negativity could have significantly influenced voter behavior, contributing to the incumbent's defeat.

Corruption: Office of the Presidency

Age									
Category	Total	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 and above	Mean	Standard	De N
None	3.9%	3.7%	3.5%	4.8%	3.9%	3.8%	37.48	14.92	93
Some of them	39.6%	41.4%	35.3%	37.2%	47.8%	42.4%	37.89	15.06	938
Most of them	32.1%	32.3%	34.1%	33.8%	26.8%	28.7%	36.84	14.19	760
All of them	22.5%	20.9%	25.6%	23.4%	18.9%	19.9%	37.00	14.24	533
Refused	0.0%	-	-	-	-	0.3%	76.00	0.00	1
Don't know/ Haven't heard	1.9%	1.7%	1.4%	0.7%	2.5%	4.9%	43.62	16.80	45



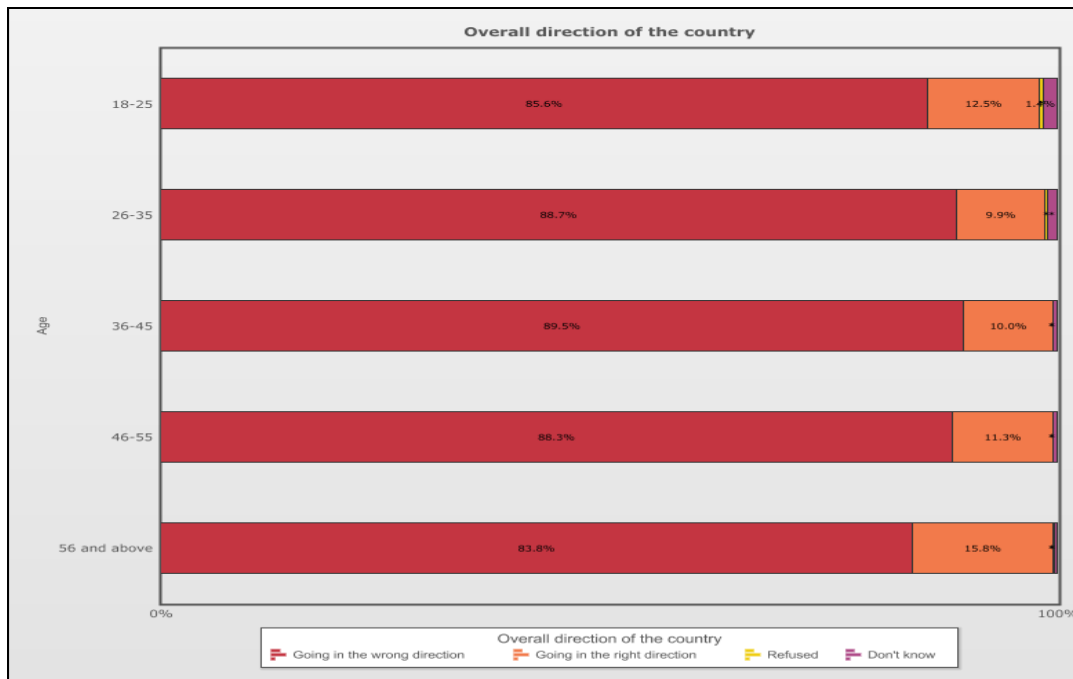
Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool.

The provided data examines public perceptions of corruption about the presidency in Ghana, categorized by age groups among a total of 2,369 respondents. A notable 3.9% believe there is no corruption, with this view slightly varying across age groups. The largest segment, 39.6%, perceives that some individuals in the presidency are corrupt, with the highest percentage (47.8%) found in the 56 and above age group, while the lowest (35.3%) is among the 36-45 age group. A significant portion, 32.1%, believes that most individuals are corrupt, with this perception peaking at 34.1% for the 36-45 age group and dropping to 26.8% for those aged 56 and above. Additionally, 22.5% feel that all individuals in the presidency are corrupt, particularly among

the 26-35 age group (25.6%), while only 18.9% of the 56 and above group share this view. A small fraction of respondents (1.9%) are unsure about their opinions, with the uncertainty slightly higher among older respondents. Overall, the data reveals that perceptions of corruption vary notably by age, with younger individuals more likely to believe that some or most officials are corrupt, while older respondents tend to exhibit a stronger belief in the prevalence of corruption, particularly in the "some of them" category. This highlights a significant concern regarding governance in Ghana, suggesting that addressing corruption through transparency and accountability measures will be crucial for restoring public trust.

