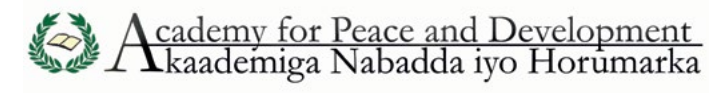




Voter Behaviour in Somaliland

ACADEMY FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT (APD),
HARGEISA, DECEMBER 2016



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ACRONYMS

APD	Academy for Peace and Development
NEC	National Electoral Commission
LAU	Local Administrative Unit
RVI	Rift Valley Institute
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted by the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) as part of the Interpeace Somali Programme, which complemented ongoing democratization work with the Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC). The study was also conducted at an important time when the voter registration operations had been completed across all of Somaliland and the results publicly released by NEC on 28 March 2017.

The study provided an opportunity for APD to explore and enhance the understanding and analysis of certain perceptions and behaviour of voters in Somaliland in regards to the voter registration, upcoming elections and political parties.

The main aim of the study was to understand voter behaviour in Somaliland, with a particular focus on the upcoming presidential elections. Specifically, the study objectives were:

1. To measure attitudes towards the National Election Commission (NEC) of Somaliland;
2. To measure attitudes toward the postponement of the parliamentary elections, the possible postponement of the planned presidential elections, and the consequences of this;
3. To explore how informed voters are about the upcoming presidential election and identify their sources of information about the upcoming elections;
4. To understand people's motivations for voting;
5. To understand why people vote for particular parties and candidates.

In order to achieve its objectives, the study used mixed-methods research design that involved a range of data collection and analysis techniques. The strength of mixed methods research lies in its ability to combine different data collection and analysis techniques to overcome the weaknesses of each and take advantage of the strengths of all. The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative component, a sample of 3,289 respondents were selected using multi-layered random sampling and a questionnaire was administered. For the qualitative component, focus group discussions were conducted, one in each of the six regions. The quantitative data from the survey research was used to capture general information regarding voter behaviour in Somaliland while qualitative data, obtained through focus group discussions, were used to explore aspects of voter behaviour further.

KEY FINDINGS

- **A large proportion of respondents were satisfied with the performance of the NEC.** Around one-third of the respondents (34%) said that they are very satisfied with the performance of the institution, while around one-tenth (10%) of respondents said they are satisfied with its performance.
- **The majority of the respondents (78%) reported that they participated in the 2012 local council elections.** Sanaag and Togdheer regions had the highest proportion of participation, constituting 86% and 84% respectively. In contrast, the regions of Sool and Maroodi-jeex had the lowest proportion of those who participated in the elections.
- **A significant majority (84%) of respondents perceived voter registration positively.** In total, 53.2% described it as 'very good' and 30% as 'good'. Linked to this, the survey found that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (91%) are registered to vote in the coming presidential elections. Sanaag, Togdheer and Awdal regions had the highest proportion of those who registered (95%, 94% and 93%, respectively). The survey found that of those who registered, only 6% reported they had tried to do so more than once.
- **The majority of respondents (64%) perceived the postponement of the parliamentary elections positively.** Only 14% perceived the decision negatively. However, a significant proportion of the respondents reported that a further delay in the upcoming presidential elections may lead to violence.
- **The majority of the respondents (73%) had information about the upcoming presidential elections in 2017.** Of these people, 36% felt they had a lot of information, particularly respondents from Sanaag and Togdheer. Only 25% of the respondents felt they had no information about the upcoming elections, with these respondents concentrated mainly in Saahil and Maroodi-jeex. Men reported slightly more access to information and the proportion of females reporting no information about the elections was significantly higher than that of their males (32% compared to 18%).
- **Television was identified as the primary source of information (60%) by a large margin.** This was followed by the internet (15%) and radio (12%).
- **The vast majority of the respondents (88.2%) indicated that they were planning to vote in the upcoming elections.** The main reasons for voting were identified as: to exercise their right (24%); to serve their country (24%); and as a way of supporting their preferred party (15%). 13% of the respondents perceived voting as a national duty. Significantly, only 2% of the respondents said they voted to support their clan and only 9% of the respondents stated that they were not planning to vote.

INTRODUCTION

1

1. INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted by the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) as part of the Interpeace Somali Programme, which complemented ongoing democratization work with the Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC). In November 2017, Somaliland will hold its third presidential elections in a period of 14 years. The date for the elections was set by the House of Elders after several extensions due to many factors including the severe drought that was experienced in Somaliland over the last year. Despite the delays, several important elements of the Somaliland Democratization process have been successfully accomplished to date. In particular, voter registration was concluded with the end of field operations in September 2016 that was followed by the production of the Provisional Voter List in December 2016. At the time of writing this report, preparations for the distribution of voter cards and the challenges and appeals process were well underway. While the production of a credible voter register was an important milestone in Somaliland's democratization process, it was important to complement the technical work carried out by NEC with an understanding of how the citizens of Somaliland viewed the process and an analysis of the current state of democratic culture in Somaliland. To that end, this survey was initiated to examine, describe, and interpret the behaviour of voters, as perceived by the survey respondents, who are key stakeholders in the democratisation process.

Given how little research has been conducted on voter behaviour in Somaliland, this mixed methods research aimed to address this gap by exploring why citizens vote and what influences their voting patterns. In addition, the study attempted to unearth the allegiance of voters with parties and candidates. Such a study will help academics and practitioners understand important aspects of voter behaviour in Somaliland, such as voter apathy, access to information and voting by vulnerable groups, and 'anti-democratic' attitudes among voters. Such information will help the government and other stakeholders design better civic education programs in response to the voter behaviours and take other appropriate actions to promote the credibility of future electoral processes.

1. Literature Review

Voter behaviour is defined as the way voters tend to vote during elections. There are many factors that affect the way voters act during elections and which parties they vote for. These factors include social class, which is one of the factors that determines voter behaviour in both emerging and established democracies¹. Depending on the context, the agenda of the party and the interests of the electorate, different issues come to surface during elections and may determine the choice of voters. In some contexts, one can general observe a link between voter behaviour and ethnic backgrounds. In such contexts, people from the same ethnic group tend to be affiliated with the same parties and parties also differ on the way they respond to the demands and challenges of certain ethnic groups. Since people in Somaliland share the same culture, religion, language and are from the same racial group, clan takes its place and becomes a very important determinant of voter behaviour²

Somaliland's state and peace-building, democratization, and multi-party elections have been among the subjects of many academic and non-academic studies. An important theme in these studies is Somaliland's home-grown processes of peace and state-building, which have been hailed as a positive and unique development in the region. With its integration of the customary institutions blended with modern state institutions through complementary frameworks, such studies argue that Somaliland has not only solved its precarious post-conflict problems through indigenous means and processes, but can also serve as a hybrid model for other parts of the region, such as Somalia.³ Beyond institutions and frameworks, another important aspect to consider is the conduct of elections themselves - from the preparation, administration and relaying of electoral results.⁴ While many reports on this

aspect of Somaliland's democratization described the previous electoral process as fair and democratic, certain issues of electoral misconduct and challenges have been raised in the past. Some of those challenges were the result of a lack of a credible voter register, delayed elections, incomplete electoral laws, security issues that preclude elections to be held in certain areas of the country and minimal voter education.⁵ Even though the previous elections were viewed as a positive step toward genuine and representative democracy, recent studies have pointed out other factors that may threaten the authenticity of the whole process in the long-term. For instance, a recent study, commissioned by Rift Valley Institute (RVI), raised concern on the high cost of election campaigning in a largely poor society.⁶ Another issue is the male-dominated traditional and political institutions that continue to prevent or limit women's representation and participation in decision making within the public sphere. Finally, the lack of a vibrant and independent media, which is an important pillar of promoting accountability and transparency in established democracies, means that politicians and other elite leaders are not made to account for their actions and words. Even though the issues raised from these studies have enhanced the understanding of Somaliland's democratization process, it is significant that none of these studies have focused behaviours or perceptions of voters.

- 1 Alford, R. R. (1983). The Role of Social Class in American Voting. *The Western Political Quarterly*. 16(1), pp. 180 – 194.
Jansen, G., Graaf, N. D. D., & Need, A. (2011). Class voting, social changes and political changes in the Netherlands 1971 – 2006. *Election Studies*. 30(2011), pp. 510 – 524.
Dalton, R.J., 2008. Citizen Politics. Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies, fifth ed. CQ Press, Washington.
Krauss, M. W. (2015). The inequality of politics: Social Class Rank and Political Participation. Accessed at <http://irle.berkeley.edu/files/2015/The-Inequality-of-Politics.pdf> on 7/03/17.
- 2 I. M. Lewis, a leading scholar on Somali studies, first proposed the clan as a political unit. A unifying theme in his academic output, which spanned over a period of 5 decades, is that clan is the primary determinant of political affiliation among Somali society. Though several authors criticized his thesis (notable examples being Samatar and Kapteijns) the vast majority of later work largely conformed to Lewis' line of argument. More detail can be found in the following work:
Lewis, I. M., 1980, *The Modern History of Somalia: Nation-state in the Horn of Africa*. New York: Longman.
Kapteijns, L. (2011). I. M. Lewis and Somali Clanship: A Critique. *North African Studies*. 11(1), pp. 1 – 24.
Samatar, A. I. (1989). *The State and Rural Transformation in Northern Somalia, 1884 – 1986*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, Wis.
Bradbury, M. (2008). *Becoming Somaliland: Understanding Somaliland and Somalia*. Indiana University Press: Indianapolis.
International Crisis Group. (2003). *Somaliland: Democratization and its Discontents*. ICG Africa Report No. 66. ICG: Nairobi/Brussels.
International Crisis Group. (2015). *Somaliland: The Strains of Success*. ICG Africa Report No. 113. ICG: Nairobi/Brussels.
- 3 Jhazbhay, I. (2003). Somaliland: Africa's best kept secret, a challenge to the international community? *African Security Review*. 12(4), pp. 77 – 82.
Yusuf, H. A. (2010). Part One; Somaliland's Political Culture: Challenges to Democracy. In *Somaliland: Facing the Challenges of Free and Fair Elections*. Soradi: Hargeysa, Somaliland.
Fadal, M. (2010). Somaliland: A Growing Ownership and Elections. In *Somaliland: Facing the Challenges of Free and Fair Elections*. Soradi: Hargeysa, Somaliland.
- 4 Abokor, Adan Yussuf, Kibble, Steve, Bradbury, Mark, Ahmed Yusuf, Haroon, and Georgina Barrett. 'Further Steps to Democracy: The Somaliland Parliamentary Elections, September 2005'. Progressio, London, 2006. ([http://](http://www.progressio.org.uk/sites/default/files/Further-steps-to-democracy.pdf)

- www.progressio.org.uk/sites/default/files/Further-steps-to-democracy.pdf)
Abokor, Adan Yussuf, and Haroon Yusuf. 'Somaliland: Choosing Politics over Violence'. *Review of African Political Economy* 30/97 (2003): 455-78.
Kibble, Steve and Michael Walls. 'Swerves on the Road: Report by International Election Observers on the 2012 Local Elections in Somaliland'. Progressio, London, 2013. (<http://www.progressio.org.uk/sites/default/files/Swerves-on-the-road-2013.pdf>)
Walls, Michael and Steve Kibble. 'Somaliland: Change and Continuity. Report by International Election Observers on the June 2010 Presidential Elections in Somaliland'. Progressio, London, 2011. (<http://www.progressio.org.uk/sites/default/files/Somaliland-elections-2010-report.pdf>)
Academy for Peace and Development, Interpeace (2010), 'Pillars of peace: Democracy in Somaliland: Challenges and opportunities' November
Hassan Mohamed M, Farah Hers M (2012), 'A Vote for Peace II, A Report on the 2010 Somaliland Presidential Election Process' edited by S Raju (Nairobi: Academy for Peace and Development, Interpeace)
SONSAF (2011), 'Somaliland elections review' March, available at www.sonsaf.org/Files/SOMALILAND_ELECTIONS_REVIEW.pdf
SONSAF (2013), 'Democratisation policy brief on Somaliland's 2012 post-election challenges and priorities' March
- 5 Walls, M. (2009). *Somaliland: Democracy Threatened*. Chatham House. Program Paper AFP 2009/4.
- 6 Verjee, A., Abokor, A. Y., Yusuf, H. A., Warsame, A. M., Farah, M. A., & Hersi, M. F. (2012). *The Economics of Elections in Somaliland*. Rift Valley Institute Research Paper 3.

