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PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

A Survey Report

Summary

The Ghanaian Legislature plays an integral Constitutional role in Ghana's system of government. In particular, the Constitution gives to the Legislature and her members a fundamental role in acting as an important check on the exercise of Executive power.

This paper presents the results from the Survey on Public Perceptions of Members of Parliament conducted in May and June of 2011 across Ghana's 10 regions. The overall objective was to understand the manner in which MPs, and their roles, were perceived by Ghanaians. The survey paid particular attention to the relationship between MPs and their constituents, seeking to establish the level of familiarity and interaction with local MPs. The survey also looked at the performance of MPs with respondents allocating a rating to their MP. The issue of qualifications for MPs through establishing minimum levels of education for candidates was explored, as well as views on the appropriateness of ex-gratia payments made to MPs.

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Ghana**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
1. METHODOLOGY.....	4
2. BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS.....	5
3. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CONSTITUENTS & MPs.....	8
4. VOTING AND MPs	13
5. EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR MPs.....	15
6. MPs PERFORMANCE.....	17
7. MPs AND EX-GRATIA PAYMENTS.....	18
8. CONCLUSION.....	20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ghanaian Legislature plays an integral Constitutional role in Ghana's system of government. Chapter 10 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution sets out a range of matters relating to the Legislature including eligibility requirements to become a Member of Parliament (MP), payments to MPs and the privileges and immunities of MPs amongst others. More fundamentally, however, the Constitution gives to the Legislature and her members a fundamental role in acting as an important check on the exercise of Executive Power.

The Legislature of the Fourth Republic was inaugurated in 1993. Yet after almost 20 years, and despite the important Constitutional role given to the Legislature, many argue that the ability of the Parliament to carry out its Constitutional functions is stifled. Provisions in the Constitution, such as those prohibiting MPs from introducing Bills with financial implications and those requiring the President to appoint a majority of his Ministers from within Parliament, have arguably left the Legislature and her members unable to effectively undertake its duties. It is not the intention of this report, nor was it the intention of the survey, to examine these Constitutional issues. These issues were considered in the IEA's survey report *The 1992 Constitution Review Process: A Survey on Emerging Issues from Community and Regional Consultations* and are otherwise being considered as part of the broader constitution review process.

This survey tests Ghanaian public opinion on Parliamentarians. Given the focus on the Executive and the arguably stifled role of the Legislature it was considered instructive to consider what Ghanaians thought about their Parliamentarian. The survey paid particular attention on the relationship between MPs and their constituents given that this relationship is an integral aspect of democratic governance. The overall objective was to highlight key issues which will provoke thinking on the how MPs could represent their constituents more effectively.

Using a survey to examine these questions recognizes the importance of polling as a tool in gauging public opinion on national issues. Unfortunately, in Ghana, surveys have not been a strong feature of our political governance, despite the fact that vigorous discussions in the print and electronic media signify a growing public awareness of political issues.

A total of 2,346 individuals aged 16 years and above, and representing a cross-section of educational backgrounds, were selected from across the 10 regions of the country for this survey. The analysis in this report is derived from the responses provided by our sample.

The findings from the survey, as outlined in this report, are instructive. The results indicate a broad awareness of MPs among the electorate (82 percent of respondents were aware of who their MP was) and a preparedness to contact them (some two thirds of respondents had contacted their MP). This awareness decreased in the larger and relatively wealthier regions, notably Greater Accra and Ashanti. Over half of respondents believe that the primary role of their MP is to provide direct assistance to the constituents with just under a third of respondents who had contacted their MP, doing so to request financial assistance.

Overall MPs were given an average report on their performance, with the largest proportion of respondents giving their MP an 'average' rating.

A majority of those interviewed were of the view that Members of Parliament should have a minimum level of education. Significantly, this view is equally shared by respondents with just a basic education and those who have more advanced education qualifications. Of those that considered that there should be a minimum level of education, a significant majority considered that the minimum qualification should be a university degree.

Half of the respondents noted that the amount of ex-gratia payments made to MPs was excessive. There was, however, evidence of a greater acceptance of ex-gratia payments if they were linked to (perceived) better performance.

It is anticipated that this survey will increase the understanding on public perceptions of MPs. The findings of this study will therefore be expected to be useful for policy and programme interventions as well as public education, not only by Government, but also by all partners and stakeholders in the development agenda for Ghana. Where relevant the report is careful to draw distinction on perceptions apparent across the regions. In this way it is hoped that any action taken will be appropriately tailored and prioritized to specific geographic areas, rather than making a one-size-fits-all intervention.

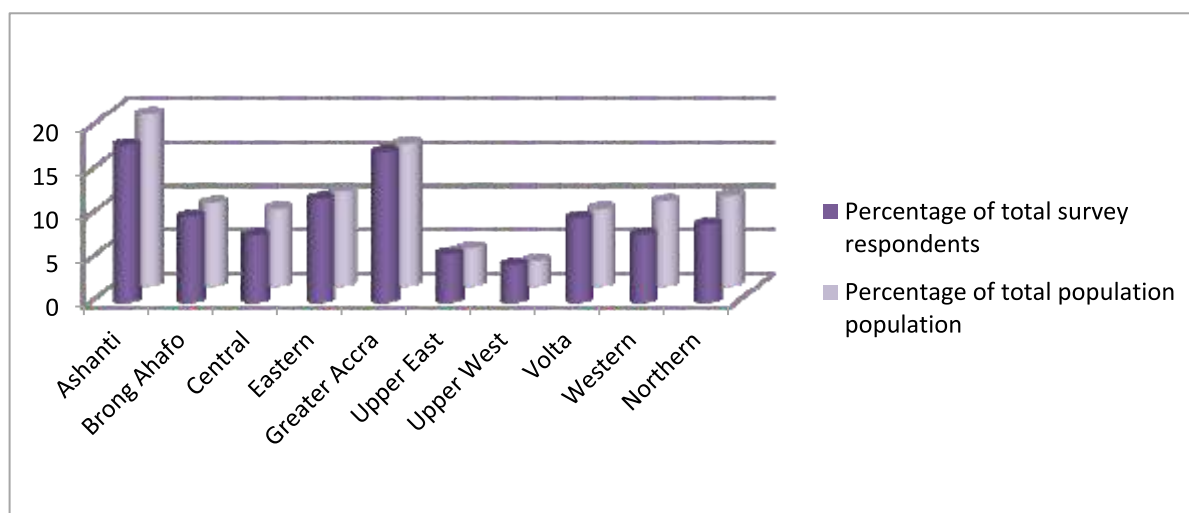
The methodology adopted for the survey is next presented. This will be followed by the background characteristics of the respondents and then the subsequent sections follow the thematic areas used to categorize the issues involved.

1. METHODOLOGY

Pre-testing of the survey was undertaken in Accra in early May 2011, during which an earlier version of the survey was administered to a small sample of randomly selected people. This process resulted in some amendments to the survey questionnaire to remove ambiguities and uncertain language.

The survey itself was administered during May and June 2011 across the country. To ensure that the survey results reflected the broad range of views that may exist across the country, all of Ghana's ten administrative regions were polled. The number of surveys allocated to each of the regions was proportional to the population in that region, based on the provisional 2010 census results which were then available. As a result, and as can be seen in the following chapter, more surveys were administered in those regions with a greater concentration of people (e.g. Ashanti and Greater Accra). This was done to ensure that the results of the survey were broadly reflective of the total Ghanaian population. Figure 1 below demonstrates that, by region, the percentage of those surveyed approximates the regional demographics of Ghana, based on the most recent survey data.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents surveyed compared to percentage of population, by Region



Survey respondents were randomly selected. However, to ensure a balance in the representation of male and female, the field teams applied gender alternation in selecting respondents whenever it was possible. In total, 2,346 responses were collected representing about 93.8 percent of the 2,500 targeted surveys.

The surveys tended to be administered in or near population centres. Whilst it would have been preferable to administer more surveys across rural areas this was not practical given resource constraints.

The questionnaires were administered as face-to-face interviews by experienced research staff of the National Centre for Civic Education (NCCE). This followed earlier training provided by the IEA's Research Assistants who also supervised the administering of the surveys.

2. BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The distribution of the background characteristics of the survey respondents is shown in Table 1 with an illustration of the age breakdown shown in Figure 2 and education levels in Figure 3.

In total, 2,346 people were surveyed, broadly divided between men (54.37 percent) and women (45.63 percent). This is reflective of the random approach taken in administering the survey.

In terms of age, those between ages 25 – 34 years were more highly represented (29.92 percent) while those above 65 years were the least represented (5.12 percent). This latter fact is consistent with the latest estimate on the age distribution (notably those above 64) of the broader Ghanaian population.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents has some form of formal education, with over 50 percent having completed secondary school (25.12 percent) or possessing a tertiary qualification (34.39 percent). This is instructive as it would be expected that those with a greater level of education would be more politically aware and engaged.

A majority of the respondents (74.44 percent) were employed with the remainder being fairly evenly split between students and the unemployed.

Of those that have employment, a significant proportion of these (43.06 percent) are employed by Government. The fact that such workers are more highly represented in the sample size (compared to the national average, last estimated at 5.9 percent), perhaps reflects the fact that surveys were administered in higher population areas (where public services are focused) and away from more rural areas where public sector jobs are less numerous.

More than half (51.24 percent) of the respondents were married whilst 37.64 percent of the total respondents had never been married.

Consistent with the regional approach taken in administering the surveys (proportional to population levels, as noted in the methodology above), the number of survey respondents is not consistent across the regions. The two most populous regions, Ashanti and Greater Accra, made up 17.86 and 17.06 percent of the survey respondents respectively while the least populated Regions of the Upper East and Upper West made up only 5.46 and 4.26 percent of the respondents respectively.

¹Ghana Statistical Service, available at <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/KeySocial.html> accessed 19 October 2011.

²Ibid.

Table 1: Background characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	1,274	54.37
Female	1,072	45.63
Age groups (years)*		
16-24	444	18.95
25-34	701	29.92
35-44	481	20.53
45-54	346	14.77
55-64	251	10.71
65+	120	5.12
Marital Status*		
Never married	880	37.64
Married	1,198	51.24
Separated/Divorced	151	6.46
Widowed	107	4.58
Other	2	0.09
Education*		
None	201	8.59
Primary	113	4.83
Middle/JSS/JHS	604	25.80
Secondary	588	25.12
Tertiary	805	34.39
Others	30	1.28
Employment status*		
Employed	1733	74.44
Unemployed	323	13.87
Student	271	11.64
Employment category*		
Civil/Public Servant	744	43.06
Private-sector employee	266	15.39
Self-employed	574	33.22
Other	144	8.33
Region of residence		
Ashanti	419	17.86
Brong Ahafo	229	9.76
Central	178	7.59
Eastern	276	11.76
Greater Accra	401	17.09
Upper East	128	5.46
Upper West	100	4.26
Volta	225	9.59
Western	181	7.72
Northern	209	8.87

*Note that the total number of responses in these categories does not equate to the total number of surveys administered. This is due to non-responses to these biographical questions.

Figure 2: Percentage breakdown of respondents by age

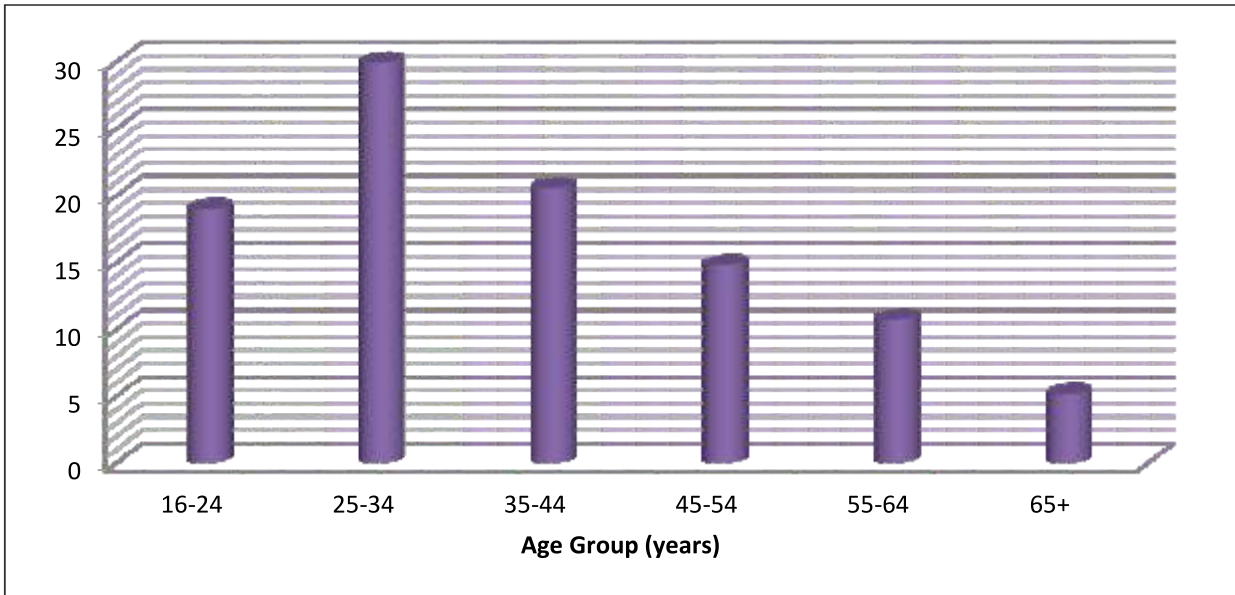
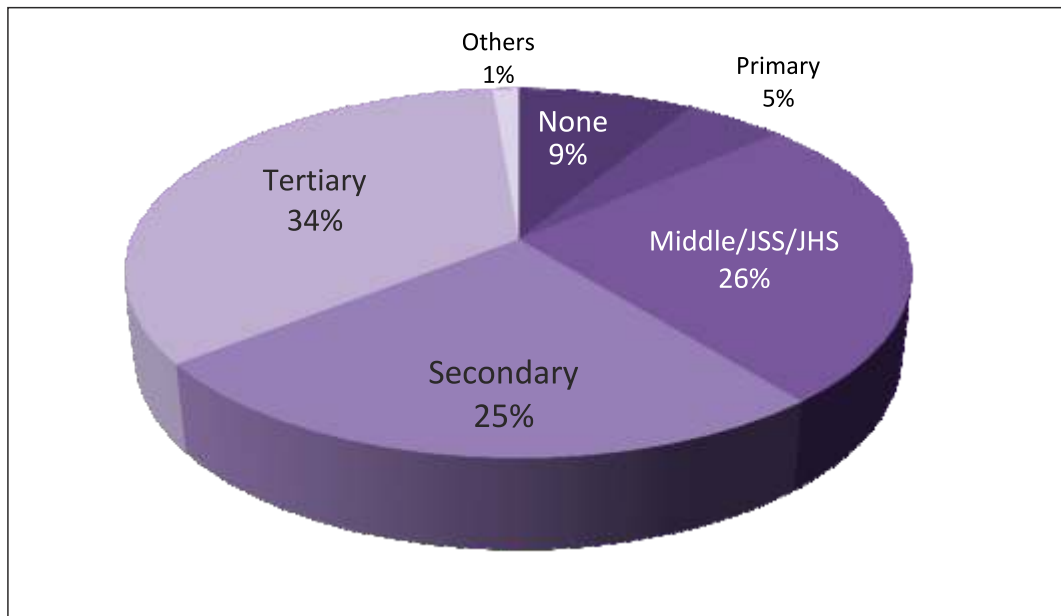