Overall direction of the country

Age									
Category	Total	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 and above	Mean	Standard	De N
Going in the wrong direction	87.5%	85.6%	88.7%	89.5%	88.3%	83.8%	37.35	14.37	2,072
Going in the right direction	11.5%	12.5%	9.9%	10.0%	11.3%	15.8%	38.86	16.90	272
Refused	0.2%	0.5%	0.4%	-	-	0.1%	31.26	13.61	6
Don't know	0.8%	1.4%	1.0%	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%	31.56	11.60	20



Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool.

The provided data examines public perceptions of Ghana's overall direction, categorized by age groups among a total of 2,072 respondents. A significant majority, 87.5% (1,817 individuals), feel that the country is heading in the wrong direction, reflecting a strong consensus of dissatisfaction regarding the current state of affairs. This sentiment is particularly pronounced among the 36-45 age group, where 89.5% express dissatisfaction, indicating substantial concern about various issues such as economic challenges, governance, and social conditions. In contrast, only 11.5% (272 respondents) believe that Ghana is moving in the right direction, with the lowest percentage found in the 26-35 age group at 9.9%. A negligible number of respondents (0.2%) refused to answer, suggesting that most participants were willing to share their opinions, while 0.8% (20 respondents)

expressed uncertainty about the country's direction, slightly higher among the 18-25 age group at 1.4%. Notably, younger respondents (18-25) show slightly more optimism, with 12.5% believing the country is going in the right direction compared to lower percentages in older groups. Overall, the overwhelming sentiment of dissatisfaction reflects a widespread belief that Ghana is not on the right track, highlighting the urgent need for the government to address the underlying concerns driving this perception to restore public confidence and guide the nation toward a more favorable trajectory. This stark contrast between the significant dissatisfaction and the small fraction expressing hope emphasizes the necessity for effective governmental action to rebuild trust and improve the current situation.

MPs Listen



Age									
Category	Total	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 and above	Mean	Standard De	N
Never	43.5%	44.8%	45.2%	41.2%	42.8%	41.9%	36.88	14.32	1,031
Only sometimes	41.3%	42.1%	42.6%	40.7%	39.4%	39.5%	37.32	14.87	978
Often	9.3%	8.9%	7.6%	10.1%	10.9%	10.9%	39.02	15.32	220
Always	5.0%	3.9%	4.3%	5.4%	6.2%	6.7%	39.89	14.74	118
Don't know	0.9%	0.3%	0.4%	2.7%	0.6%	1.0%	42.49	12.27	22

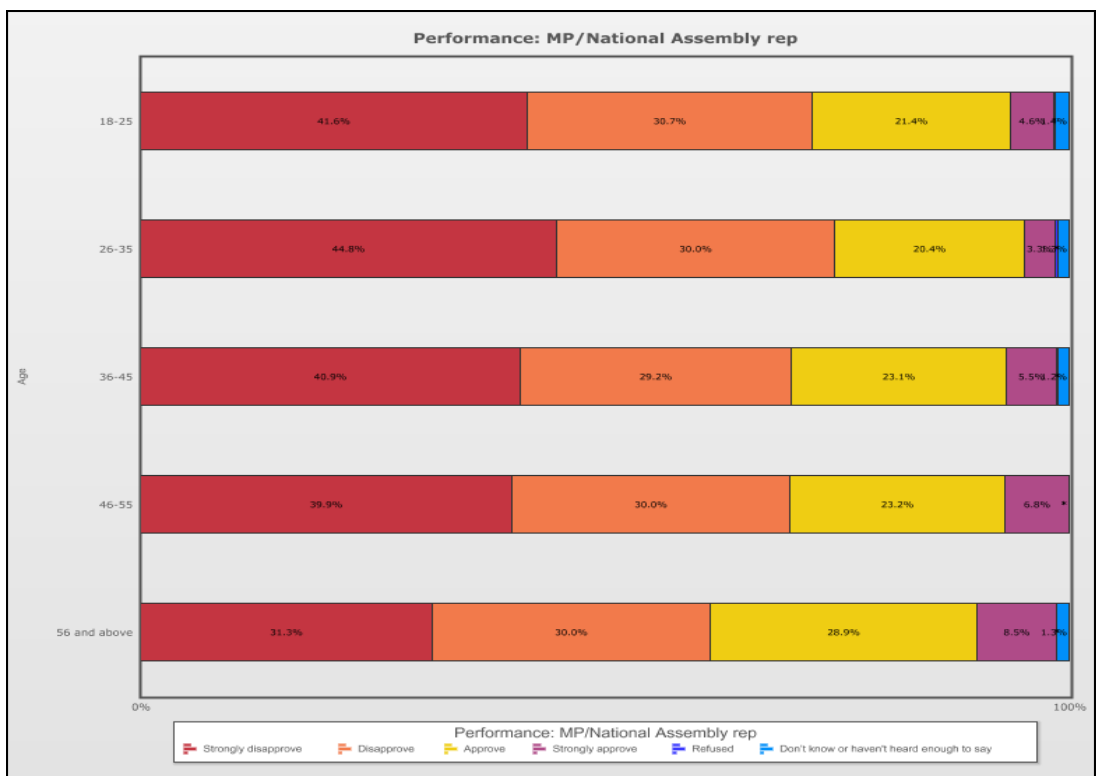
Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool.