2. Somaliland Elections and Democratization

Somaliland ventured into multi-party democracy in 2001 with the aim of replacing the previous system of clan-based power-sharing through the formation of political parties that would compete through democratic elections. The Constitution of Somaliland, which was ratified through popular referendum in 2001, laid the framework for the system of democracy that the country would adopt. Once in every decade, existing and newly formed political parties would compete in local council elections with dual purpose. First, members of the new district councillors would be elected. Secondly, the three top political associations would be recognized as 'National Parties', 'Axsaab Qaran', and would become the only legal political parties in the country for the next decade until the political space is opened for new entrants.⁷ In the first local council elections in 2002, the three parties that became the first three front-runners and became official 'National Parties' were UDUB, UCID and Kulmiye. Following these first local elections in Somaliland's post-conflict history, the small unrecognized nation held two presidential elections (2003, 2010), one parliamentary elections (2005) and another local election (2012). The next presidential elections are planned to be held in 2017. International and local observers generally described all of these elections as 'free and fair' despite technical errors and challenges. Given Somaliland's recent history of politics and security, holding peaceful elections is a major achievement itself, as Mohamed Farah Hersi (2015) writes in an APD report:

It is an extraordinary achievement to hold peaceful and credible elections in a post-conflict context where institutions are fragile. Somaliland, which withdrew from its union with Somalia in 1991 after a long civil war, successfully held five elections in the decade from 2002 to 2012.⁸

Still, there have been many challenges in Somaliland's elections and democratization process. First, delays in elections have been an underlying feature in Somaliland's democratic history. Nearly all elections were delayed at least once, sometime as many as three or four times. Sometimes, these delays nearly triggered civil unrest in the country⁹. The main reasons for these delays have been identified as incomplete electoral legislation and lack of government commitment to the agreed dates. Secondly, voter registration was a major issue in all of these elections and this put a question mark on the credibility of the elections and increased the risk of fraud. That is why the parliament passed voter registration law which required voter registration to be conducted before the next presidential and parliamentary elections. The third, and the most significant challenge to Somaliland's elections and democracy, is the clan factor. Somaliland has become a 'power sharing democracy' where clans are the most important constituencies. The clan system groups individuals related through patrilineal lineage into a traditional and political unit. Members in this unit do not engage in deliberations equally; women and youth are excluded from the whole process which is dominated by clan elites. A 'clan democracy', therefore, is not characterized by individuals who vote to choose their leaders based on their political programs and agendas.

⁷ Article 6 of the Parties Law clearly stipulates that in every 10 years, new parties will be registered

⁸ APD and Interpeace. (2015). Vote for Peace II: A Report on the 2010 Somaliland Presidential Election Process'

⁹ Ibid., 62

METHODOLOGY

2

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study was to understand voter behaviour in Somaliland, with particular focus on the upcoming presidential elections. More specifically, the study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To measure attitudes towards the National Election Commission (NEC) of Somaliland;
2. To measure attitudes toward the postponement of the parliamentary elections, the possible postponement of the planned presidential elections, and the consequences of this;
3. To explore how informed voters are about the upcoming presidential election and identify their sources of information about the upcoming elections;
4. To understand people's motivations for voting;

2.2. Methodology

In order to achieve its objectives, the study used mixed-methods research design that involved a range of data collection and analysis techniques. The strength of mixed methods research is in its ability to combine different data collection and analysis techniques to overcome the weaknesses of each while taking advantage of the strengths of all. The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from survey research was used to capture general information regarding voter behaviour in Somaliland while qualitative data obtained through focus group discussions were used to explore some aspects of voter behaviour further. In conducting the survey component of the research, an interview questionnaire that included 15 closed-ended questions was prepared, pretested and administered.

2.3. Survey Population, Sample and Sampling

Since the aim of this survey was to understand a political phenomenon in a large population, a representative sample was selected from the study's target population, who were individuals in the voting age (16 years and over). Geographically, Somaliland is divided into six electoral regions, consisting of 21 districts. This study was conducted only in the six regional capitals of these regions. As shown in Table 1, the sample was distributed proportionally to each region and the sample size was calculated using UNFPA Somaliland population estimate. The systematic sampling error was +/-3.5% based on 95% confidence level.

Table 1: Sample Distribution by Regions

Regions	Population distribution	Eligible Age % (52%)	Sample Universe	Sample per region:
Maroodi-jeex	1,134,262	589816.24	589,816	549
Togdheer	661,070	343756.4	343,756	549
Sool	327,427	170262.04	172,262	548
Sanaag	544,124	282944.48	282,944	548
Awdal	673,263	350096.76	350,097	549
Saahil	168,034	87377.68	87,378	546
Total	3,508,180	1824253.6	1,826,253	3,289

The survey used multi-stage sampling procedure. In order to respect the culture and religion of the society, the sample was divided at the outset into male and female sub-groups. Each region was then assigned an equal number of female and male respondents. Respondents of each gender were interviewed by field staff of the same gender. There were no major challenges encountered in traveling to the regions or in accessing the respondents as APD engaged enumerators from the regions who were well versed with relevant contextual dynamics.

In conducting the survey, each city was divided into 69 Local Administrative Units (LAU). Each LAU was assigned a starting point by the team leader in each LAU. The starting points were recognizable places, such as market, popular businesses and buildings, schools and junctions that are close to the centre of the particular LAU. Each of the field teams included four interviewers and a team leader. Once the team reached the starting point of the LAU, in alphabetical order of their names, each interviewer was assigned to the four different directions. In selecting the first household, each interviewer would skip eight houses. In what followed, the interviewers would skip the houses using the Day Code method. Once a household is selected, interviewers would select each respondent randomly using Kish-grid. In the grid, names of all household members were listed, with their age in descending order. Selecting the numbers in the top row using the Day Code method, the respondent that matches the number that falls at the intersection of the selected column and the row of the last name was chosen for the interview. Interviewers were not allowed to substitute a household member for the selected respondent. If the selected respondent refused to participate or was not available for interview, the interviewer moved on to the next household and selected another respondent using the Kish-grid. Around 8 respondents had to be selected from each LAU.

2.4. Training of Enumerators

Data was collected by teams of well-trained interviewers who are based in each region of Somaliland. Each team of enumerators had a team leader, a researcher from APD, and was supervised by the lead researcher. Before conducting fieldwork, interviewers were given refresher training. During the training, they were given the opportunity to review the questionnaire, practice and ask for questions and clarifications if needed. During the training, the following issues were emphasized:

- Introducing the APD, work, programs and staff
- Introduction to voter behaviour
- Introduction to empirical research and its importance
- Introduction to survey, household and respondent selections
- Data collection methods
- Team composition, roles and responsibilities
- Importance of quality and accurate data
- Research ethics
- Possible challenges in the field
- How to conduct focus group discussions
- LAUs in each city

2.5. Focus Group Discussions

While surveys are good at capturing the opinion of the general public and providing large sets of data that can be the basis for findings that can be generalized to wide population, their limitation is that they cannot be used to understand issues especially about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions. To this end, and to complement the interviews, focus groups were conducted in all the six regions of Somaliland (one in each region). Focus groups provide a conducive environment where different participants can exchange ideas, challenge each other's opinion and explain their positions to other participants. This was intended to add qualitative aspect to this study. The focus groups explored the issues under investigation deeper and tried to capture the meaning people gave to their opinions and how they interpreted these issues. In each of the focus groups, 5 to 9 participants took part. The focus group discussions were conducted by the lead researchers. The participants of each focus group represented people with different backgrounds. They included women, young people, people from different kinds of professions, including white collar professions and labourers, unemployed people, and minority groups

With permission from participants after the researchers shared with them principles of confidentiality and anonymity that this research should adhere to, the focus group discussions were recorded and the audio files were used to transcribe. The following are the issues that were discussed in each focus group:

- Previous elections in Somaliland
- Democratization and political party system
- Voter registration

- Postponement of the parliamentary elections
- Presidential elections
- Choosing a candidate and a party
- Plans to vote
- The National Election Commission

2.6. Challenges & Limitations

As always, this research was not conducted in perfect circumstances. The study had a number of limitations that should be mentioned. The study was urban-biased as it was conducted in the capital cities of the six regions of Somaliland. As a result, the findings of the study may be viewed as representative of voter behaviour in urban settings. For example, when asked about their source of information on elections, television was more popular, which is a common source of information and characteristic of many urban homes in Somaliland, but not necessarily rural areas. Since the data collection was conducted in the morning, the enumerators found it harder to find adult male members at the household compared to their female counterparts. Even though the sampling plan meant that equal numbers of men and women had to be selected, which was achieved despite of this challenge, it is not known whether there could have been a significant difference in terms of demographic characteristics between the adult male respondents who were interviewed and those who were away (for work and for other purposes).

FINDINGS

3

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Characteristics of Survey Respondents

In this survey, a total of 3,300 equally divided between male and female respondents were interviewed. The respondents of the survey were almost equally distributed across the main cities of the six electoral regions of Somaliland. The survey targeted participants who were eligible to vote, which meant those who were 16 years of age and older at the time of the data collection, according to Somaliland's Election Law.¹⁰ 72.2% of the respondents were 35 years of age or under, as shown in Figure 3.1.1, which is a reflection of the current population estimates of the Somaliland youth according to Somaliland's national youth policy.