Figure 3: Percentage breakdown of respondents by education level



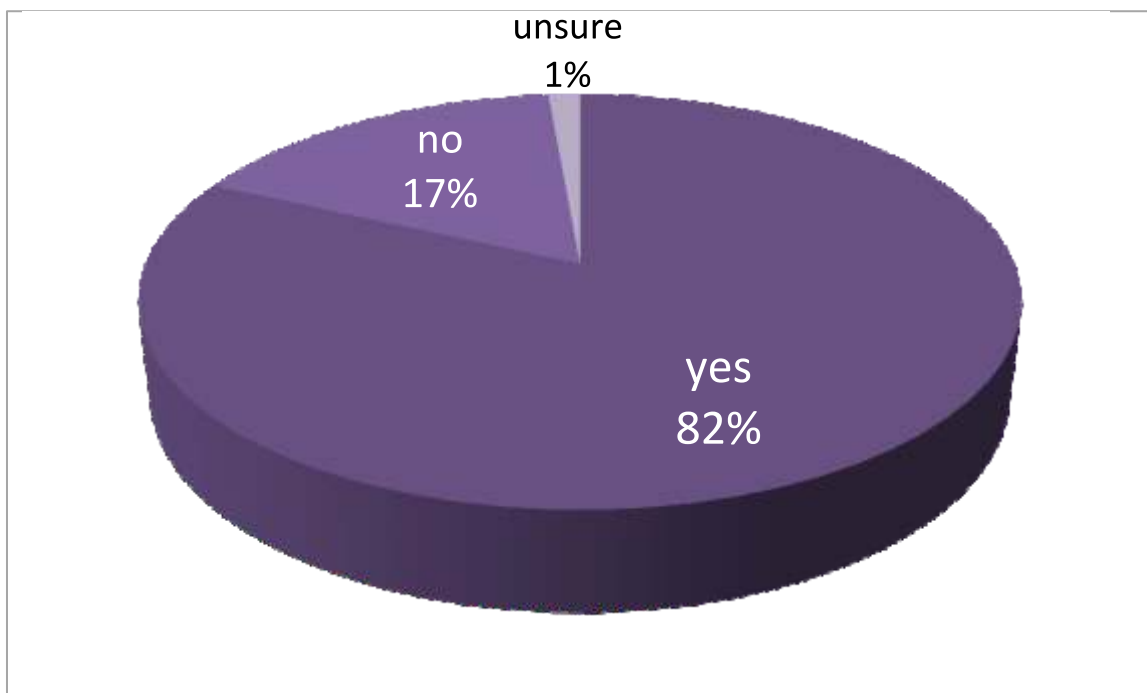
3. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CONSTITUENTS & MPs

Respondents were asked a number of questions to gauge their level of awareness and engagement with their own MP. In a representative democracy such as Ghana, MPs are expected to represent their constituents on the floor of Parliament. They also act as a conduit between their constituents and the workings of Parliament and, given Ghana's hybrid model, Government.

Nonetheless, there may be a number of reasons to suspect that the majority of constituents are not aware of and do not engage with their MP. Primarily, it is clear under the Ghanaian system of governance that the arm of Government with the most influence is the Executive. This is the arm of Government that makes and implements policy and directs public spending. Whilst every Ghanaian could be expected to be aware of their President, Vice President and perhaps key Government Ministers, the same could perhaps not be expected for MPs. Parliamentarians (other than those who are Ministers) have no direct control over directing Government policy, are less likely to receive media attention and their performance, compared to the Executive, is not readily monitored and assessed.

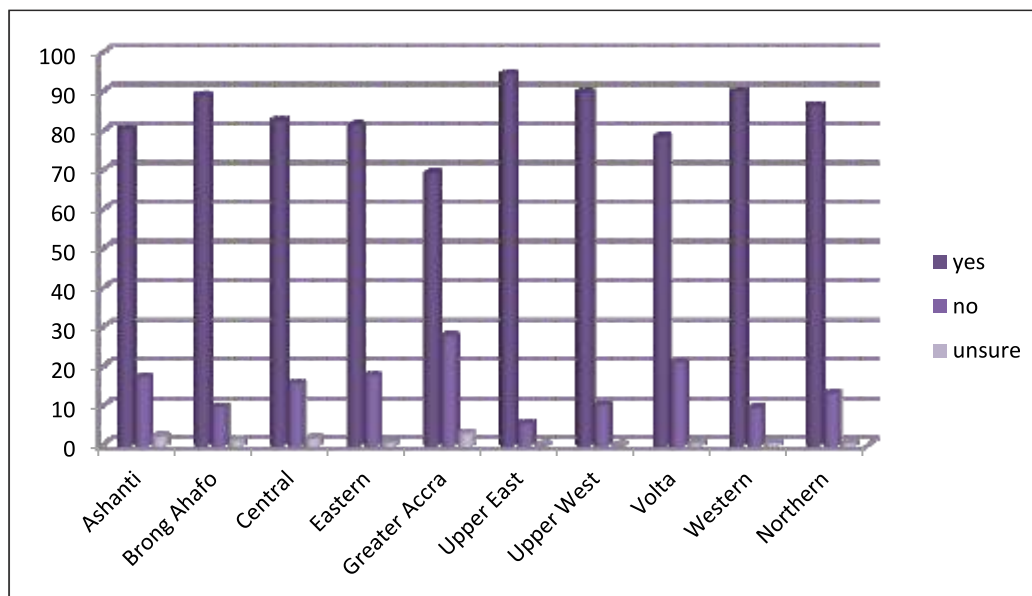
Firstly, respondents were asked simply whether they knew who their MP was. The breakdown of responses is depicted in Figure 4 below. Indeed the results are significant, with an overwhelming majority of respondents, 82 percent, being aware of who their MP was. This suggests that, despite the political and media focus on the Executive, people are still very much aware of their MP.

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who were aware of their MP



The breakdown of responses to this question, by region, provides some interesting insights. This is illustrated by Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who were aware of who their MP is, by region

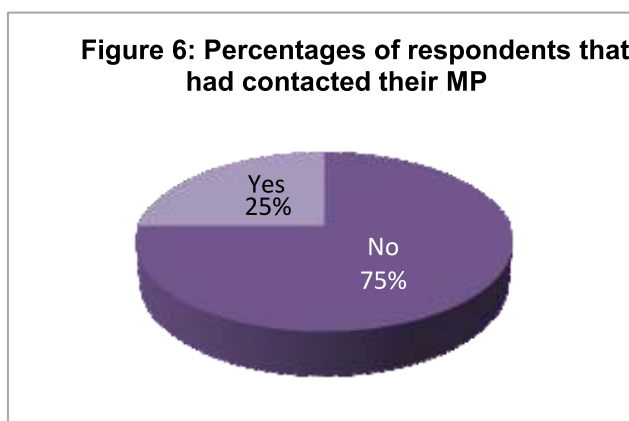


Notably, Greater Accra had the biggest proportion of respondents (27.75 percent) unaware of whom their MP was. This compares to Upper East which had the least number of respondents (5.47 percent) being unaware of who their MP was. In fact, generally, it appears the greater the population in the Region, the less likely it was for a respondent to be aware of their MP. What would explain this, given that populations in separate constituencies should generally be the same size?

One possible explanation relates to the profile of the MP. The Upper East region has 13 MPs, the second smallest of any of the regions. However, three of these have a national profile. Cletus Avoka (MP for Zebilla constituency) is the majority leader and former Minister of Interior. Albert Abongo (MP for Bongo) is a former Minister for Water Resources, Works & Housing. Joseph Kofi Adda (MP for Navrongo Central) is a former Minister for Energy. Given the relatively small number of seats in this Region, it appears as there are proportionately more MPs in the Upper East with national profiles and a more direct role in influencing national policy. It may, arguably, also be the case that the more remote regions of Ghana share a greater sense of community than, for instance, more urban environments. This may make elected representatives more widely known amongst those communities. Future surveys could interrogate this issue further.