The provided data examines public perceptions of how often Members of Parliament (MPs) in Ghana listen to their constituents, categorized by age groups among a total of 2,031 respondents. A significant 43.5% of respondents believe their MPs never listen, with this sentiment most pronounced in the 26-35 age group at 45.2%, indicating a strong feeling of neglect among younger voters. In contrast, 41.3% feel that their MPs only sometimes listen, with slightly higher percentages among the 18-25 age group (42.1%) compared to older constituents (39.4% in the 56 and above group). Only 9.3% report that their MPs often

listen, and just 5.0% believe they always do, with the latter being highest among older respondents at 6.2%. A negligible 0.9% expressed uncertainty about their MPs' listening habits, with the highest uncertainty in the 46-55 age group at 2.7%. Overall, the data reveals a widespread sentiment of dissatisfaction, as 84.8% of respondents feel their voices are not adequately heard. Younger respondents, particularly those in the 26-35 age group, exhibit higher levels of dissatisfaction, while older constituents show slightly more optimism.

Performance: MP/National Assembly Rep

Age									
Category	Total	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 and above	Mean	Standard De	N
Strongly disapprove	40.9%	41.6%	44.8%	40.9%	39.9%	31.3%	36.15	13.59	969
Disapprove	30.0%	30.7%	30.0%	29.2%	30.0%	30.0%	37.45	14.70	710
Approve	22.7%	21.4%	20.4%	23.1%	23.2%	28.9%	38.85	15.55	537
Strongly approve	5.2%	4.6%	3.3%	5.5%	6.8%	8.5%	42.33	17.10	123
Refused	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	-	-	30.39	8.05	3
Don't know or haven't heard enough to s	1.1%	1.4%	1.3%	1.2%	-	1.3%	35.85	15.83	27



Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool.

The provided data examines public perceptions of the performance of Members of Parliament (MPs) or National Assembly representatives in Ghana, categorized by age

