

Press Briefing

IEA's

Socio-economic and Governance Survey

25th February, 2015

Introduction and Background

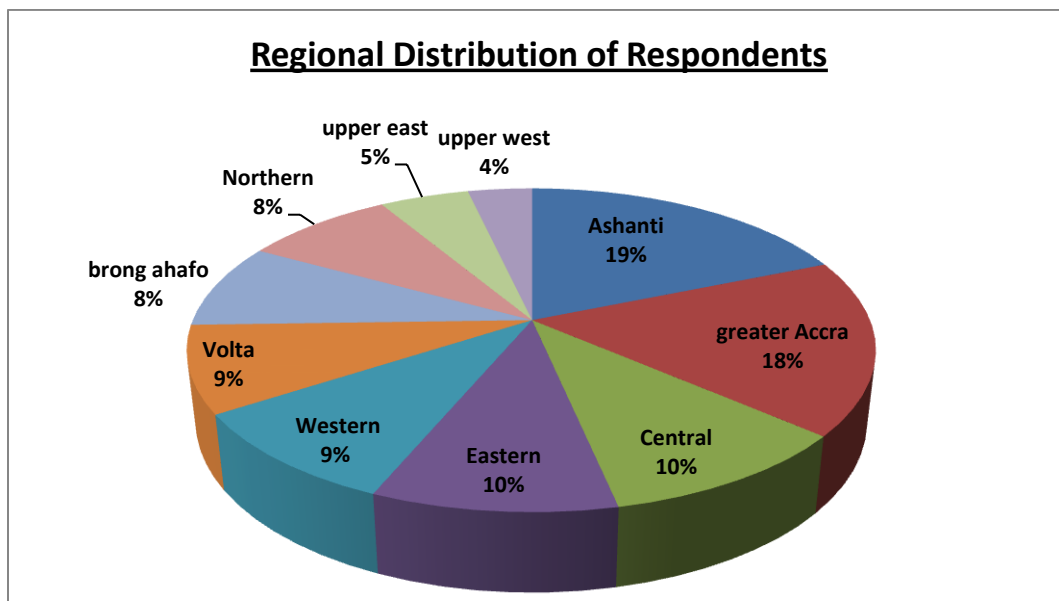
In line with its goal of promoting good public policies, IEA conducts periodic surveys on public perception and assessment of socio-economic and governance conditions in the country. The purpose of these surveys is to solicit and provide information on Ghanaians' perceptions on a whole range of subjects, including: economic and living conditions, public safety and security, media freedom and abuse, discrimination and relations between ethnic groups, factors which influence elections, trust in institutions, important problems confronting the country, government performance, corruption, bribery, access to public services, etc.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted in all the 10 regions of Ghana, with persons aged 18 years and above as the target population.

A stratified design that employs sampling with probability proportional to size (PPS) was adopted. Stratification was based on the regions of Ghana, and selected households and individuals for the survey were randomly sampled from pre-selected primary sampling units (PSU's).

A total sample of 1,200 households was selected to allow for up to 20% non-response.



Demographic background of respondents

The regional and gender distribution mirrors closely the 2010 population and housing census figures. The region with the highest proportion of respondents is Ashanti (18.8%) and upper west region has the least (3.6%). Females make up 52.3 percent of the respondents as against 47.8 percent males.

SURVEY RESULTS

People's Living Conditions

The survey tried to elicit household perceptions and assessment of their living conditions. A good majority of respondents (63.3%) regard their current living conditions to be bad. Only 25.2% indicated that their current living conditions were good. The results generally suggest deep economic hardship.

There were considerable regional variations in the responses. More people in Western, Central, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions reported bad living conditions when compared to the Greater Accra, Upper east and Upper West. In general, urban dwellers (63.5%) reported worse living conditions than rural dwellers (60%). This result must be taken against the backdrop of generally higher cost of living conditions in urban areas, although poverty is also lower in those areas.

Females (66.5%) reported worse conditions than males (60.4%). This is not surprising since males tend to be generally better off economically than females given that males have better opportunities in education and jobs and tend to have higher incomes. Most homes have males as the breadwinners.