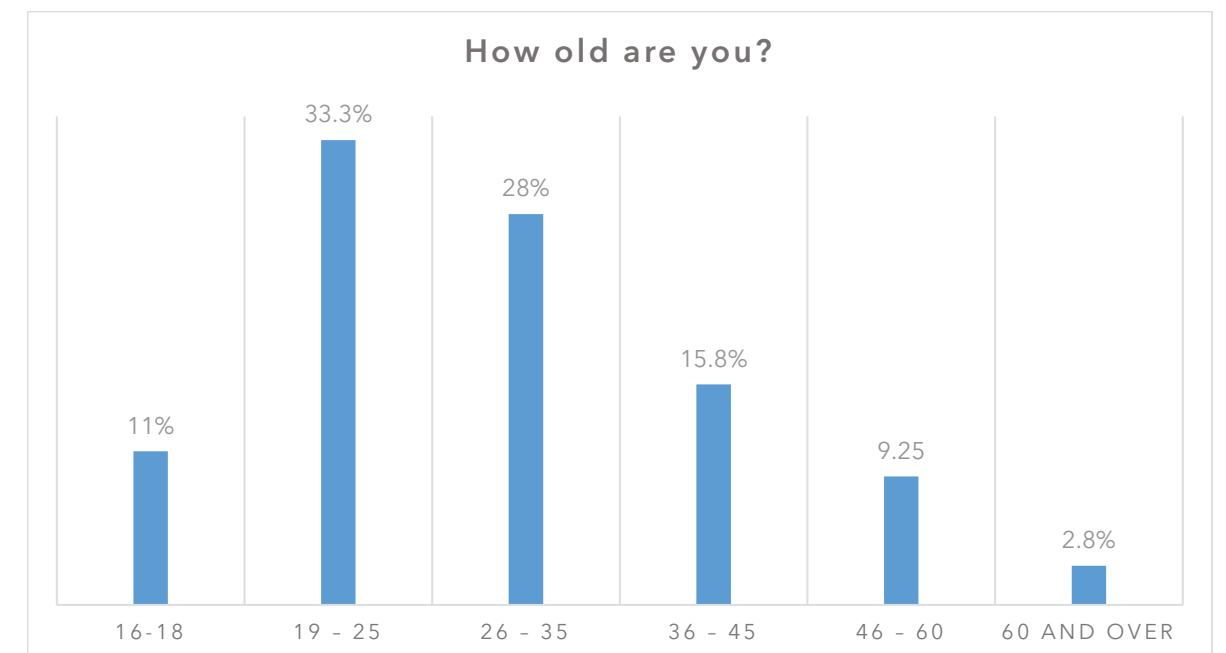


Figure 3.1:12: Age of Respondents

The participants of the survey varied considerably in terms of their educational achievement. As shown in Figure 3.1.2, 17.7% of the respondents completed primary education, another 26.3% completed secondary education while another 20.1% either completed or were studying for university. Over a quarter (28%) of the survey participants reported that they did not have any education.

¹⁰ The Law on Presidential & Local District Councils Elections 2002 (Law No: 20/2001).

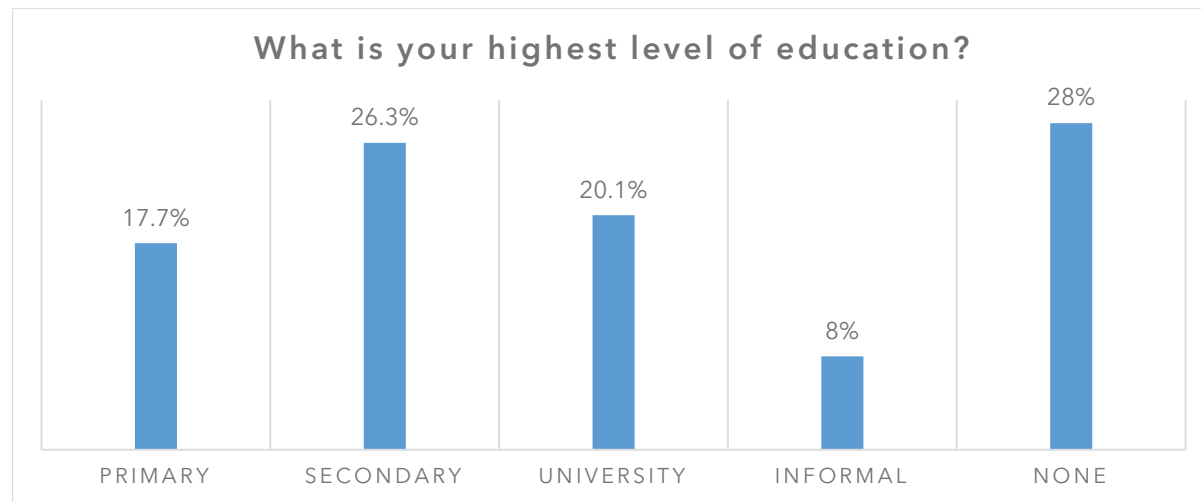


Figure 3.1:2: Level of Educational Achievement

With regard to the employment status, the majority of the respondents did not have paid jobs. This could be partly due to the time of the day the survey was administered, which was morning, when many people are at work (whether employed or self-employed). The status of the respondents who did not have jobs varied: 25.6% described themselves as house persons, 19.7% were students while only 11.9% described themselves as unemployed. On the other hand, nearly 42% of the respondents reported to have some kind of jobs. Figure 3.1.3 shows the distribution of participants according to their employment status.

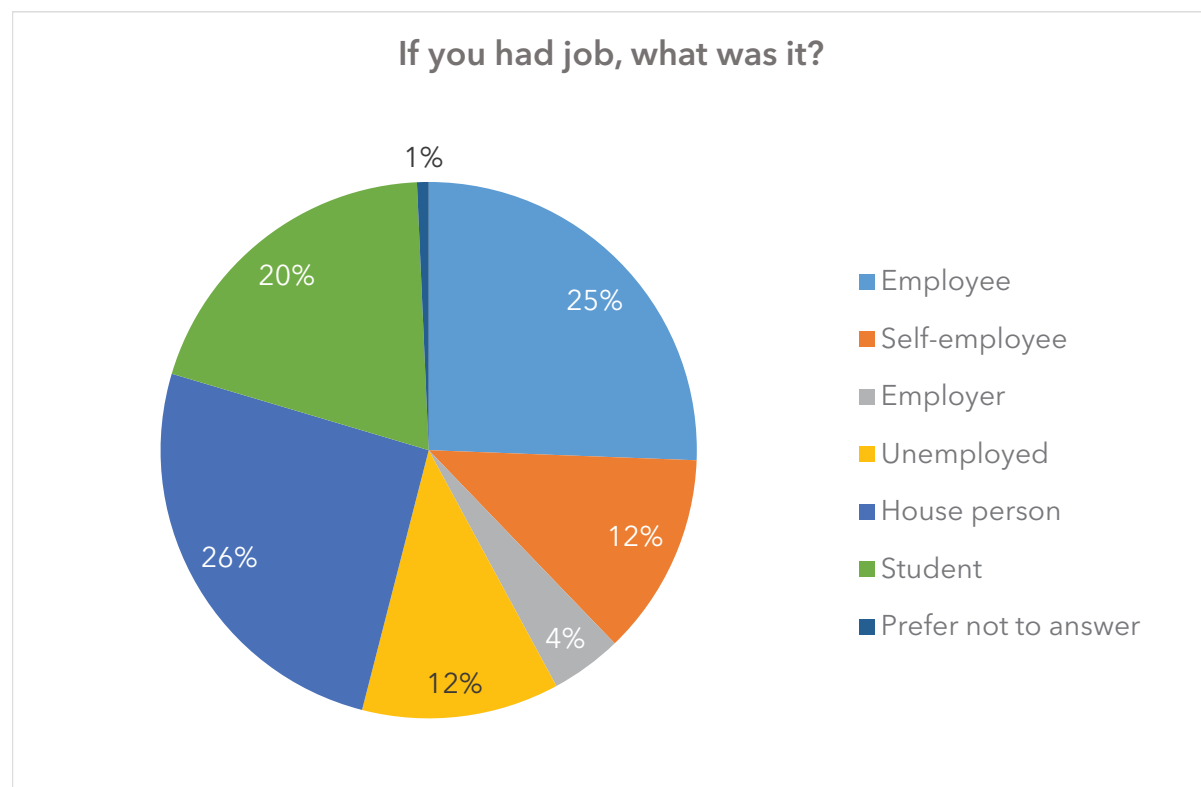


Figure 3.1:34: Employment Status

Those who had jobs were employed in different sectors. Slightly over one-third (34%) of the respondents were labourers, while close to a quarter (24%) of the respondents were in business. Around a quarter of the respondents (23%) were skilled workers and another one-fifth (19%) were civil servants.

3.2. Voting 2012 Local Council Elections

In order to understand the voting behaviour of the participants, the survey inquired about their participation in the last elections, which was the 2012 local council elections. **The majority of the respondents (77.9%) reported to have voted in the 2012 local council elections.**

The level of participation by gender in the 2012 elections did not differ significantly. When compared by age, there was also no significant difference for the respondents with the age of 19 and above. However, for respondents between the age groups of 16 to 18 years, 58.30% reported to have participated yet they were underage at the time. This can be explained by the fact that the 2012 local council elections were conducted without voter registration, a situation that resulted in electoral fraud due to multiple voting. Due to this, a decision was made for all future electoral processes to be conducted only once a credible voter register is in place, a process that has now been completed.

The six electoral regions of Somaliland differed considerably in their level of participation in these elections through voting. Sanaag and Togdheer had the highest proportion of those who reported that they voted in the 2012 local elections, constituting 86% and 84% respectively. In contrast, the regions of Sool and Maroodi-jeex had the lowest proportion of those who participated in the previous elections. As shown in Figure 3.2.2, only 68% of the respondents in Sool region and 71% of those in Maroodi-jeex region reported they participated in these elections. Given the security situation of Sool region and political apathy among its residents, such high level of non-participation in the 2012 elections in the region is understandable. What requires deeper understanding such high level of non-participation among the residents of the Hargeysa, the capital city.

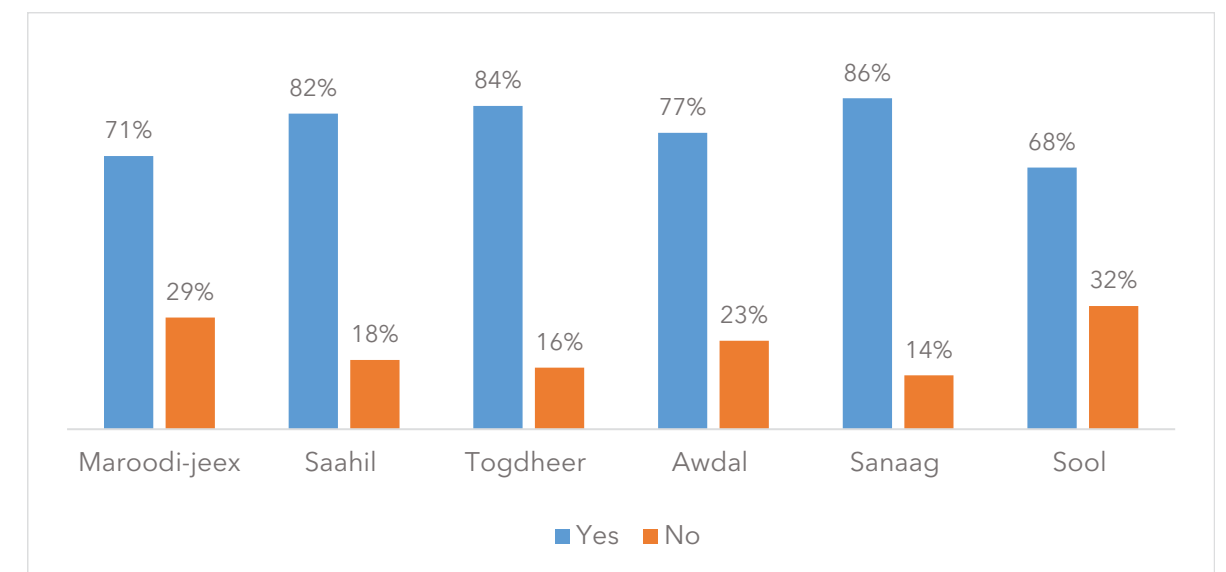


Figure 3.2:1: Participation in 2012 Local Council Elections by Regions

For those who did not participate in the elections, the most common reasons they cited for not voting were: they were not eligible to vote (6%), could not go to the polling station (5.1%) and were too busy to vote (3.4%). Other reasons included: they were not interested in voting (2.4%), did not prefer any of the parties (1.4%) and did not have information regarding how to vote (1.8%).

