

**BASELINE SURVEY REPORT**

**PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES**



**WITH SUPPORT FROM**



**YOUTH  
DEMOCRACY  
COHORT**



**European  
Partnership for  
Democracy**



## **BASELINE SURVEY**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Promoting Youth Participation in civic and democratic processes project is a one-year project that is supported by the Youth Democracy Cohort (YDC), European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), and powered by the European Union (EU). The project began in June 2023, and the baseline survey was conducted between July – September 2023, by means of online questionnaires using Google Forms and WhatsApp poll. The survey covered targeted youths between 18-35 years in the Mashonaland District.

The survey reached a total of 73 young women and men. The baseline survey investigated the number of youths currently involved in the civic and democratic processes before the initiation of the project. The survey further looked at barriers that hinder the effective participation of youth in the local governance process and established some of the reasons that hinder youth from participating in decision-making processes.

This baseline report aims to provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of the situation across the Mashonaland East. The report provides rich insight into the level of participation of young people in civic and democratic spaces and barriers that inhibit youths from participating effectively in civic and democratic processes. The baseline survey will serve as a reference point against which future progress and achievements across the project in terms of outcomes will be measured. It is important to note that most findings of the baseline survey are consistent with the assumptions in the project proposal document that youth participation remains limited in Zimbabwe.

### **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Girls and Women Empowerment Network (GWEN) is implementing a holistic project that is aimed at amplifying youth participation in civic and democratic spaces in Mashonaland East. The project implementation is shared with and supported by partner local authorities, traditional leaders, youths, and democratic influencers at grassroots levels. The project seeks to ensure that youths especially young women participate and influence governance processes at the local and national level ensuring that their rights are respected. The key activities of the

project include capacitating youths to participate in governance processes, and facilitating the engagement of youth in governance processes. Moreover, the project is targeting democratic influencers and the use of a local radio station so that they play a key role in disseminating information on youth inclusion and needs.

### **The project focuses on the following objectives**

- To increase the inclusion and participation of youths in all decision-making processes from local to national levels
- To create platforms for engagement for young people to take part in civic and political spaces
- To raise awareness and strengthen advocacy for the global commitments developed by the Youth Democracy Cohort
- To influence government adoption and implementation of global commitments developed by the Youth Democracy Cohort

### **Introduction**

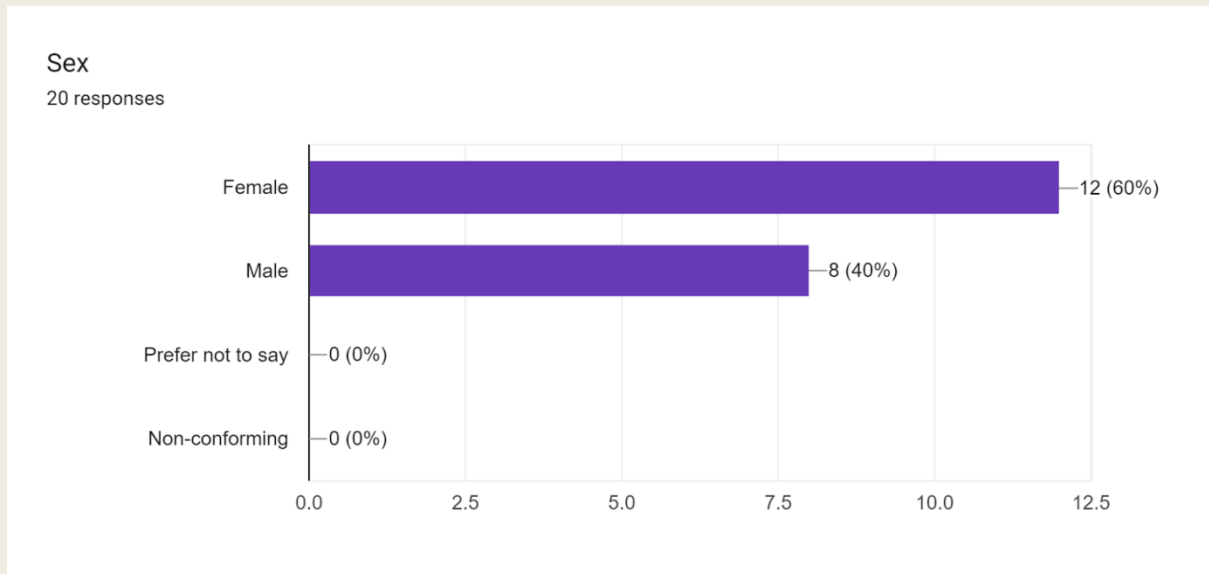
The primary aim of the baseline survey was to investigate and assess the level of participation of youths in civic and democratic development processes, forming a benchmark against which progress and impact of the project will be assessed and providing a baseline for monitoring and evaluating the extent to which the project has increased participation in development processes. In addition, the baseline data was collected to inform project implementation and also as a first step in evaluating GWEN 's achievement of these objectives over time. The baseline survey was conducted using an online questionnaire and WhatsApp poll prior to project initiation. Findings from the questionnaire responses including the Google Docs and WhatsApp will be presented in this report. The baseline survey highlighted a number of issues related to young people's access to the Internet. At the end of the project, findings from the baseline survey will be compared with end-of-project data.