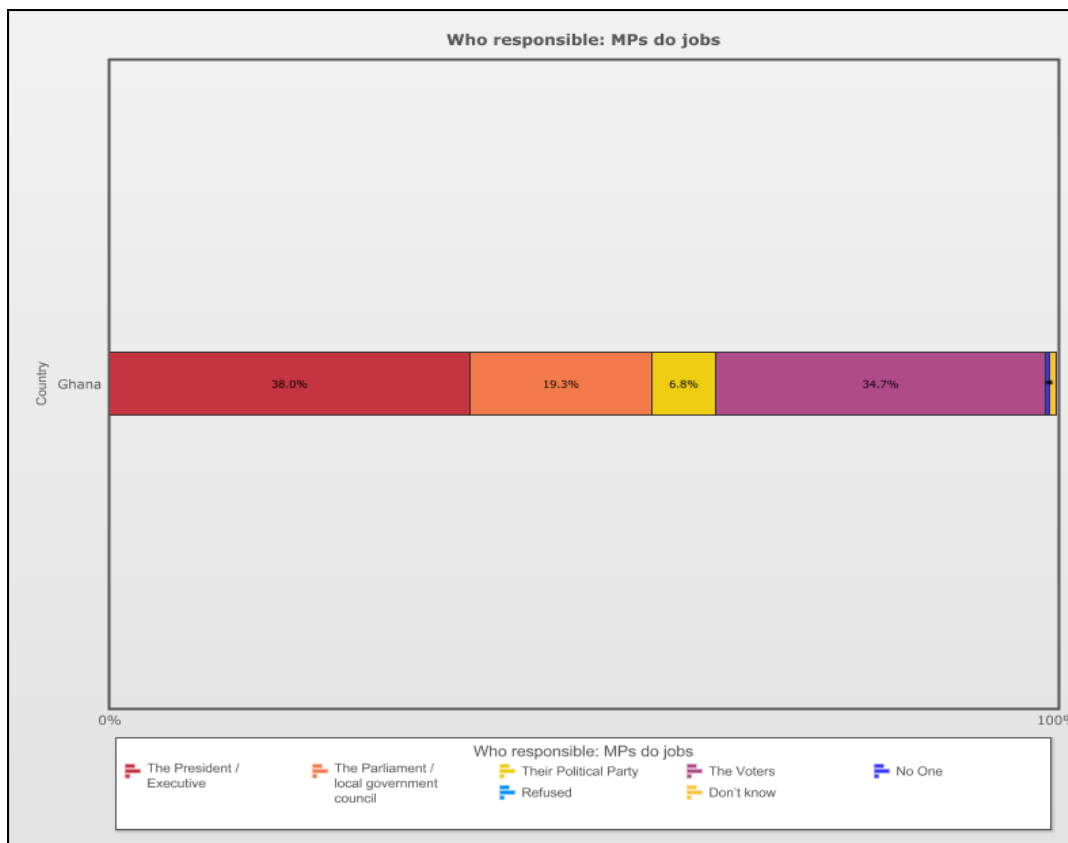
groups among a total of 2,376 respondents. A significant 40.9% of respondents strongly disapprove of their MPs' performance, with this sentiment particularly pronounced in

the 26-35 age group at 44.8%, indicating heightened dissatisfaction among younger voters. Additionally, 30.0% of respondents disapprove, with consistent percentages across age groups, including 29.2% in the 46-55 age group. Only 22.7% approve of their MPs' performance, with the lowest approval rates found in the 26-35 age group at 20.4%, suggesting that younger constituents are less satisfied than older groups, where approval is slightly higher, such as 23.2% in the 46-55 age group. A mere 5.2% strongly approve, with the highest percentage in the 46-55

age group at 6.8%. Only 0.1% refused to answer, indicating a high willingness to share opinions. Additionally, 1.1% expressed uncertainty about their MPs' performance, with the highest uncertainty in the 18-25 age group at 1.4%. Overall, the data reveals a significant level of dissatisfaction, as 70.9% of respondents express disapproval. Younger respondents, especially in the 26-35 age group, exhibit the highest levels of discontent, while older constituents show more favorable perceptions, with 28.9% approving and 8.5% strongly approving.

Who responsible: MPs do their jobs

Ghana	
Category	Total
The President / Executive	38.0%
The Parliament/ local government council	19.3%
Their Political Party	6.8%
The Voters	34.7%
No One	0.4%
Refused	0.0%
Don't know	0.7%