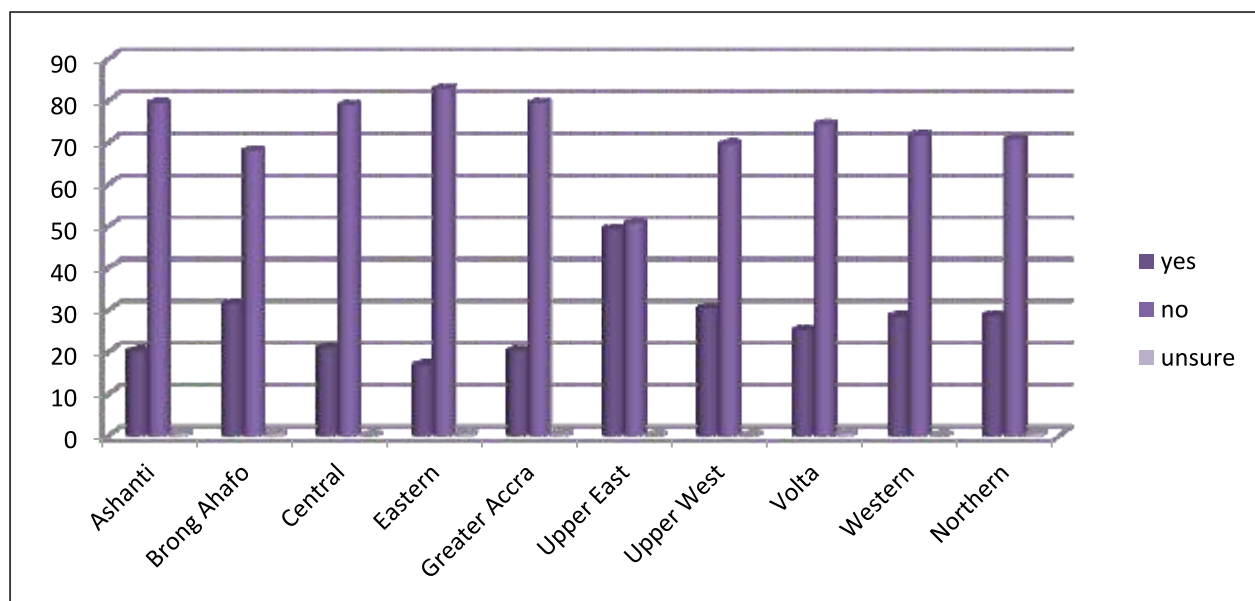
In order to assess respondent’s understanding of, and relationship with, their MP, respondents were asked whether they had contacted their MP. The results are shown in Figure 6 and they are noteworthy. While it is true that a majority of respondents had never contacted their MP, 25 percent of respondents had. This is a significant minority and is higher than might otherwise have been expected.

Figure 6: Percentages of respondents that had contacted their MP



A closer analysis of this, broken down by regions, is illustrated in Figure 7. The region that stands out the most is the Upper East Region where almost 50 percent of respondents had indicated that they had contacted their MP. Again, this could be explained on the basis that a higher proportion of Upper East MPs have a national profile and are perhaps more able to influence Government policy. Moreover, the Upper East region faces more development challenges and has more people living in poverty than, for instance Greater Accra and Ashanti regions. Therefore an individual in the Upper East might feel more compelled to contact their MP to seek financial assistance. The reasons that people contacted their MP are considered further below.

Figure 7: Percentages of respondents that had contacted their MP, by region



It is also instructive to examine a breakdown of the results of this question by other categories. This is illustrated in Table 2 below. Notably, men were almost twice as more likely to contact their MP as women. This may reflect the fact that women tend to be less engaged in the political process in Ghana. This appears to be a common feature of Ghanaian society.

Education level does not appear to significantly impact the likelihood of someone contacting their MP. Of the respondents that held tertiary qualifications, some 29.77 percent had contacted their MP. This can be compared to 22.22 percent of respondents who had not completed any level of education. Of course, as detailed further below, it might be expected that the reasons such respondents contacted their MP would be quite different.

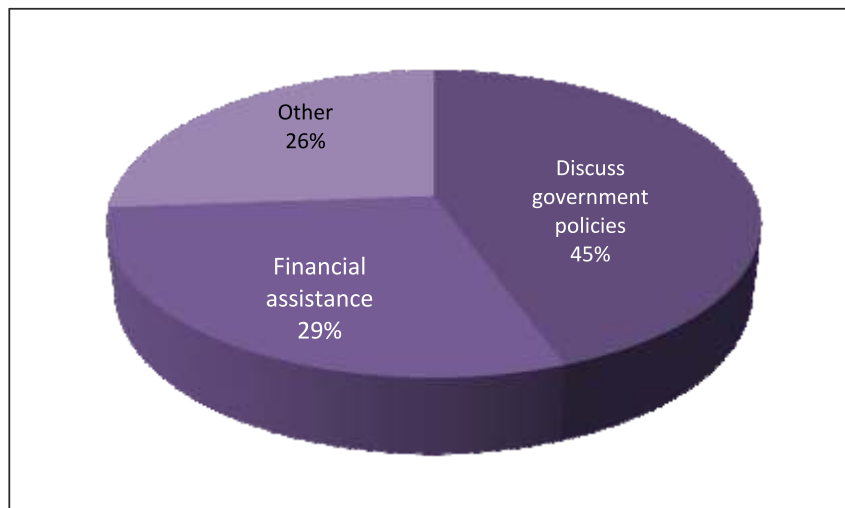
The proportion of respondents who had contacted their MPs by age category is interesting. The proportion seems to increase until the 45-54 category (33.33 percent) and then decreases after that. This could be seen to track the relative level of responsibility that a person has at different stage of their life. When they are younger, with no family and no significant commitments a person is arguably less impacted by the political process and has less need to engage with Government. However, this changes as the person gets older and takes on a greater level of responsibility at home and in the workplace.

Table 2: Percentage of respondents that had contacted their MP

	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
Sex				
Male	31.03	68.81	0.16	100.0
Female	17.66	81.84	0.49	100.0
Age				
16-24	16.63	82.67	0.70	100.0
25-34	20.74	78.81	0.44	100.0
35-44	28.42	71.58	0.00	100.0
45-54	33.33	66.67	0.00	100.0
55-64	31.02	68.57	0.41	100.0
65+	30.25	69.75	0.00	100.0
Education level				
None	22.22	77.78	0.00	100.0
Primary	19.63	79.44	0.93	100.0
Middle/JSS	19.55	80.10	0.34	100.0
Secondary	25.57	73.90	0.53	100.0
Tertiary	29.77	70.10	0.13	100.0
Others	34.48	65.52	0.00	100.0
Employment category				
Civil/public	30.89	68.84	0.28	100.0
Private sector	23.26	75.97	0.78	100.0
Self-employed	22.99	77.01	0.00	100.0

Of course there are many reasons as to why a person would contact their MP. Notably, one view might be that constituents see their MP, not as a conduit between themselves and the workings of Parliament and Government, but as a person they can seek financial assistance from. Accordingly, the survey asked respondents who indicated they had contacted their MP the reason for doing so. Respondents were given three options – to discuss proposed or existing government policies, to seek financial assistance or other. The responses are illustrated in Figure 8 below.

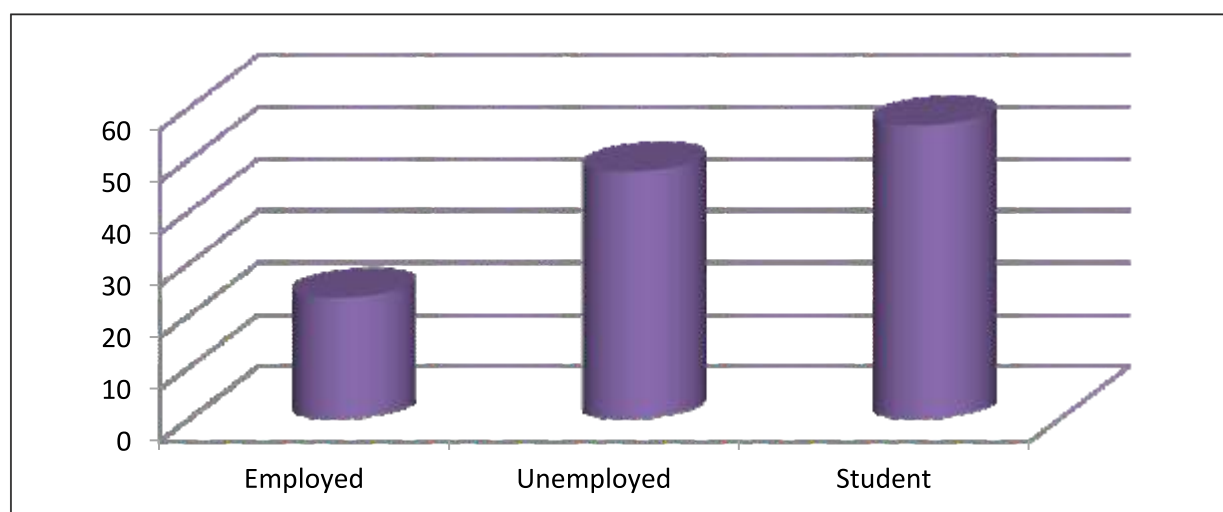
Figure 8: Percentage (breakdown) of those respondents that had contacted their MPs, and reasons for doing so.