The majority of respondents (68.5%) indicated that their living conditions remained the same or worsened over the last six months. However, respondents were generally optimistic about improvements in their living conditions in the next six months. 43.4% indicated that their living conditions will improve over the next six months and this optimism cuts across the gender and rural urban divide. Only 22.4% thought their living conditions will worsen. The general optimism seems to emanate from the fact that economic conditions were pretty bad at the time of the survey, including a cedi crisis, high fuel and utility prices and power constraints. The expectation was that things could only get better going forward.

Regarding access to food, about a quarter (25%) of respondents indicated that their households did not have enough food to eat in the last six months. In addition, another 22% had on occasions experienced hunger. Northern region reported the highest level of respondents without food while Greater Accra reported the least. Further, rural areas generally reported lower access to food, possibly reflecting the higher poverty in those areas.

In terms of access to clean water, about 3 in every 5 persons (60%) had access over the past six months. There were regional variations with 66% in Greater Accra having access compared with 47% for the Northern Region. Also, unsurprisingly, urban access (65%) is higher than rural access (55%).

With regards to access to medicine or medical treatment, almost 50% of interviewees responded that they had had no access in the last six months. Not surprisingly, the worst affected areas are Northern Region and Upper East Region, where medical facilities are relatively few.

Regarding school expenses, an overwhelming majority of households reported difficulties in meeting them. Nationally, 66% of households indicated they lacked money for school expenses. Unsurprisingly, the problem was more widespread amongst rural dwellers (69.2%) than urban dwellers (63.2%). The levels in both cases are, however, high and generally point to a high incidence nationwide of difficulty in meeting school expenses. Given the importance of education in national development, policy intervention to address this need is urgent.

The ease with which people are able to access public services like birth certificates; driver's license; passports, electricity, education; medical care, to mention a few, shows how efficient and effective public institutions charged with delivering such services are operating. On the other hand, the more difficult it is to access these facilities, the easier it is for corruption to thrive. Respondents generally expressed difficulty in having access to passports, police assistance, water for household use, and drivers' license. Four services stand out in terms of ease of access. These are: voters' ID, national health insurance card, and a place in a primary school for a child.

Most Important Problems Confronting the Country

On the most important problems facing the country, the questionnaire offered a menu of 38 for respondents to choose from. While the answers showed that the problems are many and varied, the answers became quite diffused.

About a fifth (20%) of respondents consider unemployment to be the most critical problem. This is followed by education (12.3%), management of the economy (8.3%), electricity (7.3%) and roads (6.9%). Others are water supply (6.7%), transportation (5%), health (4.6%), wages and salaries (4.2%) and poverty/destitution (4.1%). The least of the worries are: international war, AIDS, land issues, civil war, gender issues/women's rights, discrimination/inequality, political violence and drought. At the local level, unemployment is still the dominant problem though it is more endemic in the urban places (22.7%) than the rural areas (16.0%). Again, education, roads, water supply, transportation, farming/agriculture and health are more of a concern in the rural areas than the urban areas. In contrast, the management of the economy, electricity, rates and taxes, corruption, and access to loans/credit are of much worry to urban dwellers than their rural counterparts.

Broadly speaking, therefore, about 40 percent of Ghanaians think the economy as a whole is the major problem confronting the country. This shows clearly that bread and butter issues are the immediate concern for respondents. Understandably, respondents do not seem to be so much concerned with issues that look too remote to them (such as civil war, political violence, drought) or which they may not have encountered before (like AIDS, gender rights, discrimination). Our leaders need to pay due attention to the bread and butter issues.

Public Safety

Ghanaians feel reasonably safe within their neighborhoods with levels of feeling safe higher in the more rural areas. Our results indicate that more than 7 out of every 10 persons (74.3%) reported that they felt safe walking in the neighbourhood during the day or during the night. More persons in Upper West Region (88.4%), Brong Ahafo Region (80.4%) and Northern

Region (80.2%) felt safe walking in the neighbourhood during the day or the night. Not surprisingly, more males (79.6%) than females (71.1%) feel safe walking in the neighbourhood during the day or night. 81.4 percent of the rural persons feel safe walking in the neighbourhood during the day or night as compared to their urban counterparts (69.8%).