### **THE SURVEY FINDINGS**

In order to undertake this baseline survey, 73 youths participated from Mashonaland East. The survey was carried both on WhatsApp's group using a poll and google docs. The Table 1: Total reaches of the baseline survey.

## Demographic information

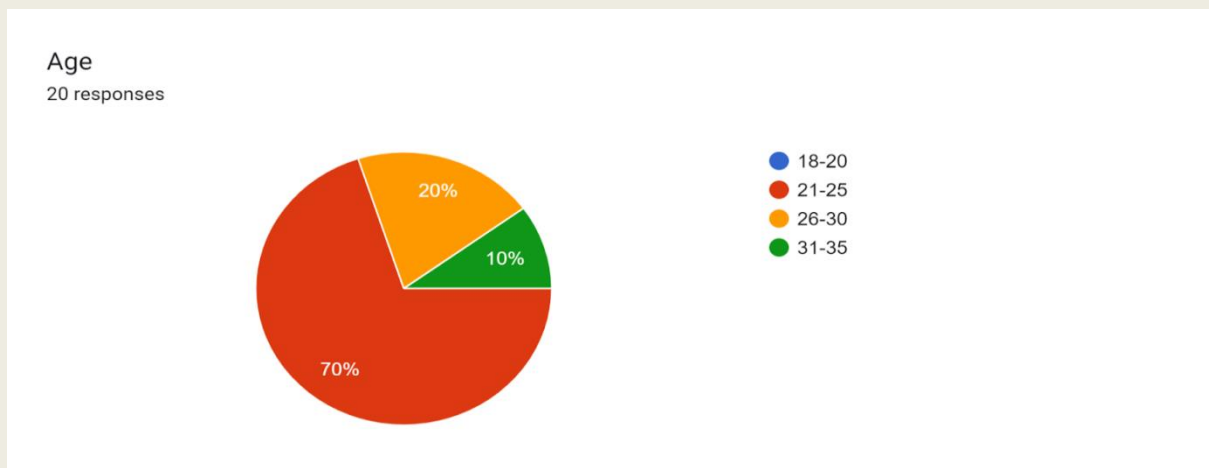
### Results



### WhatsApp poll

Female	Male
43	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

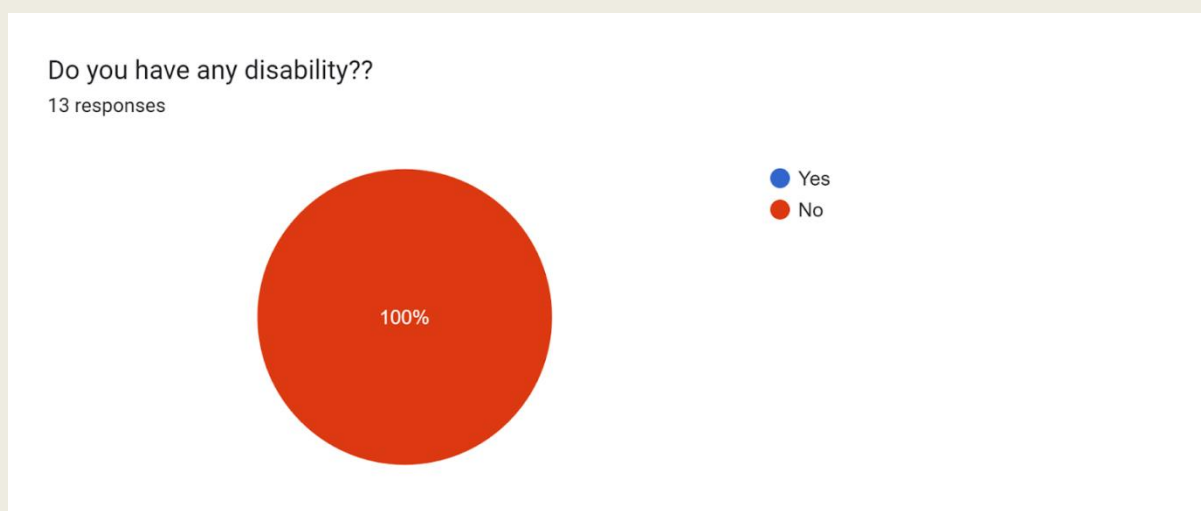
Findings from the table above show that, of the 73 participants who answered survey questionnaires 55 were female and 18 were male. The reason behind women's active participation can be attributed to the fact that the organization's key target in its traditional programming is adolescent girls and young women.



### WhatsApp poll

16 -20 years	21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years
5	23	16	10

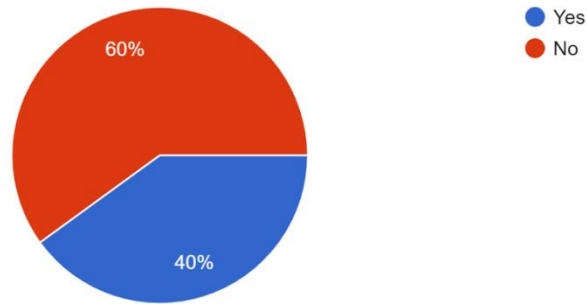
The ages of participants were from 16 years old to 35. The largest age concentration was between the ages of 21-25 years with 40 participants. This is followed by 26-30-year-olds with 18 participants, followed by 31-35 with 11 participants, and lastly the ages of 16-20-year-olds with 5 participants.