The results illustrate that whilst a significant proportion of respondents (29 percent) had contacted their MP for financial assistance, just under half (45 percent) contacted their MP to discuss proposed or existing Government policy.

Examining this further by employment status brings predictable results. Of the employed respondents that had contacted their MP, only 23.34 percent contacted their MP for financial assistance. This compares to the unemployed, 47.62 percent and students 56.52 percent. This is illustrated in Figure 9 below. The fact that students are more than twice as likely as those who are employed to contact their MP for financial assistance may reflect the financial strains placed on students.

Figure 9: Percentage (breakdown) of those respondents that had contacted their MPs for financial assistance, by employment status

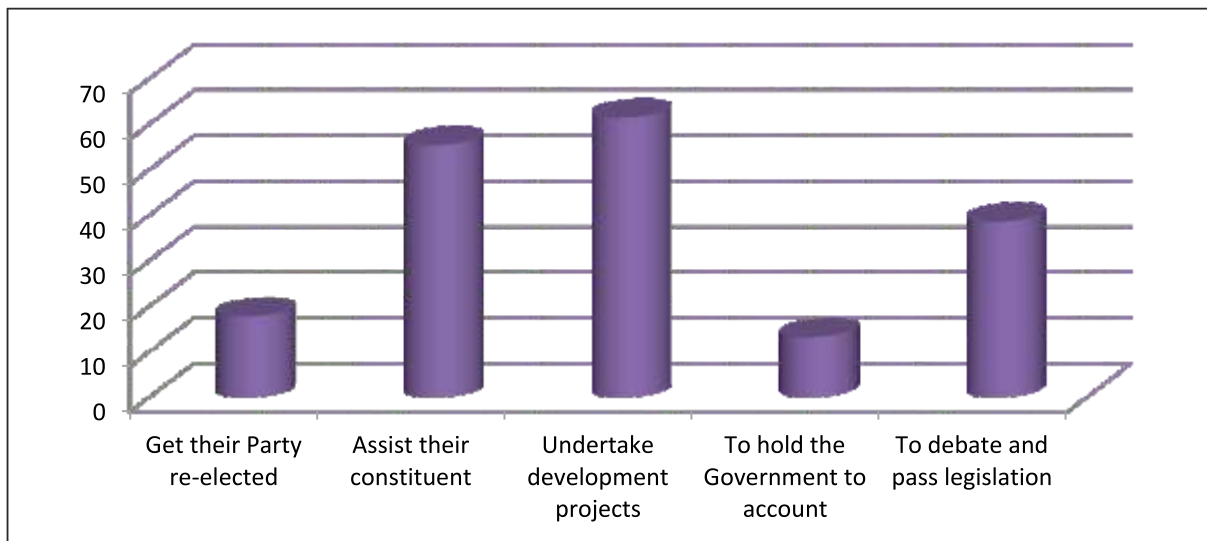


To follow up this question, all respondents (irrespective of whether or not they had contacted their MP) were asked what they considered to be the role of their MP. This was intended to obtain a sense of what primary role MPs were seen to play. They were asked to select two of: To get their Party re-elected; to assist their constituents; to undertake development projects; to hold the Government to account and to debate and pass legislation. Figure 10 illustrates the results.

The results illustrate that respondents considered that the role of their MP was to assist their constituents directly, with over 50 percent of respondents selecting 'assisting their constituent' and 50 percent selecting 'undertaking development projects'. Whilst 38.49 percent of respondents recognised the legislative role of an MP to debate and pass legislation, only 13.17 percent of respondents considered the primary role of a parliamentarian was to hold the Government to account. In other words a majority of respondents failed to recognise the role that MPs play as part of the country's primary legal and oversight body. This arguably reflects the widely held view that Ghana's Parliament does not act as an effective oversight body of Government affairs. Another possible reason is the 'mixed messages' conveyed by the MP common fund under which MPs receive a small proportion of the District Assemblies' Common Fund to undertake development projects. It is unsurprising therefore that an MP may receive more 'local' attention with respect to the manner he or she spends these moneys, rather than the role they play in the parliamentary process.

Only 17.69 percent of respondents considered that one of the primary roles of their MP was to help in getting their party elected.

Figure 10: Respondents views as to the role of MPs (percentage)

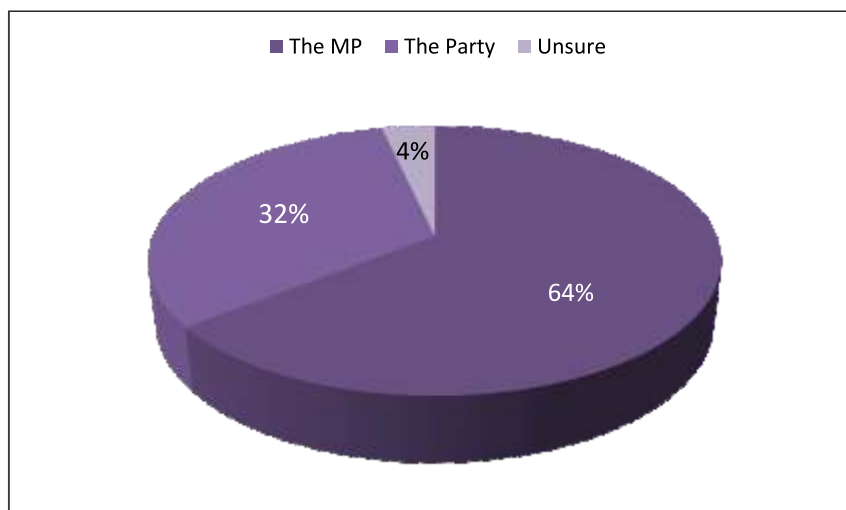


4. VOTING AND MPs

Above all else, there is one crucial moment that defines the relationship between a constituent and his/her MP – the election. Held every four years, an election offers each constituent an opportunity to consider and assess their MP's performance, registering their support or otherwise at the ballot box. Again, however, given the dominance of the Executive in Ghana, voters may arguably cast their votes based on the party of the particular candidate.

To assess this, respondents were asked whether, in choosing their MP in a Parliamentary election, they are more likely to take into account the candidate or the party that they are from. The overall results are illustrated in Figure 11 below.

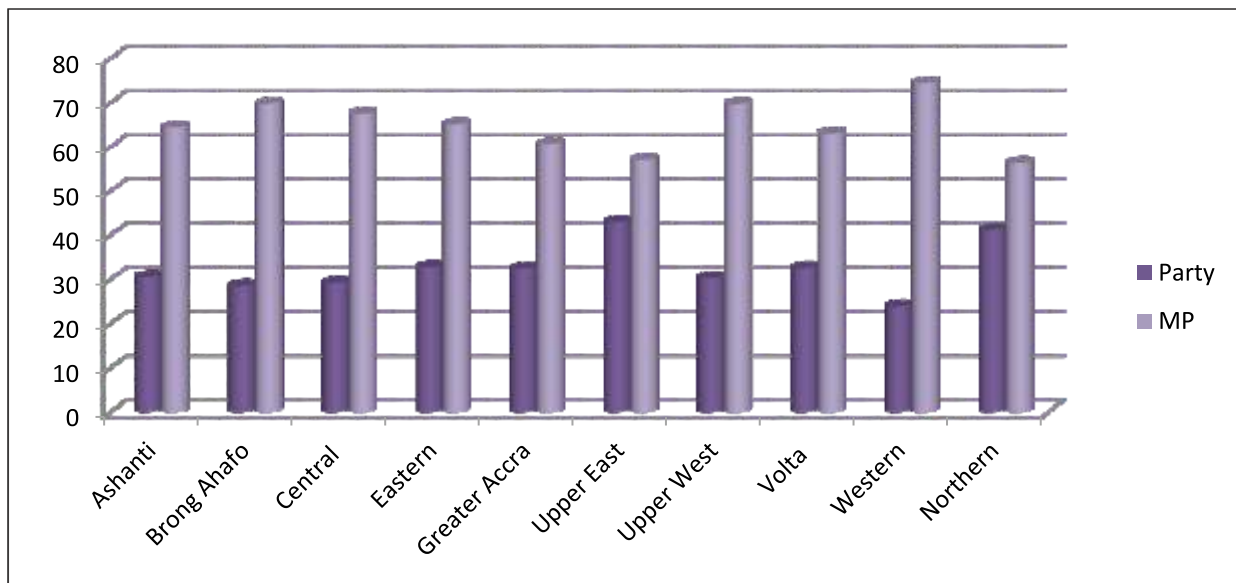
Figure 11: Percentage of respondents who would cast their vote in Parliamentary elections based on the candidate or the party of the candidate.