3.3. Voter Registration

Respondents were asked about their attitude toward the voter registration, which was completed in September 2016. **A significant majority of the respondents (89.6%) perceived the voter registration positively**, as demonstrated by Figure 3.3.1 demonstrates, with only 3.1% respondents perceiving it negatively.

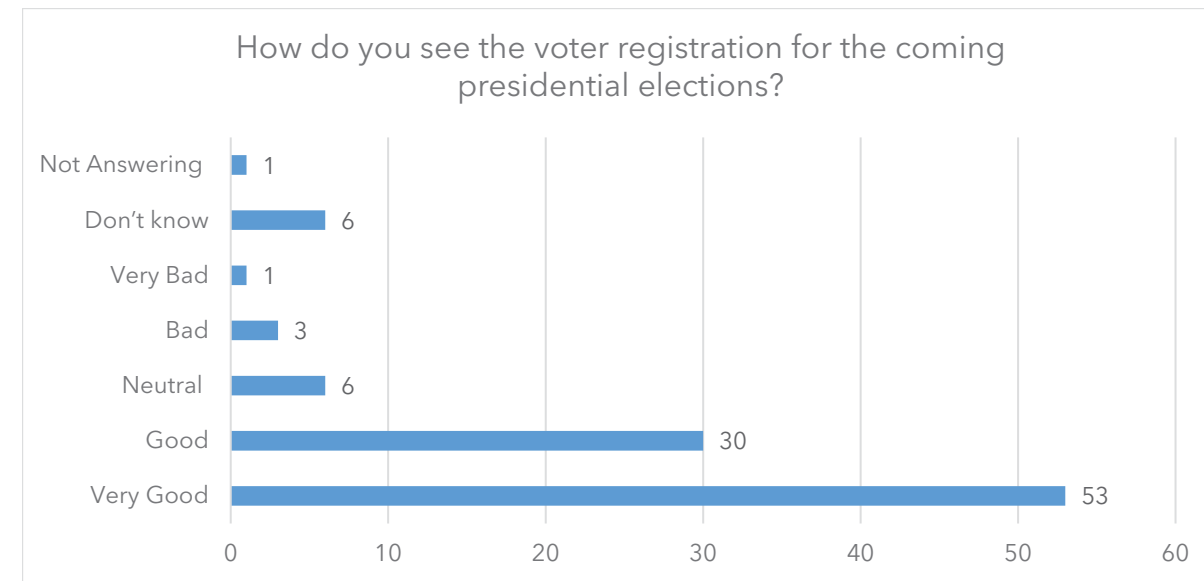


Figure 3.3.1: Attitude toward Voter Registration

Participants of the focus group discussions also expressed positive attitudes toward the voter registration exercise in Somaliland. The participants believed that it was an important step toward achieving credible elections in Somaliland. As one participant in Togdheer mentioned, the voter registration exercise will prevent some of the fraudulent practices that were employed in the previous elections.

Even though the cards have not been issued yet, but I believe that it [the voter registration] will make a difference and some practices in previous elections, such as multiple voting or multiple registration, will not happen this time. I think it will prevent multiple voting this time.

Omar Hassan Farah, Burco, Togdheer.

As another participant in Sanaag summed up, the voter registration will enable Somaliland achieve 'one person, one vote':

I believe that it [the voter registration] will lead Somaliland toward achieving 'one person, one vote' since in Erigavo there is no person who registered more than one time.

Hassan Kaamil, Erigavo, Sanaag.

The study also aimed to understand the extent to which eligible voters in Somaliland registered to vote for the coming presidential elections. **The survey found that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (90.5%) reported that they are registered to vote for the coming presidential elections.**

There was some regional difference with regard to voter registration. Sanaag, Togdheer and Awdal had the highest proportion of those who stated that they had registered to vote for the upcoming presidential elections, with proportions of nearly 95%, 94% and 93% respectively of the respondents in these regions reporting they had registered to vote. In contrast, Sool and Maroodi-jeex regions had the highest proportion of those who did not register to vote (18% and 13% respectively), as shown in Figure 3.3.2.

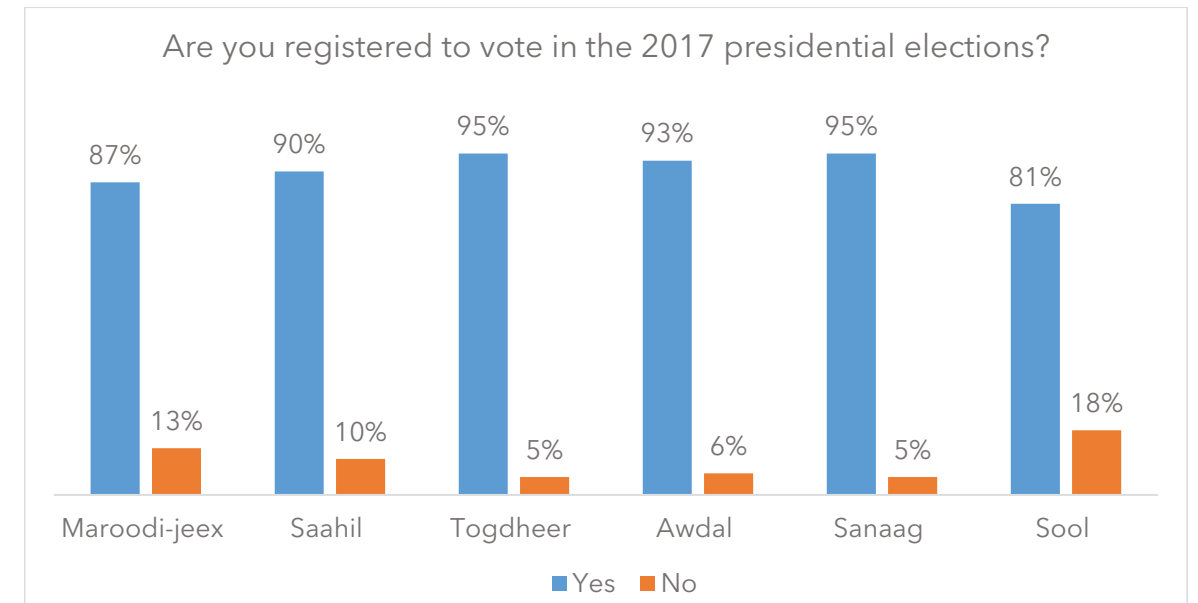


Figure 3.3.2: Voter Registration by Regions

'Duplicate' registration has been identified as one of the significant obstacles to achieving credible elections and the principle of 'one-person, one-vote' within a democracy. That was among the reasons why the previous Somaliland voter registration, which was conducted in 2008-2009 and used for the 2010 presidential elections was later discarded¹¹. This survey intended to measure whether the eligible voters in Somaliland had registered more than once in the now concluded voter registration. **The survey found that, among the respondents who had registered, only 6% reported that they had done so more than once.**

Further analysis also indicated that there was regional variation to this finding. As shown in Figure 3.3.3, the regions of Sool (9.7%), Awdal (7.5%) and Maroodi-jeex (6.6%) had the highest proportion of people who reported to have tried to register more than once. Sanaag had the lowest proportion (3.1%) of those reported to have attempted multiple registration.

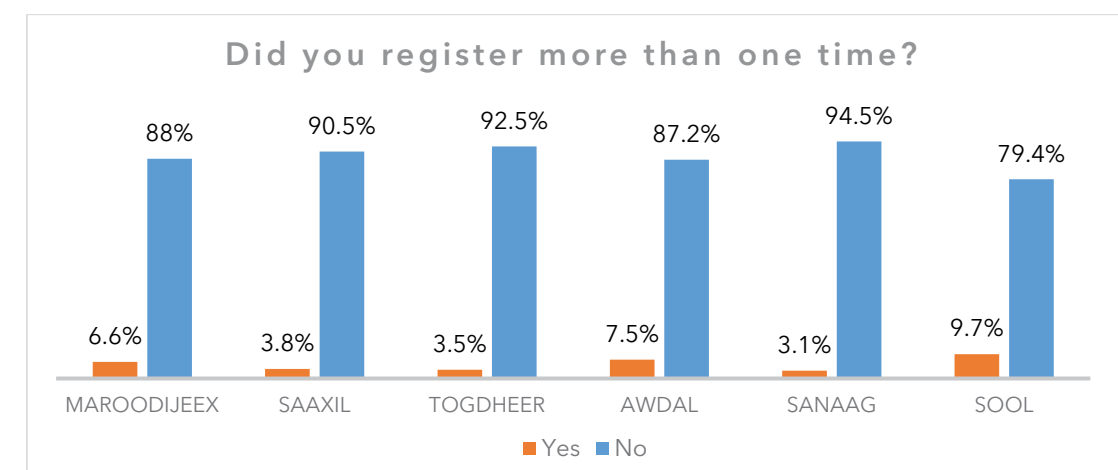


Figure 3.3.3: Multiple Registration by Regions

¹¹ A report done by Electoral Reform International Services for Somaliland National Election Commission (NEC) writes: "after delays and extensive cleaning the voter register still contains around 30% of fraudulent and duplicate records" Matheison & Wager (2010).

3.4. Level of Information about Elections

The study also attempted to measure how much information respondents had about the coming presidential elections. The majority of the respondents (73.4%) reported that they had some information, 36% felt they had a lot of information while only 25% of the respondents felt they had no information about the coming elections.