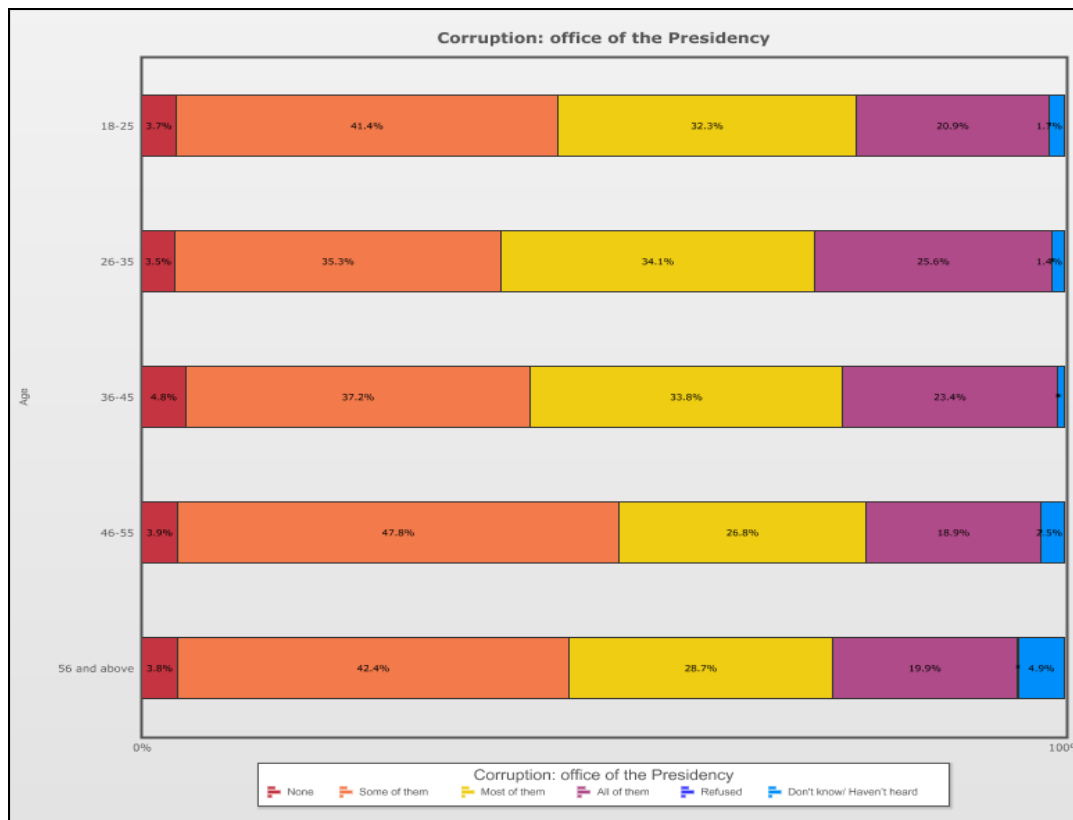
Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool.

The provided data examines public perceptions in Ghana regarding who is responsible for the performance of Members of Parliament (MPs) in doing their jobs. A significant 38.0% of respondents attribute this responsibility to the President or executive branch, indicating strong public expectations for leadership and oversight in parliamentary performance. In contrast, approximately 19.3% believe that responsibility lies with Parliament or local government councils, reflecting a recognition of the role legislative bodies play in ensuring that MPs fulfill their duties. Only 6.8% attribute responsibility to the political

parties of the MPs, suggesting a limited perception of party accountability. Notably, a substantial 34.7% of respondents feel that voters themselves bear responsibility, highlighting a strong sense of civic duty and the belief that the electorate plays a crucial role in holding their representatives accountable. A very small percentage (0.4%) believe that no one is responsible, while 0.7% expressed uncertainty about the issue. Overall, the data reveals a diverse range of opinions on accountability, emphasizing the importance of both leadership and civic participation in governance in Ghana.

Corruption: office of the Presidency

Age									
Category	Total	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 and above	Mean	Standard DeN	
None	3.9%	3.7%	3.5%	4.8%	3.9%	3.8%	37.48	14.92	93
Some of them	39.6%	41.4%	35.3%	37.2%	47.8%	42.4%	37.89	15.06	938
Most of them	32.1%	32.3%	34.1%	33.8%	26.8%	28.7%	36.84	14.19	760
All of them	22.5%	20.9%	25.6%	23.4%	18.9%	19.9%	37.00	14.24	533
Refused	0.0%	-	-	-	-	0.3%	76.00	0.00	1
Don't know/ Haven't heard	1.9%	1.7%	1.4%	0.7%	2.5%	4.9%	43.62	16.80	45