Overall, when choosing an MP, 64.3 percent of the respondents indicated that they take the individual candidate's attributes into account whilst 32.12 percent would consider the political party the MP belongs to.

Examining this issue on a regional basis produced the results in Figure 12 below. One would have expected that regions that are party strongholds (for instance, the NDC in Volta and the NPP in Ashanti) people would have been more likely to vote on the basis of party. Similarly, we may also have expected that in the 'swing' regions such as Central respondents would have given more consideration to the candidates for MP, as opposed to the political parties of the candidates. However this is not reflected in the results.

Figure 12: Percentage of respondents who cast their vote in Parliamentary elections based on the candidate or the party of the candidate – by region



There may be a number of reasons why these results hold. It cannot be discounted that respondents simply did not want to appear to be making decisions on the basis of party affiliation if they understand that a constituent election should be about the individual representative. Ghana's electoral history has, in recent times, demonstrated that certain parties perform consistently well in certain areas – the Ashanti and the Volta Regions being the most prominent examples. There are clearly 'safe' seats for each of the major parties, seats in which the dominant-party candidate arguably has less work to do to convince his or her electorate that he or she is the right individual for the job.

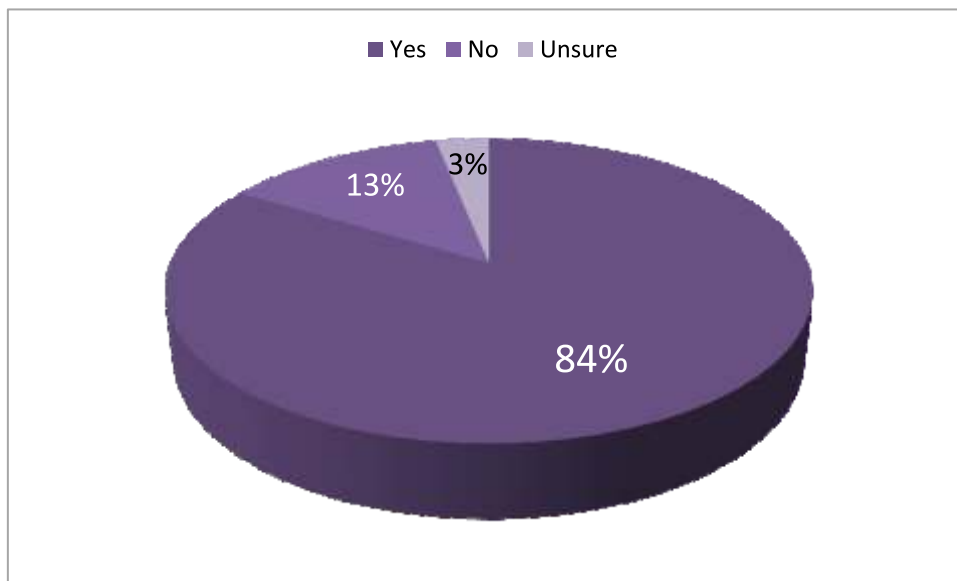
Notwithstanding this, the results do suggest at least a greater focus on individual candidates than might otherwise have been expected in a country dominated by two leading parties. Future surveys might do well to further interrogate this issue.

5. EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR MPs

The work of an MP is an onerous one. In addition to the demands of election periods, the day-to-day work of an MP is varied and demanding. In analysing and debating legislation, MPs may require some level of understanding across a broad spectrum of key policy areas, often in a short period of time. In addition, MPs are often called upon to oversee the operations of Government in its various Committees. Again, this requires careful attention to detail in often complex policy areas.

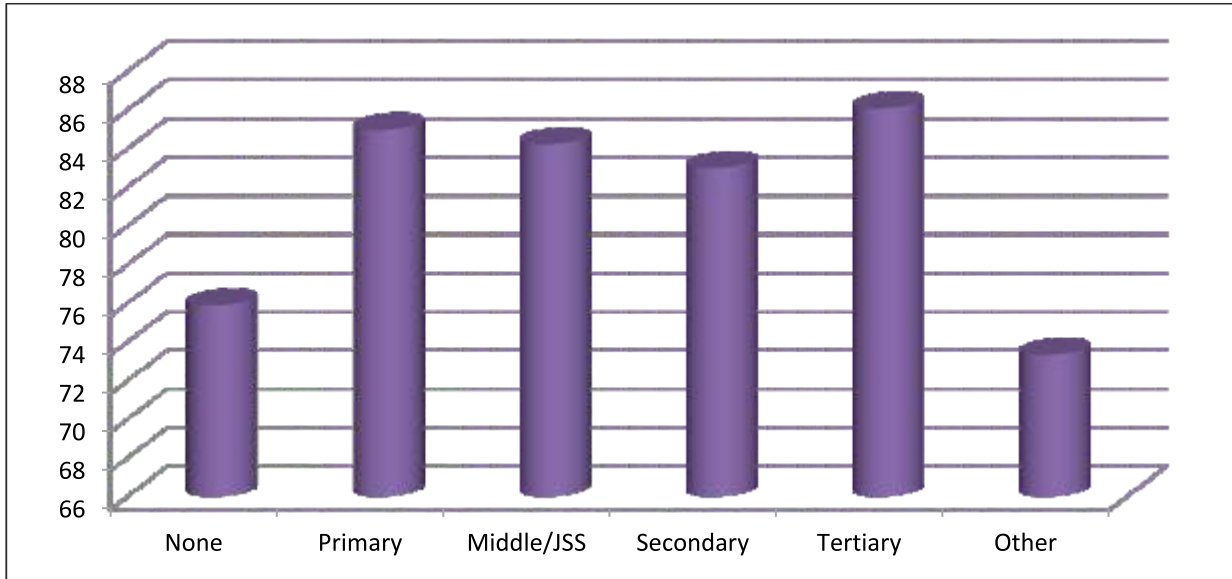
Whether an MP should have a basic level of education as a prerequisite to standing as a candidate is an issue that has received some attention in Ghana. Indeed this issue has been raised as part of consultations on the Constitution Review process. This survey provided another opportunity to gauge the broader public's perspective on this issue. The overall results on this question are shown below in Figure 13. An overwhelming majority of respondents (83.68 percent) believed that there should be a minimum education level. This result was consistent even taking into account the individual's own education level. About 75 percent of respondents without any education level considered that there should be some minimal qualification to become an MP.