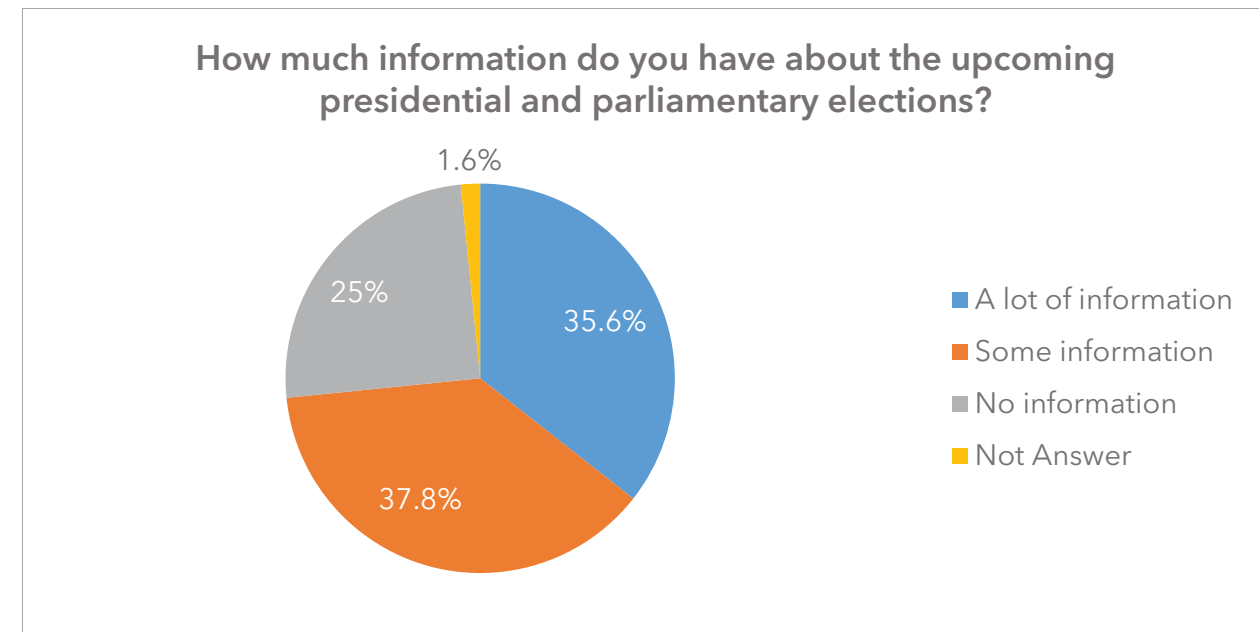


Figure 3.4:1: Level of Information About Upcoming Elections

There was considerable variation with regard to respondents' information about the upcoming presidential elections. In Sanaag region, 52% of the respondents reported that they had a lot of information about the upcoming elections, while another 32% reported having some information. Only 15% of the respondents in Sanaag region reported having no information about the elections. In contrast, Saahil and Maroodi-jeex regions had the highest proportion of those who did have any information about the coming elections. In Saahil region, 34% of the respondents reported that they had no information about the elections. In Maroodi-jeex region, the figure was very close; nearly 31% of the respondents reported having no information about the coming elections.

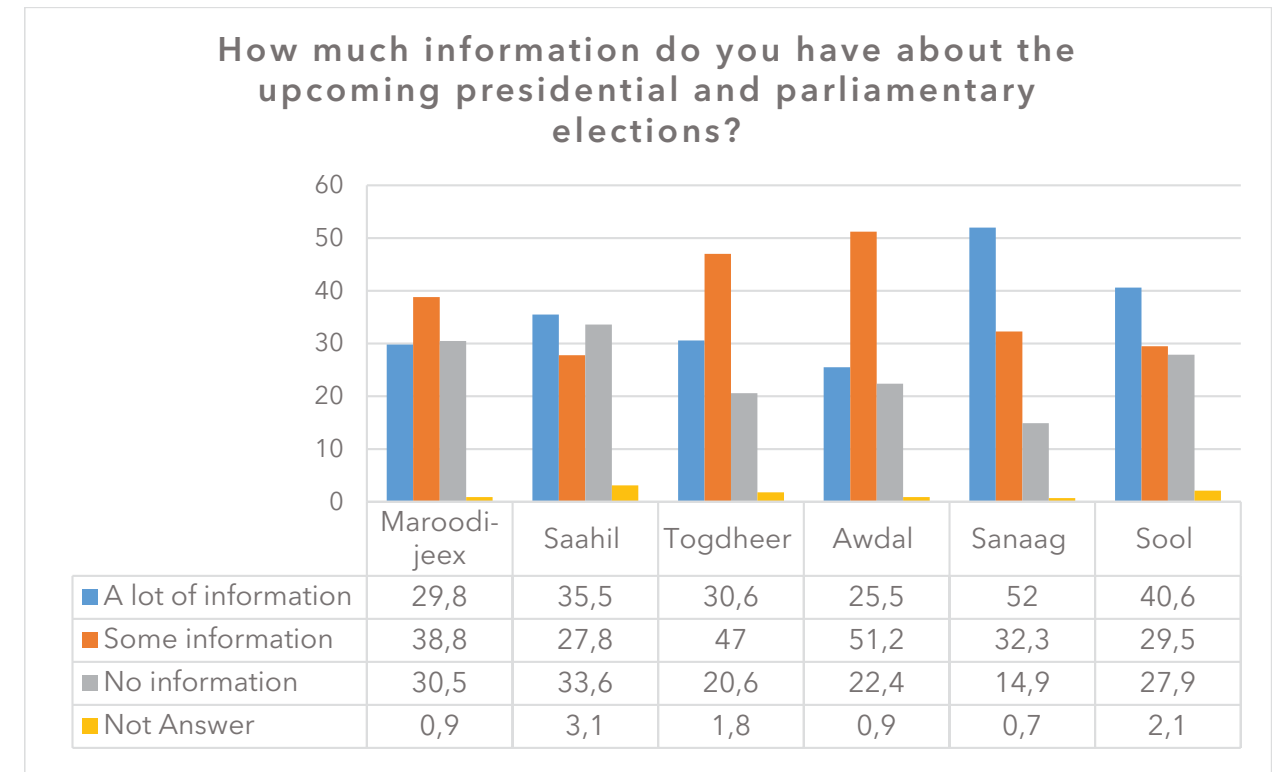


Figure 3.4:2: Level of Information About Upcoming Elections by Regions

The study indicated that men were more likely to report having information about coming elections. 38% of male respondents reported that they had a lot of information about the coming elections, compared to 33% of female respondents. Similarly, 42% of male respondents reported having some information, compared to 34% of their female counterparts. A higher proportion of female respondents reported having no information about the elections (32%) than their male counterparts (18%).

For most age groups, age was not a significant factor in understanding respondents' access to information. Respondents whose age fell in the range of 19 - 25 years were least likely to report having no information about the elections. Only 21% of the respondents in that age reported having no information about the coming elections. In contrast, respondents in the age ranges of 45 - 60 and 61 and over had the highest proportion of those who did not have any information about the coming elections (33% and 37%, respectively).

Education was an important factor in understanding respondents' access to information. As Figure 3.4.5 shows, respondents with different levels of educational achievement varied significantly in the amount of information they had about the coming elections. Those who had some formal education were more likely to report having information about the coming elections. Respondents who were studying at university and those who already completed university level education had the highest proportion of those who had a lot of information about the coming elections (50% and 61% respectively) and the lowest proportion of those who reported having no information (10.4% and 12% respectively). In contrast, those who had no education or some informal education were more likely to report having no information about the coming elections (31% and 40% respectively).

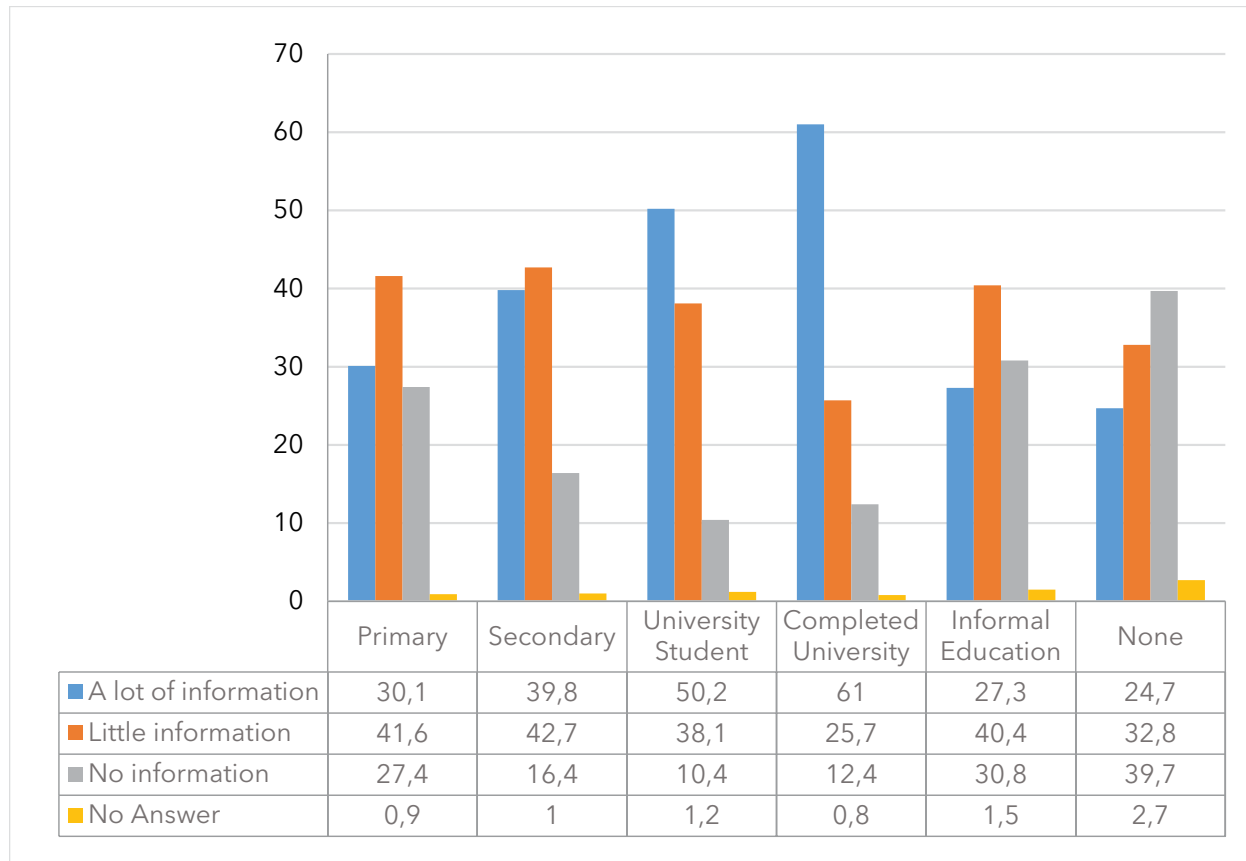


Figure 3.4:3: Level of Information About Upcoming Elections by Educational Achievement

3.5. Source of Information

When respondents were asked about their source of information about the coming presidential elections, nearly 60% named television. The second most popular source of information was Internet, through which 14.5% of the respondents said they received information. Only 11.8% of the respondents mentioned radio as their source of information. Friends, family and neighbours were also mentioned as other sources of information on the coming elections among 5% of the respondents, as shown in Figure 3.4.6.