Given the level of safety, only 27.2% reported someone had been attacked in their neighbourhood. Similarly, respondents (26%) are not afraid of being burgled. Only 23.8% of respondents had experienced theft once or more.

A relatively higher number of persons in urban localities (28.1%) as compared to their counterparts in rural communities (26.2%) indicated that they did not suffer any physical attack during the past year.

Unfortunately, a large majority (71.4%) who had suffered attacks or burglaries at home did not report to the police. There were considerable regional variations. Most persons in Western, Upper East, and Upper West Regions who suffered physical attack or burglary at homes did not report to the police. In the more urbanized regions, e.g. the Greater Accra Region, over 50% of such persons who suffered physical attack or burglary did report to the police.

Majority of persons (23.2%) who suffered physical attack or burglary and did not report to the police believe that it would be a waste of time since they would be required to make repeated visits to the police station. This is more pronounced among the 25-59 year group (24%) compared to the 18-24 (23%) and 60 and over year (19.1%) groups. One out of every five also believe that people really do not have enough time to report crimes whilst another 17.1 indicated that the police would have demanded money or a bribe from them if they had reported their case.

Fear of reprisal from attacker/relatives of attacker/community (3.9%) is another reason why those attacked did not report to the police. The year group which feared reprisal from attacker/relatives of attacker/community more are the 25-59 (4.4%) followed by the 60+ group (2.5%). However, only 2.7 percent of the 18-24 year group did not report to the police due to the fear of reprisal from attacker/relatives of attacker/community.

Moreover, about one percent was of the opinion that the police themselves may be involved in the robbery or assault.

Relations between Ethnic Groups

There is a general perception that one's ethnic background or gender affects his/her chances of getting government job, contract, public housing, loans from government banks or even admission into the education institutions and other security services.

Generally, about 50% of respondents think that someone's ethnic background influences one's chances of getting government job. The perception is higher among urban dwellers (57.3%) than rural dwellers (37.6%). The regional perception varies from 33.1% in Volta Region to as high as 61% in the Western Region. Generally, the heterogenous nature of urban and peri-urban centers predisposes them to ethnic cosmopolitanism. Rural dwellers generally have the advantage of enjoying ethnic homogeneity. This could explain why more urban dwellers think there is a correlation between one's ethnic background and chances of securing government job, as compared to the situation in the rural areas.

The relations between ethnic groups in Ghana are generally good. Approximately 80 percent of the respondents indicated that the ethnic groups in the country relate peacefully. Only one percent (one in hundred persons) feels that relations are bad. This is good for long-term social cohesion.

On the religious front, about 84 percent of respondents are of the view that relations between the different religious groups are either very good or good. Only 6.5 percent indicated that the relations are bad. The same perception cuts across the regions, locality of residence, educational level and ethnic groups. Indeed, one of the many critical factors that have contributed to Ghana's drive towards democratic maturity and sustenance is religious tolerance. This is good news and we need to build on it.

Performance of Present Government

Seventeen areas of concern were identified and views of respondents solicited as to how well or badly the current government is addressing them. Government performed poorest in "keeping prices down" (71.5% response rate). This was followed respectively by "creating jobs" (62.0%), "narrowing the gap between rich and poor" (58.2%), and "improving the living standards of the

people” (57.8%). 56 percent of the respondents believe that the current government is managing the economy very badly as against only 5% who say the government is doing very well.

Among the 17 matters put to respondents, it is only in the areas of “combating HIV/AIDS” and “resolving violent conflict between communities” that more respondents consider Government to be performing very well as against those who think it is performing very badly. In the 15 other areas, more respondents consider the government to be performing very badly than those who consider it to be performing very well. The verdict is clear here and does not need further elaboration.