Figure 13: Percentage of respondents who considered that there should be a minimal education standard for MPs



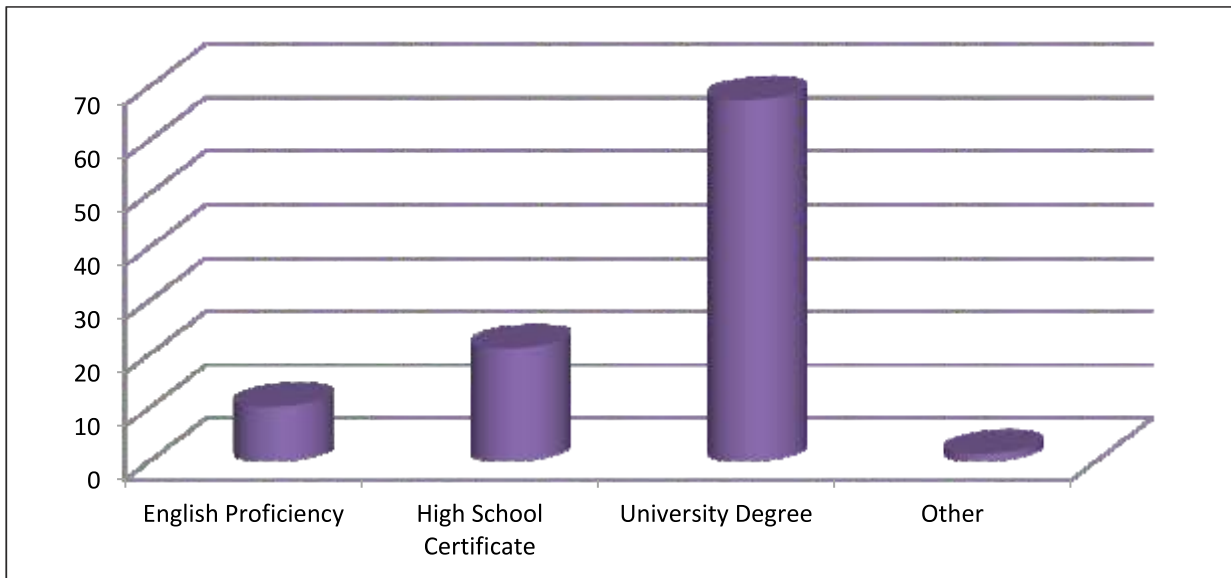
As illustrated in Figure 14 below, this result does change depending on the education level of the respondents themselves.

Figure 14: Percentage of respondents of various education levels who consider that there should be a minimal education requirement for MPs



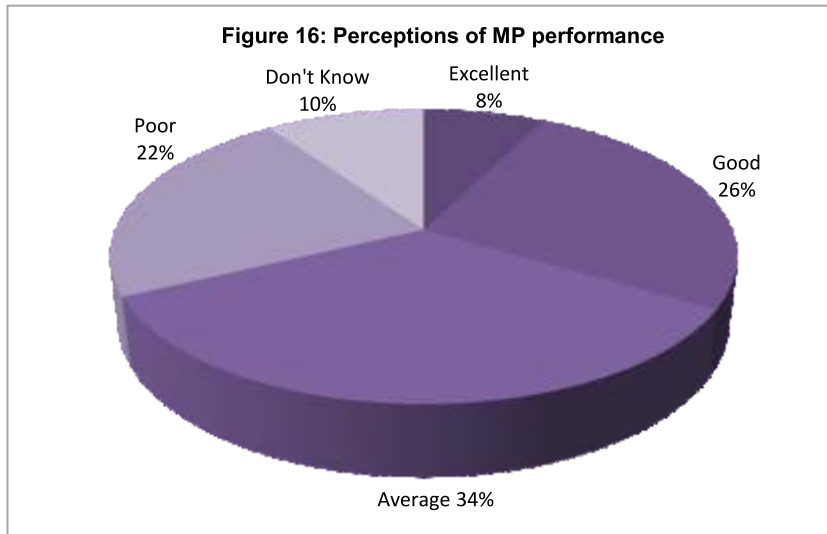
The survey further interrogated respondents on this issue. Notably, for those who agreed that there should be a minimum education level, respondents were asked what level that should be – English proficiency, High School Certificate or University Qualification. A significant majority of 67.42 percent of respondents (Figure 15 below) believe that the minimum level should be set quite high – as a tertiary qualification.

Figure 15: Level at which minimal qualifications to become an MP should be set (percentage)



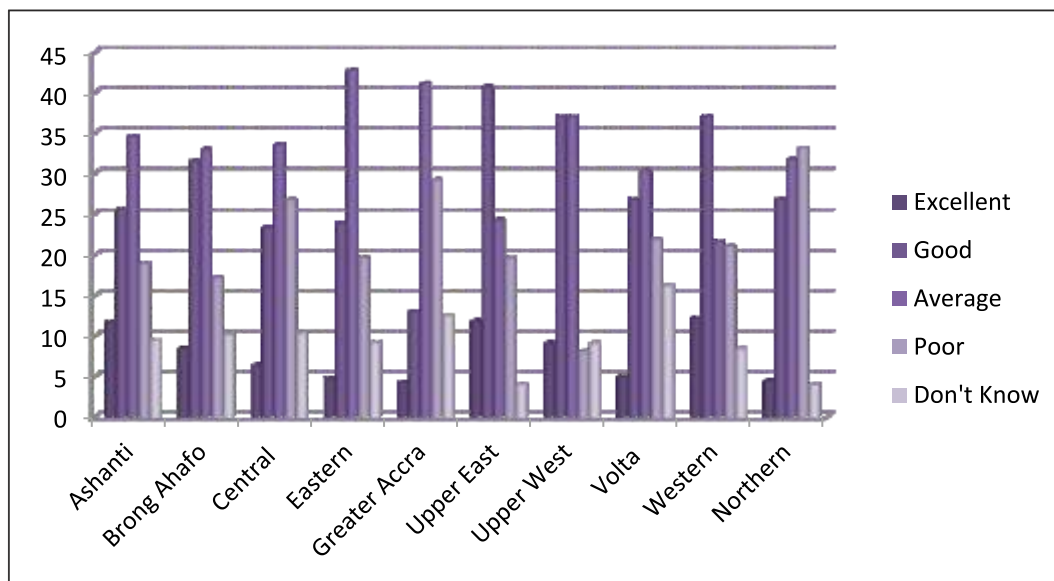
6. MPs PERFORMANCE

Respondents were asked to rate their MP's performance with a rating system varying from poor to excellent. The total results are illustrated in Figure 16 below. The results are mixed. The largest majority of respondents (34 percent) considered that the performance of their MP was average. Approximately 26 percent considered that their MP's performance was 'good' and 22 percent rated them as 'poor'. As a weighted average, this suggests an overall 'average' result. Of note, only 8 percent of people rated their MP's performance as excellent. The level of respondents who indicated that they were not able to rate their MP's performance (10 percent) is unsurprising given that, as noted above, some 17 percent of respondents did not know who their MP was.



Examining perceptions of performance by region produces the results illustrates in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Perception of MP performance by region

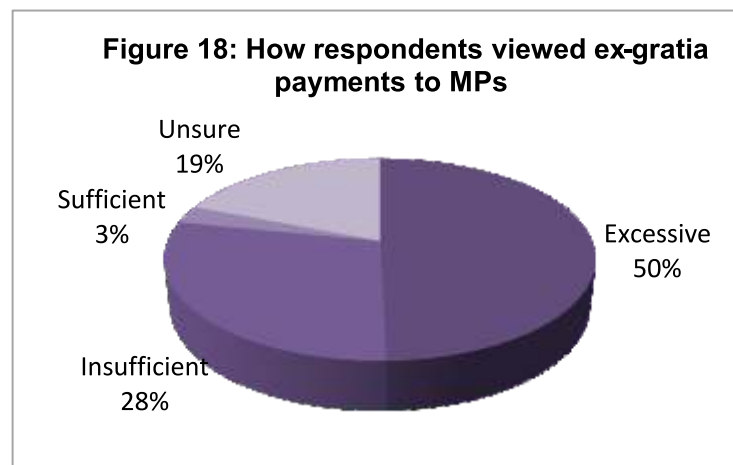


The results indicate that the strongest negative perception on MP performance is in the Northern and Greater Accra regions. The most positive views on MP performance are in the Ashanti, Western and the Upper Eastern and Upper Western regions.