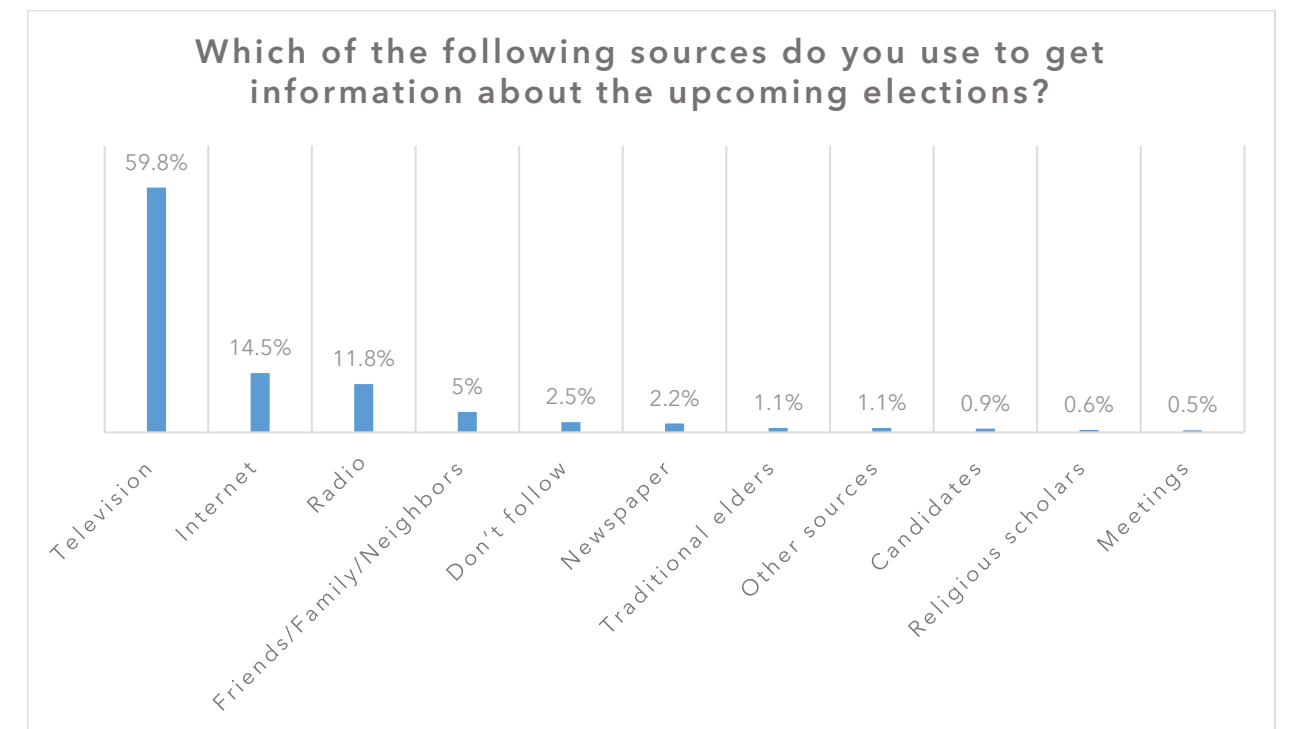


Figure 3.5:1: Source of Information

Television was the most popular source of information across all regions, except Sool where the majority of the respondents (58%) mentioned newspapers as their source of information. Even though previous media researches in the Somali region¹² indicate radio as the most popular source of information, this is something that would be worth exploring more in future surveys to help inform voter and civic education strategies across Somaliland. The preference for television could be explained by the fact that the study was limited to the urban areas of Somaliland, where, like in any urban setting, television availability within the household is common.

¹² BBC World Service Trust (2011), An analysis of the Somali Media Environment, BBCWST: Somalia; Gallup (2013), Media Use in Somalia: BBG

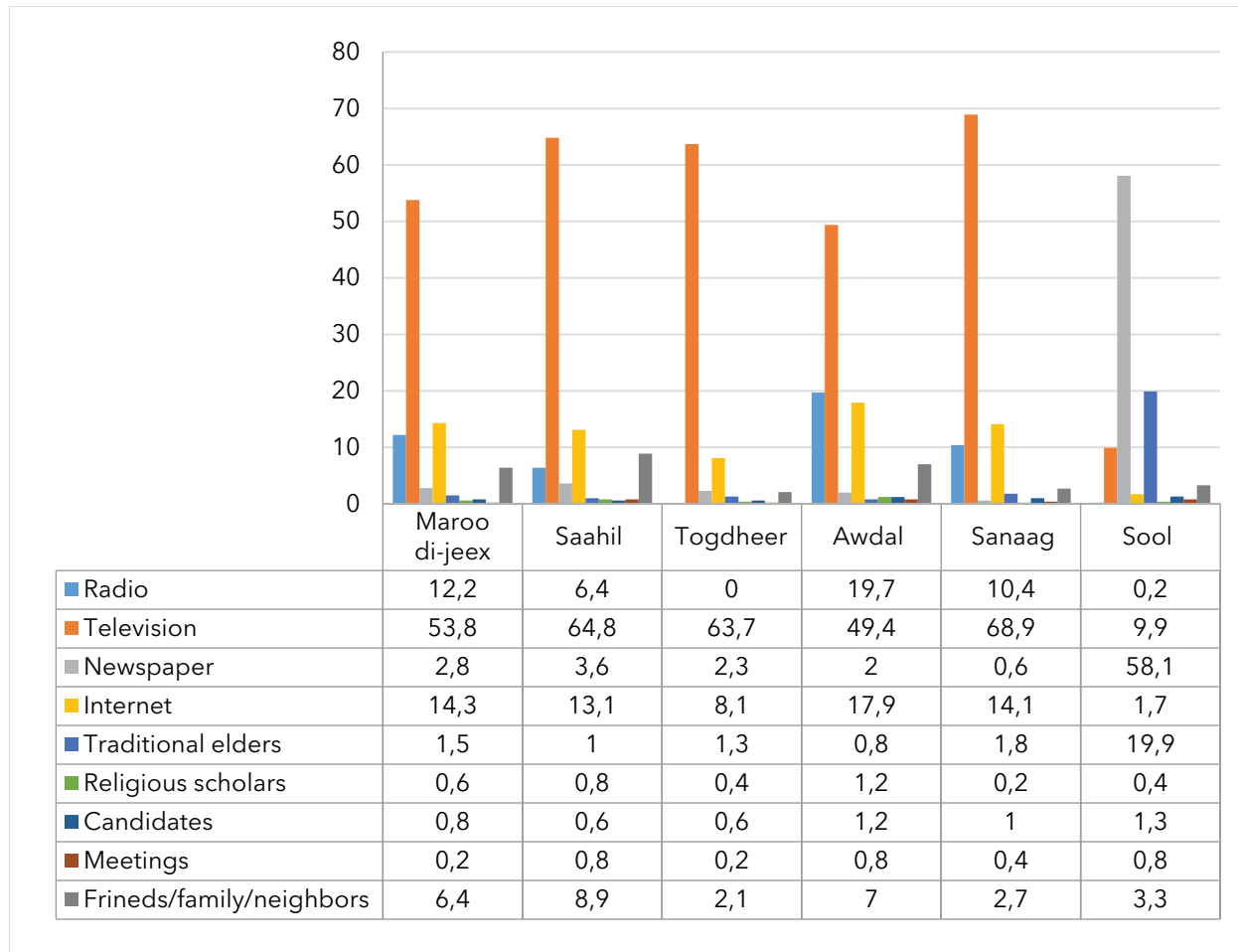


Figure 3.5:2: Source of Information by Region

Television was also a popular source of information across all age groups, despite some variations. Across the age groups, the pattern of internet and radio as the source of information about the coming elections was inversely proportional. Internet was popular among younger respondents, and it was most popular among respondents aged 18 years of age and under (20%) of those who mentioned internet as their source of information about the coming elections. As the age of respondents increases, the proportion of respondents mentioning internet as their source of information decreases; 8% among those aged between 35 to 45, 4% among those aged between 46 to 60 and only 3% among those older than 60 years of age.

The pattern for radio across age groups was the opposite of that of internet. Radio was most popular among those older than 60 years, a quarter of who mention radio as their source of information. In contrast, only 8% of those aged between 19 and 25 years and 9% of those aged 18 and under said that radio was their source of information about the coming elections.

3.6. Upcoming Presidential and Parliamentary Elections

In the relatively short period in which Somaliland has been experimenting with multi-party elections, delays have been more regular than timely elections. This survey attempted to measure the respondents' attitudes toward possible delays of the upcoming elections and the potential consequences of such delays. With regard to the postponement of parliamentary elections that were planned to be held concurrently with the presidential elections, **the majority of respondents (63.7%) perceived the postponement of the parliamentary elections positively** for various reasons as described below. Slightly over one-third of the respondents saw the decision to postpone parliamentary elections as 'very good'. Only 13.7% of the respondents perceived the decision negatively. As shown in Figure 3.6.1, just 5.3% of the respondents saw the decision as 'very bad'.

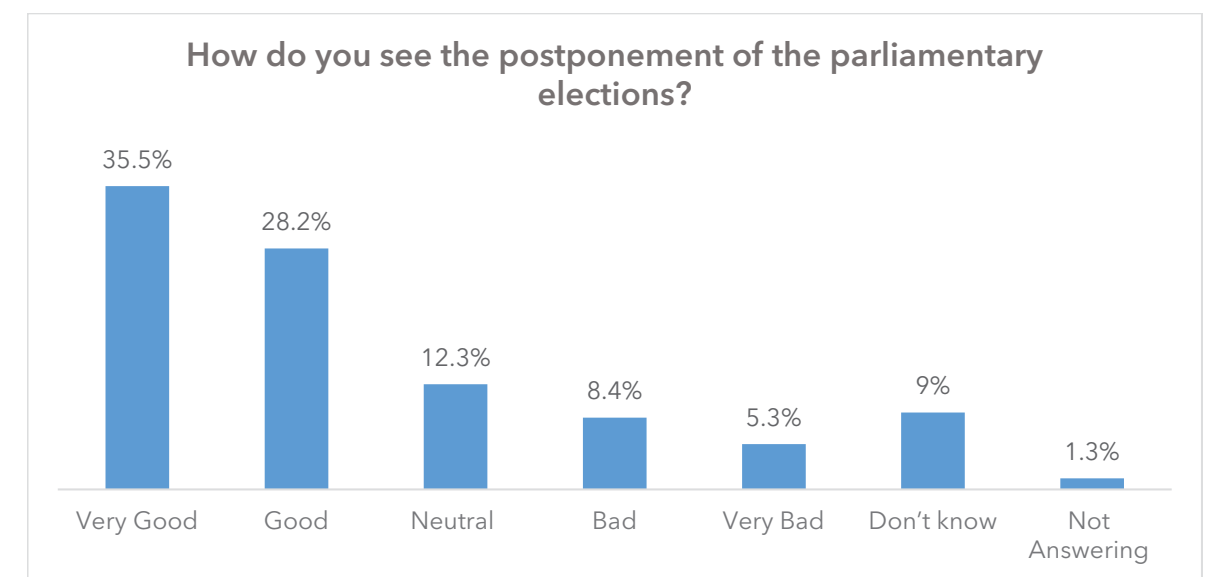


Figure 3.6:1: Attitude toward Postponement of Parliamentary Elections

Participants of focus group discussions had varied opinions with regard to the postponement of the presidential elections. Some of the participants believed that the postponement of the parliamentary elections was a good decision since voters in Somaliland were not familiar with the presidential and parliamentary elections being conducted concurrently (on the same day).

I believe it was good to postpone one of the elections and hold one at a time because people are not used to combined elections. Also we cannot afford the cost of campaigning for two elections that are held at the same time.