Of all the participants that answered the survey none of them had a disability. Limited participation of persons with disabilities can be attributed to high levels of inaccessibility on the Web and in internet-enabled mobile technologies. Another reason is young people with disabilities are mostly among the poor who cannot afford phones and other gadgets that connect online coupled with inability of some to use the gadget due to lack of information. GWEN will deliberately include young people with disabilities through focus group discussions during physical meetings.

Are you currently employed?

20 responses



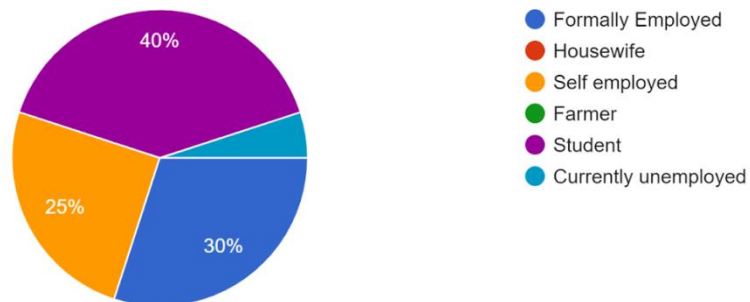
### WHATSAPP POLL

Employed	Unemployed
7	40

Findings from the survey show that the majority of young people are unemployed. Of the total 73 respondents, 48 are unemployed and 25 are currently employed. This may be the result of the economic meltdown that the Zimbabwean economy is experiencing and that the majority of respondents are still in school. The unemployment rate of young people affects their participation in political spaces as they lack funds to sponsor their campaigns and dreams.

If yes what do you do?