7. MPs AND EX-GRATIA PAYMENTS

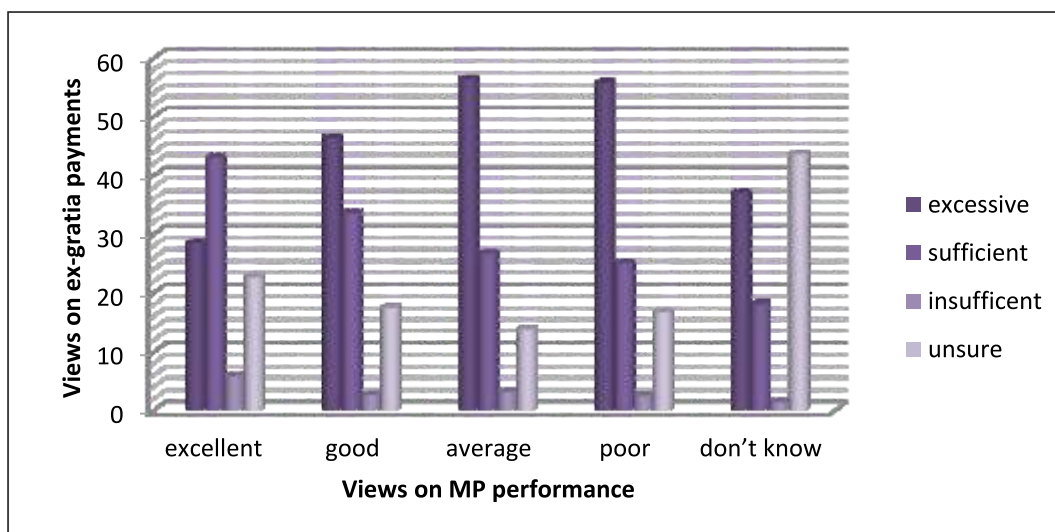
The issue of ex-gratia payments made to MPs is often a controversial one. In the IEA's survey on the 1992 Constitution Review (see IEA's Public Opinion, Volume 1 No. 1), it was found that only 30 per cent of respondents considered that ex-gratia payments (to MPs and the President in that case) were fair and just.

In this survey, views on ex gratia payments were again sought, this time focusing more specifically on the amounts of payments received. The responses are shown in Figure 18. A very small minority of respondents (3 percent) considered that the current amounts given to MPs at the end of each term was sufficient. Half of respondents considered that they were excessive while some 28 percent of respondents considered that they were insufficient.



As respondents were also asked to rate their MP's performance, it is instructive to examine the issue of the quantum of ex-gratia payments in light of responses on performance. The results are shown in Figure 19 below. As can be seen a majority of those who rate their MP's performance as excellent also think that the MP's ex-gratia is sufficient. However, as the performance drops from excellent, the respondents think that the MP's ex-gratia is excessive – in other words, respondents were happier with the ex-gratia payments if they were linked with better, or perceived better performance of their MP.

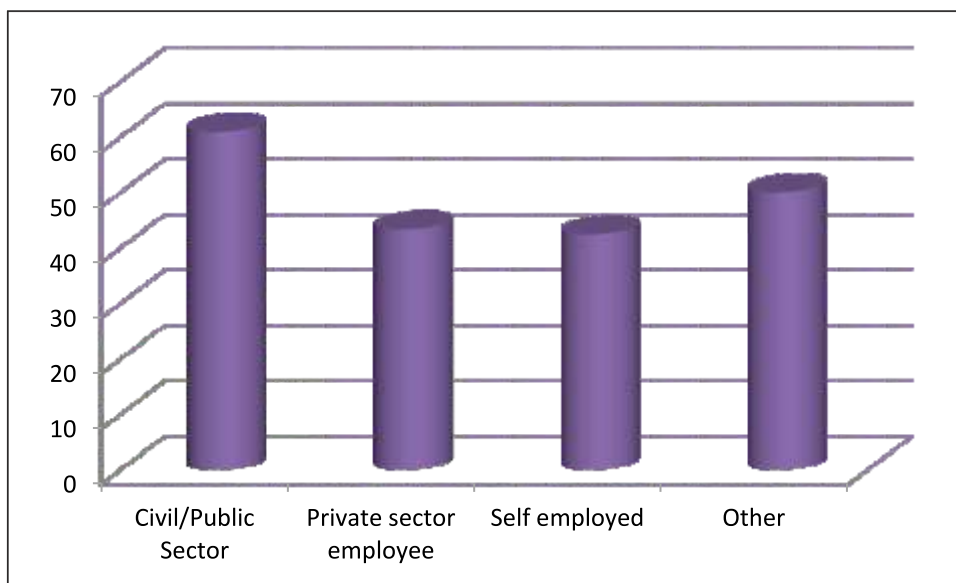
Figure 19: Respondents views on the quantum of ex-gratia payments compared to their views on the performance of their MP



This figure clearly illustrates that there is a strong connection between perception on MP performance and perceptions about the quantum of ex-gratia payments. As performance ratings slips, there is an increasing trend to emphasise that the amount of ex-gratia payments are excessive.

Examining this issue by the respondent's own employment category is also instructive. As Figure 20 below illustrates, civil servants/public sector workers were more likely to consider MP ex-gratia payments to be excessive. Future surveys could do well to explore the reason behind this in more detail. However, one possible explanation for this result is that civil servants and MPs are all involved in administering the system of Government, obviously with different roles. This result may therefore reflect perceptions that the ex-gratia payments to MPs are excessive relative to their own pay and awards.

Figure 20: Percentage of respondents who considered that ex-gratia payments were excessive, by employment category



Respondents were further asked whether MPs should receive ex-gratia payments at the end of each Parliamentary term. Just above half (50.94 percent) considered this appropriate.

8. CONCLUSION

The survey reveals a significant level of knowledge among constituents of who their MPs are and a preparedness to engage directly with them. This is a positive finding, and augurs well for Ghana's representative style democracy. However, the evidence that men are twice as likely to contact their MPs as opposed to women indicates some disparity in the level of political engagement. Future research will need to investigate this issue further. For instance, the survey may have benefitted from a follow up question for female respondents to ascertain the reason, if any, why they would be reluctant in approaching their MP. It is hoped that current efforts to increase the number of women in political decision-making position, which includes the drafting of an Affirmative Action Bill with the aim of increasing the number of women in politics, may help address this disparity.

The perceptions on the role of the MPs and the reasons why people engage with them is not so encouraging. The strong perception that MPs are there to provide support to their constituents raises some concerns that the primary and more important functions of MPs are not widely understood. This suggests that greater public education is needed to inform people about the important role of Parliament and the critical role played by MPs in their oversight and legislative roles in Parliament. It also suggests that providing MPs with a direct involvement in community development, such as through allocations from the District Assembly Common Fund, may also serve to send mixed messages about the primary role of MPs. Indeed, whilst providing funds to elected officials to assist in the development of the community that they have been elected to represent may seem to be justified, in practice the amount of time and attention that an MP would need to devote to administering these funds (relative to their size) may cause them to pay less attention to their important Parliamentary role. Further, the results in this survey underscore the need for reforms to strengthen the role of Parliament as part of the Constitutional reform process. On the basis of these preliminary results, future surveys could look more deeply into these issues. Further work could examine, for instance, the issue of the extent to which constituents find it easy to contact their MP and what measures could be taken to increase this interaction (the lack of constituency offices may be one area of examination).

One of the most significant results to emerge from this survey was the finding of overwhelming support for a minimum education level to be imposed as a prerequisite for becoming an MP. Moreover, there was very strong support for this minimum education level to be set quite high, as a university qualification. Although there is some variation, these results held irrespective of the respondent's own education level. This broad support suggests that the wider Ghanaian population recognizes that the role of Parliamentarians (whatever that may be perceived to be) is a challenging one and that therefore an education threshold needs to be set for a person to be eligible to stand. There needs to be an extensive public debate on this issue.

The issue of ex-gratia payments to MPs remains a significant issue for Ghanaians. It is clear is that half of respondents considered the amounts to be excessive. Unsurprisingly this view was more pronounced with those who had a less favourable perception on their MP's performance.

Overall MP's received an average rating. This survey was not intended to act as a poll – more of a means of highlighting potential areas of improvement. Of course, the reasons for the average ratings were not encompassed by this survey and could be addressed by future research and should no doubt be a matter of interest to each sitting and prospective MP.