Amina Farah, FGD participant in Hargeysa, Maroodi-jeex, Somaliland.

Other participants believed that though they are also of the opinion that it would have been difficult to hold combined Presidential and Parliamentary elections, they would have preferred that parliamentary elections were held first, since the current parliament has been in place for too long.

I personally believe that the decision to postpone either of the election as very good but it should have been the presidential instead of the parliamentary elections. The reason is that the current MPs are there for more than two terms. That is killing democracy. They are the legislators; they should comply with the laws of the country before anyone else does.

Mohamed Basheer, Borama, Awdal.

A young participant in Sanaag also said that they would have preferred if the parliamentary elections were held first since they give young people space to run for office and participate in politics. Another participant in Maroodi-jeex region also argued that parliamentary elections should have been held first since the laws that are required for parliamentary elections to be held are not in place.

Other participants saw the decision to postpone parliamentary elections as a major mistake in the country's democratic process and a breach to the previous agreements that were reached by all stakeholders.

I believe that the decision to postpone parliamentary elections as a big mistake because the current MPs were sitting there for more than ten years and were not able to deliver any significant legislation. There is no reason why they should be given more time, because there seems nothing that is going to come from them. They failed to pass the parliament quote sharing law and they have not issued laws regarding the demarcation of regions and districts.

Saamiya Ahmed, Berbera, Saahil.

Other participants also believed that both parliamentary and presidential elections should have been held at the same time since Somaliland cannot afford to hold two elections within a short time. They proposed that as long as it was technically possible, that both elections should be held on the date that was agreed earlier by all stakeholders.

Significant regional variations also existed in respondents' attitudes toward the postponement of parliamentary elections. The highest proportion of those who perceived this decision positively were in Sanaag (74.8%) followed by those in Togdheer (73.3%). In contrast, respondents in Maroodi-jeex and Awdal had the highest proportion of those who perceived the decision negatively (19.3% and 17.2% respectively).

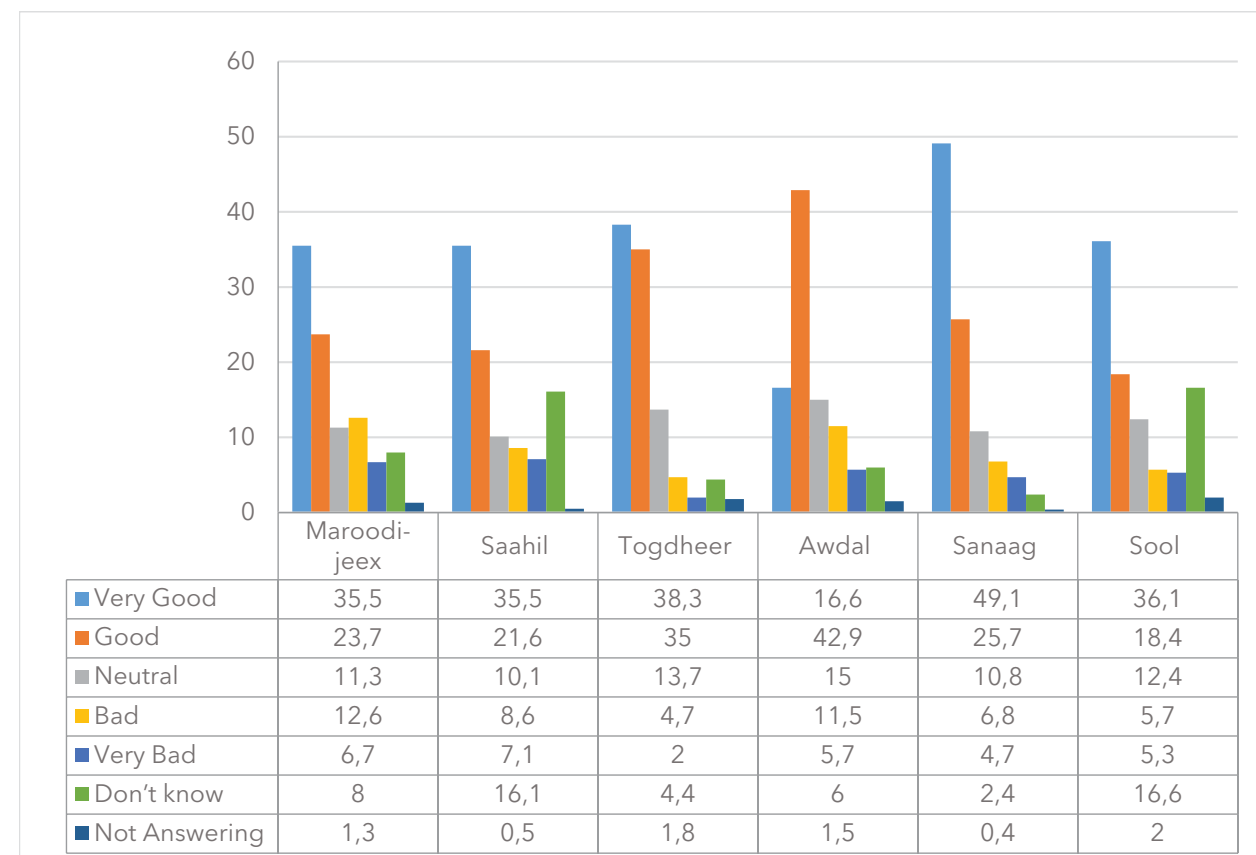


Figure 3.6:2; Attitude toward Postponement of Parliamentary Elections by Region

Whether or not the presidential elections, which at the time of data collection for the study were scheduled to take place on 28th March 2017, would take place on time, **58.8% of the respondents believed that the elections would take place on time.** Only 8.1% believed they would be delayed, while 20.9% answered they did not know. Respondents were also asked whether a postponement of presidential elections would lead to violence. Nearly half of the respondents, believed that such delay would not lead to violence. **Another 40% of the respondents believed that such postponement would lead to violence.** Even though delays in elections have been regular part of Somaliland's history of multi-party democracy, the fact that such large proportion of respondents believed that possible delay in the coming presidential elections would lead to violence was itself a worrying sign and an indication of how heated these elections are going to be.

In contrast to the findings from the survey, most of the participants of the focus group discussions believed that the presidential elections would be delayed. The most important reason that the FGD participants cited as a possible cause of such delay was the drought that affected large parts of eastern regions and hit nomadic communities hard.

I believe that the planned [presidential] elections will be delayed because of the serious drought that affected eastern regions of the country. It will not be possible for the country to go through elections under such dire conditions.

Halima Ahmed, Borama, Awdal.

Other participants also suggested that since the drought displaced large numbers of nomadic communities in the eastern regions of the country and forced them to search for water and pasture either in Western regions of the country or in Ethiopia, it would not be possible to hold the elections in time since they would not be able to cast their votes in their original registration sites. Some of the participants argued that the presidential elections should not be delayed another time since the term of the sitting president was already extended one time. They believed that another delay will be a mistake.

3.7. Voter Behaviour in Coming Presidential Elections

Plan to Vote

The survey attempted to measure the proportion of respondents who were planning to vote in the coming presidential elections. **The majority of the respondents (88.2%), stated that they were planning to vote.** Only 9% of the respondents said they were not planning to vote, while around another 3% said they didn't care if they voted or not.

Age was a significant factor with regard to intentions to participate in the coming elections. Younger respondents were more likely to report they are planning to vote in the coming elections, while older respondents were more likely to report they are not planning to vote. Respondents whose ages ranged from 16 to 18 had the highest proportion of those who were planning to vote (92.5%), followed by those in the age groups of 19 to 25 (89.5%) and 26 to 35 (88.1%). In contrast, respondents in the oldest age group in this survey (61 years and older) had the highest proportion of those who were not planning to vote in the coming elections (14%), followed by those in the age groups 46 – 60 (11.1%).

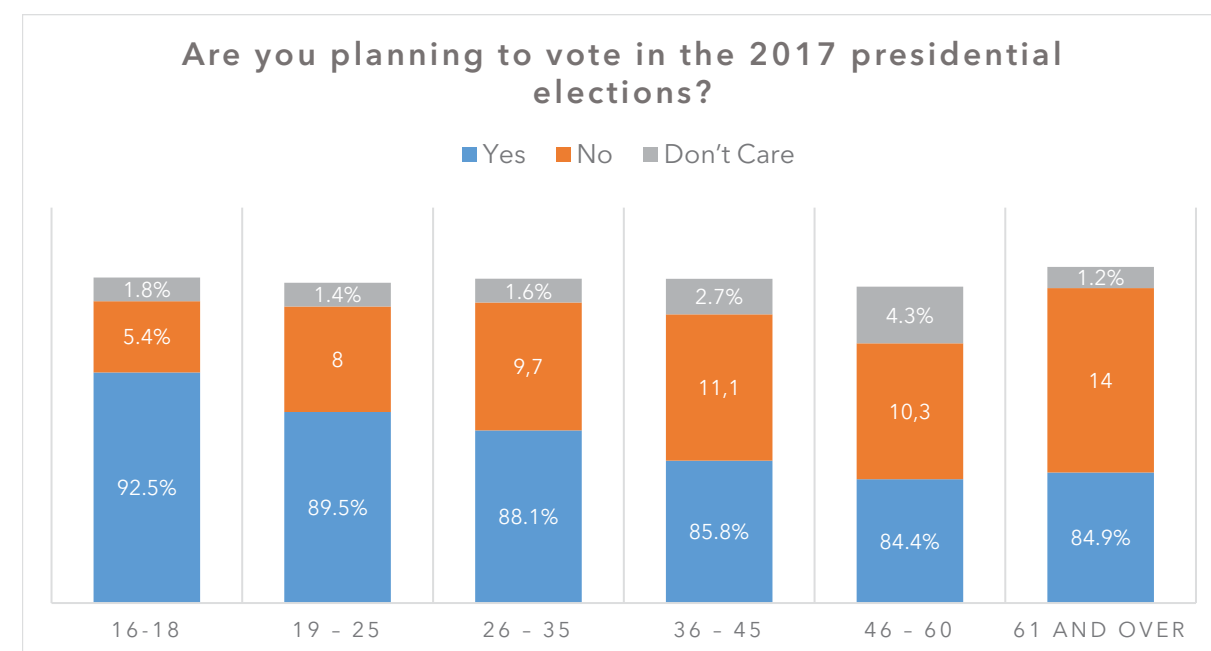


Figure 3.7.1: Plan to Vote by Age Groups

There was no significant difference between male and female respondents with regard to their plan to vote in the coming elections, but there was a slight difference among respondents in different regions. The proportions of respondents who reported that they were not planning to vote in the coming elections were highest in Maroodi-jeex (12.6%), Sool (12%) and Saahil (11.4%) regions and lowest in Sanaag region, whereas only 4% of the respondents said they were not planning to vote.

Education level also made a difference in people's intention to vote in the coming elections. Those who had formal education were more likely to report that they were planning to vote in the coming presidential elections. Respondents with secondary level of education and university students had the highest proportion of those who

were planning to vote in the coming presidential elections (90.1% and 90.9% respectively). The proportion of those who were not planning to vote was highest among those who had either formal education or no education at all (10.7% and 11.6%), followed by those with primary level of education (9.4%).