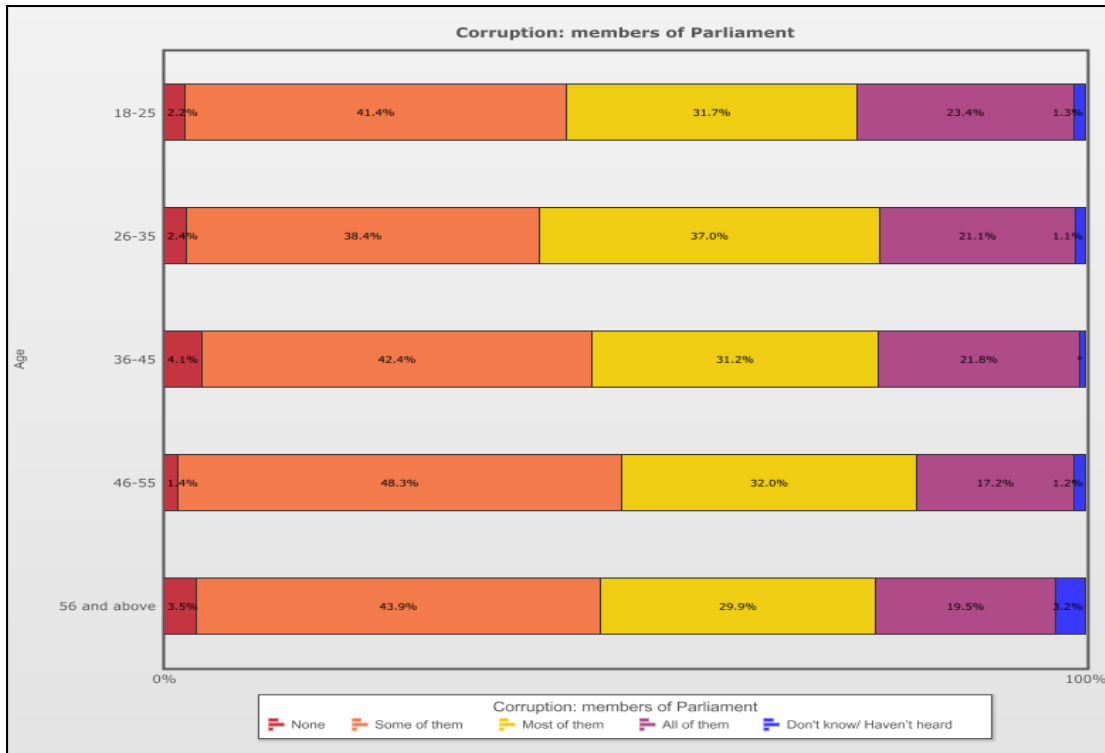
Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool.

The provided data examines public perceptions regarding corruption within the Office of the Presidency in Ghana, categorized by age groups among a total of 2,470 respondents. A significant 39.6% of respondents believe that some officials are corrupt, with this sentiment particularly strong among younger voters aged 18-25, where 41.4% express concern. Additionally, approximately 32.1% feel that most officials are corrupt, and 22.5% believe that all officials are involved in corrupt practices, indicating a widespread perception of corruption, totaling 54.6% when

combined. The belief that there is no corruption at all is minimal, with only 3.9% of respondents holding this view. Variability exists among age groups, as younger respondents are more likely to perceive corruption, while older constituents show slightly more skepticism regarding the extent of corruption, particularly in the belief that all officials are corrupt, with only 18.9% of those aged 56 and above subscribing to this view. Overall, the data highlights significant public concern about corruption in the Office of the Presidency.

Corruption: members of Parliament

Age									
Category	Total	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 and above	Mean	Standard DeN	
None	2.7%	2.2%	2.4%	4.1%	1.4%	3.5%	38.72	15.21	64
Some of them	41.8%	41.4%	38.4%	42.4%	48.3%	43.9%	37.94	14.86	991
Most of them	33.0%	31.7%	37.0%	31.2%	32.0%	29.9%	37.08	14.32	782
All of them	21.1%	23.4%	21.1%	21.8%	17.2%	19.5%	36.64	14.53	500
Don't know/ Haven't heard	1.3%	1.3%	1.1%	0.6%	1.2%	3.2%	42.46	17.21	32



Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool.

The provided data examines public perceptions regarding corruption among Members of Parliament (MPs) in Ghana, categorized by age groups among a total of 2,369 respondents. A significant 41.8% of respondents believe that some MPs are corrupt, with this sentiment particularly strong among older voters aged 56 and above, where 48.3% express concern. Additionally, approximately 33.0% believe that most MPs are corrupt, and 21.1% feel that all MPs are involved in corrupt practices, indicating a substantial perception of corruption, which totals 54.1% when combined. The belief that there is no corruption at all is minimal, with only 2.7% of respondents holding this view.