Bribery and Corruption

Bribery and corruption affect the moral and economic fabric of the country in diverse ways. Already in Ghana the perception of bribery among the people is very high and the acquisition of basic services like: getting a document or a permit; getting water or sanitation services; electricity connection; getting treatment at a local health clinic or hospital; avoiding a problem with the police, like passing a check point or avoiding a fine or arrest; avoiding a problem with the local tax officer; getting a place in a primary school for a child; getting a place in a government senior high school for a child; and getting a place in a government tertiary institution for a child are deemed to be herculean tasks in many instances.

Respondents allege that one has to pay a bribe, give a gift or do a favour before he/she could obtain any of the aforementioned services.

The survey results indicate that in the past six months, 44 percent to 50 percent of people have not had any experience with getting any of the services mentioned. Of those who have had the experience, between 42% and 50% have never paid bribe, given a gift or done a favor to get the service.

However, the services which people had had to pay bribe etc. from the most likely to the least likely are: i) avoiding a problem with the police, like passing a check point or avoiding a fine or arrest (6.7%); ii) getting electricity connection (6.6%); iii) getting a document or a permit

(6.3%); iv) getting treatment at a local hospital (5.1%) and v) getting a place in a government senior high school for a child (5.1%). The rest are: vi) getting water services (4.3%); vii) avoiding a problem with the local tax officer (3.6%); viii) getting a place in a government tertiary institution for a child (3.5%); and ix) getting a place in a primary school for a child.

Respondents' views on corruption of 10 state institutions namely: the Office of the President; Members of parliament; Government officials; Police; Tax officials; District chief executives; Judges and magistrates; Assemblymen and women; Immigration; and Army were solicited. According to the results of the survey, 23 percent of the people are of the opinion that nearly all police officials are corrupt. Only 4.4 percent said not all of them are corrupt.

The police are followed closely by the Office of the President (19.2%), tax officials (15.4%), and members of parliament (15%) at fourth place. Others are government officials generally (13.9%) district chief executives (13.3%), judges/magistrates (13.1%), assemblymen/women (11.9%), immigration (10.4 (%)) and the army (7.0%).

Generally, one of the most pressing governance challenges confronting the country is the high prevalence of bribery and corruption. Transparency International ranked Ghana 63rd out of 177 countries in its 2013 Corruption Perception Index and 61st out of 175 the 2014 rankings. While countries such as Botswana, Cape Verde, Lesotho, Namibia and Rwanda have taken proactive steps in minimizing corruption, Ghana continues to grapple with the problem. And the survey results clearly point to its severity.

Trust in Public Institutions

The public seem to have little confidence in some state institutions. The image of the Tax department especially leaves much to be desired. Out of 11 institutions studied, 37.4 percent of the people said they do not at all trust the Tax Department. This is followed closely by the Electoral Commission (35.8%), The Ruling Party (35.6%), the Police (35.1%), the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies (33.9%), the Office of the President (33.8%) and Parliament (33.1%).

Public confidence in state institutions promotes goodwill and legitimacy of such institutions.

There can be no meaningful discussion of effective and strong state institutions without dealing with the lack of public confidence and the legitimacy deficit of such institutions. Without public confidence and goodwill towards state institutions, the citizenry would evade their obligations towards them and would find their own ways of taking the laws into their own hands without recourse to due process. Unfortunately, the survey results show that many Ghanaians have a very weak image of several state institutions. This is as a result of their failure to deliver effectively on their respective mandates.

Participation in the Democratic Process

Genuine and sustainable democracy thrives on political participation through the freedom to: say what one thinks, join any political organization, vote for a candidate and political party of choice without feeling pressured, register as a voter, to vote on policies and above all, engage in protests. Furthermore, political participation is one of the key determinants of the quality and satisfaction of life. In general, most Ghanaians feel they are free to say what they think, associate freely and participate in the democratic processes.

About 80% of the respondents feel they are free to say what they think. Differences in this perception between rural and urban areas, and males and females are statistically insignificant.

There is a very high sense of freedom of association, registration as a voter and also voting. Virtually everyone, 95% of respondents feel they are free to join any political party. An equal number feel they are free to vote.