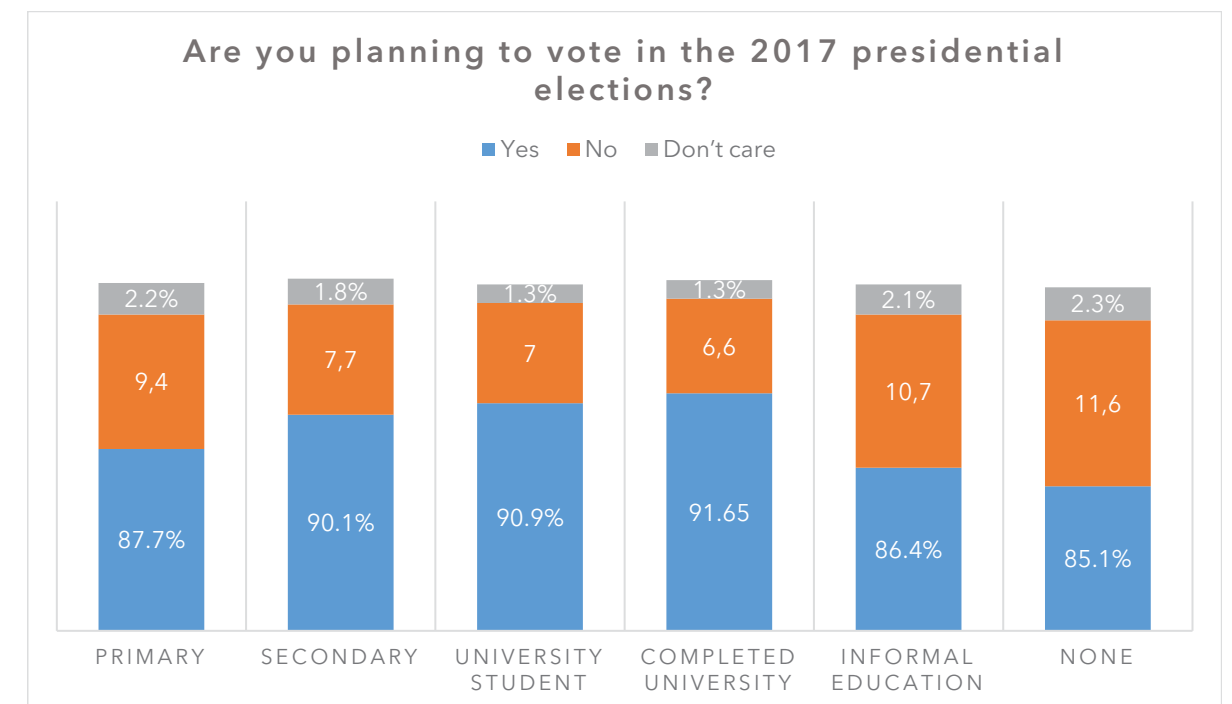


Figure 3.7.2: Plan to Vote by Level of Educational Achievement

The survey also attempted to measure where the respondents were planning to vote. Predictably, the majority of the respondents were planning to cast their votes in the same region they were residing at the time of this data collection. In Awdal region, 92.3% of respondents reported that they were planning to cast their votes in Awdal region. Maroodi-jeex region had the highest proportion of those who were planning to vote in other regions. Only 79.8% of the respondents in Maroodi-jeex reported they were planning to vote in the same region. Smaller proportions were planning to vote in the regions of Saahil (3.1%), Togdheer (1.8%) and Awdal (1.1%).

3.8. Attitude toward Multiparty System and the Performance of the NEC

Respondents were asked if they believe that political parties will bring change and development in Somaliland, an overwhelming majority answered affirmatively. Only 7.6% of the respondents answered negatively, disagreeing that political parties will bring change and development in the country.

Participants of the focus group discussions also varied in their attitude toward the current multiparty system in the country. Some of the participants argued that the current system is crucial and working since it helped Somaliland avoid the conflict, civil wars and political repressions that became normal in many countries of the region.

I am an old man and I have seen many changes in the region. Our current political system is good since it has prevented many conflicts in the country. Before, elections and power transfer used to be very messy and bloody. But now, everything is OK even the day after the election result are declared.

Farah Abdi, Erigavo, Sanaag.

Other participants also believed that the system is on the right track since it is making power transfer possible.

I believe that there are some mistakes in our system but we are on the right track in general. For example, elected officials are coming to power instead of the old ones staying in power for good.

Ayaanle Mohamed, Buroa, Togdheer.

In contrast, some of the participants, particularly those in Sool, had negative attitude toward the current political system of the country. The most important aspect of the multiparty system that they criticized is that it is clan-based.

There is no democracy in the country, but a tribalism in the form of parties. The three parties are tools owned by clans.

Hassan Osman, Buroa, Togdheer.

In Las'anood, the capital of Sool region, the tone was more critical. They described the system as one dominated and exploited by Isaaq, the main clan in Somaliland.

The survey also attempted to measure the attitude of the respondents toward the performance of the National Election Commission (NEC). A large proportion of the respondents are satisfied with the performance of the commission. **Around one-third of the respondents (33.8%) said that they are very satisfied with the performance of the institution**, while around one-tenth (9.9%) of respondents said they are satisfied with its performance. In contrast, less than one-tenth of the respondents say they are not satisfied with the performance of the NEC. Only 4.2% of the respondents said they are very unsatisfied with the performance of the Commission. Nearly half of the respondents said they had neutral opinion (24.6%) or they don't know the answer (22.1%).

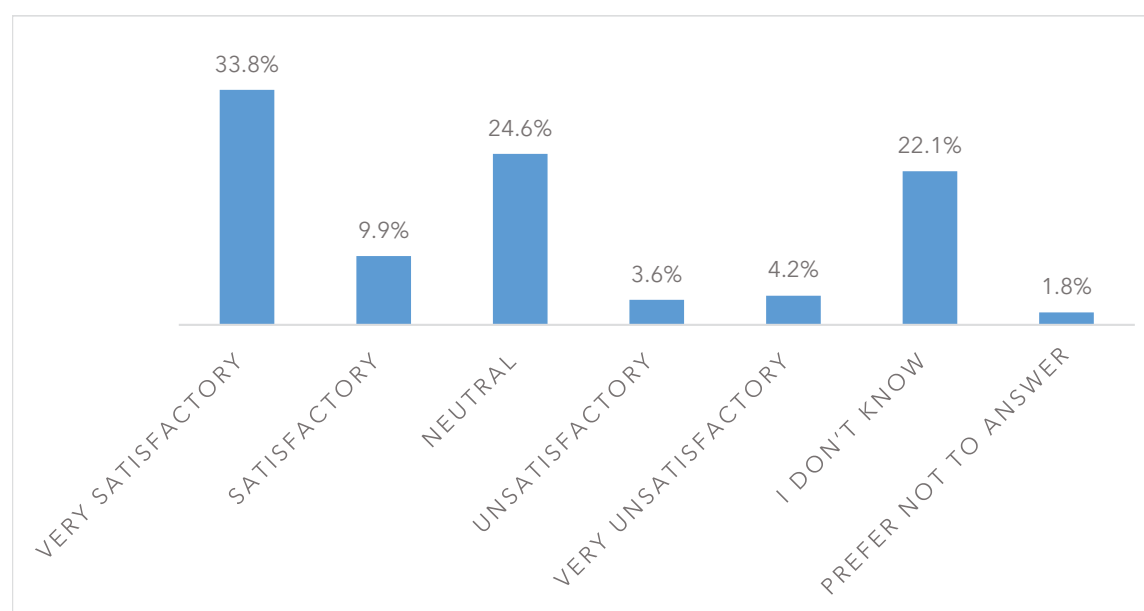


Figure 3.8.1: Attitude toward Performance of National Election Commission (NEC)

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4

4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusions

This is an important study on voter behaviour in Somaliland, explaining some aspects of voter behaviour in the previous and future elections. One of the key findings of the study is that people in Somaliland trust the current process of voter registration and see it as an important step toward achieving free and fair elections, minimizing the possibility of fraud in the elections and promoting democratization in Somaliland. The findings of the study also show that the registration process has been successful in two main areas. First, the majority of eligible voters in Somaliland reported that they had registered for the coming presidential elections. Secondly, the proportion of those who reported multiple registration was minimal and this would help reduce multiple voting in the coming elections. The study also shows that the postponement of the parliamentary elections was not a cause of worry for the people of Somaliland. Many of them could also see another postponement in the coming presidential elections, which at the time of data collection had been scheduled to take place on 28th March, 2017, as a result of the drought currently affecting nomadic communities in eastern parts of Somaliland. But in discussing the issue in detail, they did not find a justifiable reason for the postponement of the parliamentary elections. Many of the respondents interviewed perceived the poor performance of the parliament, who stayed in power for nearly two terms without elections and failed to put in place the necessary laws, as the main reason why these elections were delayed.

The study also shows that participation in elections through voting is very high in Somaliland. A very high proportion of eligible voters in Somaliland participated in the previous parliamentary elections. Similarly, the proportion of eligible voters who are planning to vote in the coming presidential elections is also very high. The study also found that the majority of the respondents supported one of current three national political parties. The majority of the respondents also felt that they had information about the coming elections. In order of popularity, television, internet and radio are the most common sources information about elections. Internet is popular among young voters, while radio is the same for older voters.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, this study makes the following recommendations to improve Somaliland elections and support voters to make better decisions:

1. The study was urban-focused as it was conducted in the capital cities of the six regions of Somaliland. As a result, the findings may be viewed as representative of voter behaviour in urban settings. Implementation of a similar study in rural areas would help complement the current findings and also deepen the understanding of voter behaviour in Somaliland.
2. The study noted several important factors that should be considered to when planning and implementing future voter and civic education programmes in Somaliland to ensure that potential voters understand the electoral process:
 - a. Education was an important factor in understanding the respondents' access to information. As detailed in the report, respondents with higher levels of education reported to have had more information about the upcoming elections than those with lower levels. This implies the need to ensure that future voter and civic education are targeted and tailored to the education needs of the potential voters to widen the

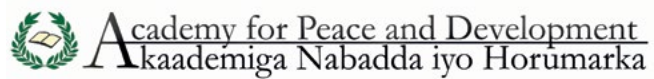
reach of voter and civic education messages.

b. Television was the common source of information about elections across all the regions. The urban focus of the study is a possible reason why this was the case and television tends to be a common household item in many towns. As such, voter and civic education programmes should utilise this medium more when conducting outreach in urban areas.

c. The study noted that internet was a popular source of information among respondents aged 18 years and under. As such, it is recommended that future voter and civic education programmes utilise more internet platforms for wider outreach among the youth

3. The role of NEC should be promoted among Somaliland voters. The study noted that majority of the respondents interviewed had a positive attitude towards the performance of NEC. This is a positive testament to Somaliland's democratisation progress and more efforts should be channelled towards supporting NEC as it prepares for the upcoming elections.

4. The study noted that the majority of the respondents positively perceived the role of political parties in bringing change and development in Somaliland. Therefore, efforts towards building Somaliland's multiparty system should be continued.



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