Variability exists among age groups, as younger respondents (18-25) are more likely to believe that all MPs are corrupt, with 23.4% subscribing to this view, compared to lower percentages in older groups.

Contact MP

Ghana	
Category	Total
Never	85.5%
Only once	6.2%
A few times	5.5%
Often	2.8%



Source: Afrobarometer online data analysis tool

The provided data examines the frequency of contact that constituents have with their Members of Parliament (MPs) in Ghana, revealing a notable lack of engagement. A substantial 85.5% of respondents report that they have never contacted their MP, indicating a significant disconnect between constituents and their elected representatives. Only 6.2% have reached out to their MP only once, while 5.5% have contacted them a few times, suggesting that even among those who do engage, such contact is infrequent. Moreover, a mere 2.8% indicate that they contact their MP often, highlighting minimal regular interaction. This overwhelming majority of non-engagement raises concerns about the effectiveness of representation and communication in the political process, suggesting that many constituents may feel that reaching out to their MP is unnecessary or ineffective. The low percentages of active engagement underscore potential opportunities for MPs to enhance their communication strategies and foster a more involved electorate.

Discussions and Conclusions

The analysis of the 2024 general elections in Ghana reveals a complex interplay of voter behavior influenced by various socio-political factors, as evidenced by the integration of spatial voting theory and empirical data. Spatial voting theory posits that voters make electoral decisions based on their policy preferences, represented in a low-dimensional space, typically a left-right spectrum. This framework emphasizes candidates aligning their proposals with the electorate's preferences. The data indicates overwhelming public dissatisfaction with Ghana's economic conditions, with 85.2% of respondents rating the economy as "very bad" or "fairly bad." This economic discontent correlates with electoral outcomes, suggesting that voters increasingly prioritized policy commitments over identity-based politics, marking a departure from historical voting patterns. While ethnicity has historically played a pivotal role in Ghanaian politics, the 2024 elections reveal a nuanced shift, where voters are more willing to assess candidates based on their economic strategies rather than solely on ethnic allegiance. This shift is particularly evident in regions like Ashanti and Volta, where traditional voting loyalties were tested against candidates' articulated economic plans.

Moreover, pervasive concerns about corruption significantly influenced voter sentiment. The data highlights that 54.6% of respondents perceive corruption within the presidency, while 41.8% regard MPs as corrupt, reflecting a deep-seated mistrust in political institutions. This sentiment likely fueled the electorate's desire for change, driving support for candidates promising transparency and accountability. Additionally, the analysis of contact frequency with MPs reveals significant disengagement, with 85.5% of constituents reporting they have never contacted their MP. This lack of engagement may contribute to the perception that MPs are out of touch with their constituents' needs, further diminishing trust in political representatives.

The electoral outcome suggests that voters are seeking more responsive governance, where their voices are effectively heard and considered in decision-making processes. In conclusion, the 2024 general elections in Ghana serve as a critical reflection of evolving voter dynamics, influenced by economic realities, ethnic affiliations, and perceptions of

corruption. The findings underscore the relevance of spatial voting theory in understanding electoral decisions, particularly in contexts where policy commitments increasingly take precedence over traditional identity-based alignments. As Ghana moves forward, political parties must recognize these shifting preferences, address economic grievances, enhance transparency, and foster meaningful engagement between MPs and constituents to restore public trust and ensure effective governance. The electoral results signal a clear mandate for change, necessitating that the new government prioritizes policies that resonate with the electorate's expectations and aspirations.

Future Research Directions

Given the findings from the 2024 general elections in Ghana, several avenues for future research can be explored to further understand the dynamics of voter behavior, political accountability, and the influence of socioeconomic factors. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that track changes in voter preferences over multiple election cycles. This approach would provide deeper insights into how economic conditions and political performance influence voter sentiment and party allegiance. Also, given the increasing youth unemployment rates and their significant discontent, future research could explore strategies for enhancing youth engagement in politics. Understanding their aspirations and challenges may inform policies aimed at increasing political participation among younger voters. By pursuing these research avenues, scholars can contribute to a richer understanding of the complexities of Ghanaian electoral politics and the broader implications for democratic governance in the region.

Cross References

Elections, Ethnicity, Voting, Economy, Corruption, Engagement.

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