Approximately 92% of the respondents voted in the 2012 presidential elections. Unsurprisingly, more rural residents (94.3%) voted as against 89.3% in the urban areas. Generally, Ghanaians are politically alive and free.

Media Freedom in Ghana

All over the world, the media is perceived as the fourth estate of the realm, coming after the executive, legislature and the judiciary. It plays a vital role in the dispensation of modern democracy by promoting peace and security. As an arm of civil society, it educates, inform, entertains and provides a linkage between governments and the governed. Generally, it can be

said that the media landscape of Ghana has changed for the better under the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

The survey results show that two-thirds of Ghanaians get their daily news from Radio. This is followed by Television (45.7%), Friends/relatives/neighbours/churches/mosques (35.5%) and telephone (20%). However, as expected, the proportion of people who get their daily news from Television in the urban areas (58%) is far greater than the rural people (31.7). Reading newspapers for news seems not to be common with many people as 3 out of every 4 (75%) people never get their news from newspapers.

The results of the survey indicate that approximately 56percent people believe that the news media abuse their freedom by printing or saying things they know are not true. More urban people (64%) have this perception as against 46percent of the rural residents. The dark days of censorship, gagging and other undemocratic tendencies that undermine media freedom seem to have given way to a new dispensation where media freedom is highly exalted.

It appears some of the media abuse their freedom by sensationalism and falsehood. Excessive partisanship also seems to dictate what the media publish or do not publish. These tendencies if need to be checked. Experiences from Rwanda and Serra Leone for instance suggest that negative reportage could create social and political instability.

Factors Which Influence Voters in Presidential Elections

Generally, the factors that influence voting can be broadly categorized into four. These are the rational factors, the sociological factors, the dominant ideology factor and the party identification factor. The survey results show quite clearly that gradually, Ghanaians are being rational in their choices and decision as to who to vote for in elections.

When respondents were quizzed about the relevance of political party programme of action and ideology as determinants of their preferences in an election, a whopping 79.1% stressed the importance of these variables in shaping their voting preference. On qualification and competence of presidential candidates, 77% indicated that they would consider them as important determinants of voting. Again, experience and past records of presidential candidates

also mattered to a good number of respondents (67.2%) while almost 60% highlighted the importance of personal qualities of presidential candidates as determinants of their voter preferences. Political party identification seems to also play a major role in determining voting in Ghana as 59.1% of respondents indicated that their voting is shaped by the party of the candidate and not necessarily the core issues the candidates stand for. Finally, it seems sociological factors like gender (28%), ethnicity (25.5%), religion (24.8%) and region (21%) play less significant role in determining voting in Ghana compared to the other factors that influence voting.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

1. There is a need for policy reforms that will speed up the rate of transmission of growth impulses into improved living conditions so that they can be realized by Ghanaians, especially with respect to employment.
2. Address issues of food insecurity
3. Ghanaians feel safe in their neighbourhoods.
4. There are no significant ethnic and religious discrimination.
5. The policy of social inclusion and tolerance must be encouraged to maintain a stable social environment for development.
6. Unemployment is reported to be the most critical problem facing the country. Together with difficulties in the management of the economy, this suggests policies to make the current growth more inclusive and also increase the efficient management of the economy.
7. Addressing issues of the economy is the one area of concern to Ghanaians from the survey results. It is also the area in which the government performed least according to our survey results. Economic policies and programs need to refocus on the major areas of concern to Ghanaians:
 - a) Keeping down prices
 - b) Creating jobs
 - c) Narrowing the gap between rich and poor
 - d) Improving the living standards of the people

8. There is a general perception of corruption among public institutions. Improving the reputation of institutions will improve public perception and trust in these institutions. This will elicit public cooperation and support in the smooth running of these institutions.
9. There is an emerging tendency for the survey from Ghanaians to vote on the basis of programs, caliber of candidates and less on ethnicity, religion and region of candidates, which is a good development.
10. The media need to improve their image from the perception that they abuse their freedom by publishing sensational and sometimes false information.