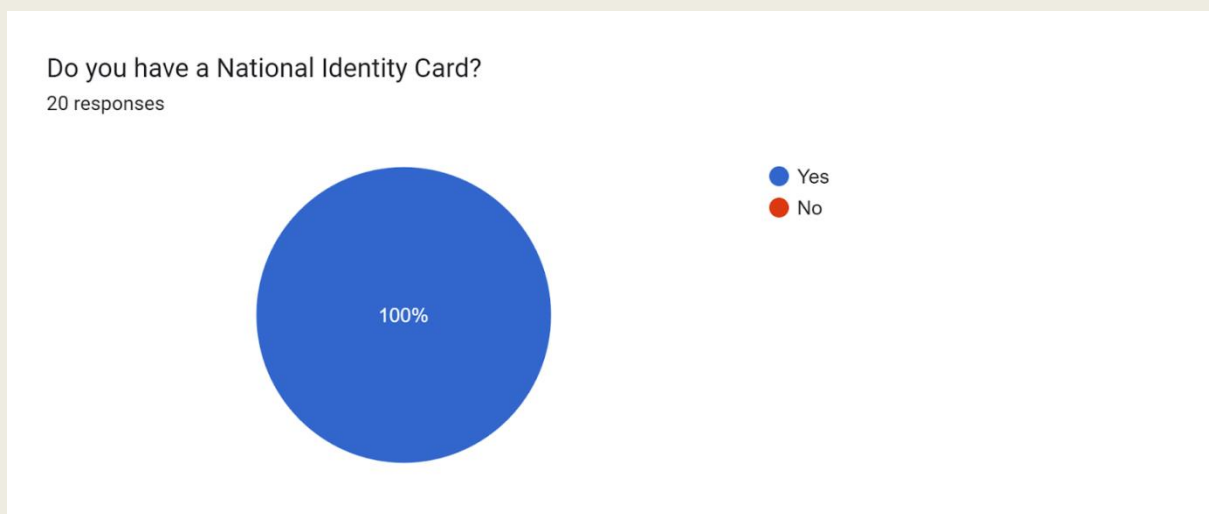
20 responses



## Whatsapp Poll

Formerly employed	7
Student	6
House wife	11
Farmer	7
Self employment	8
Currently unemployed	20

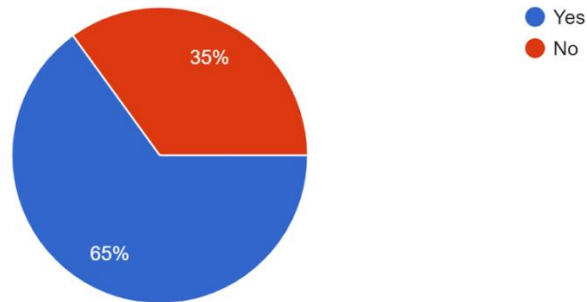
From the study 13 of the respondents indicated that they are formally employed, 13 indicated that they are self-employed and 14 indicated that they are students and 21 indicated that they are currently unemployed. The current unemployment rate among young people is one of the major reasons why they do not qualify to participate in democratic processes in Zimbabwe.



Of all the participants that took part in the survey, all 73 of them indicated that they have national identity cards which is a key document that allows them to participate in all decision-making spaces.

Have you ever participated in any leadership training?

20 responses



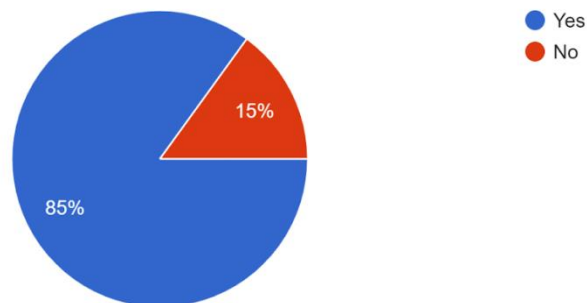
### WhatsApp poll

Participated in leadership training	Have not participated
31	22

Forty-Four participants indicated that they have participated in leadership training while 29 participants indicated that they have never participated in any leadership training. The organization needs to measure the effectiveness of leadership training and its impact on youth participation. The data presented shows that despite the increased number of youth who participated in leadership trainings their participation in leadership positions is still relatively low.

Did you participate in the previously just-held harmonized elections?

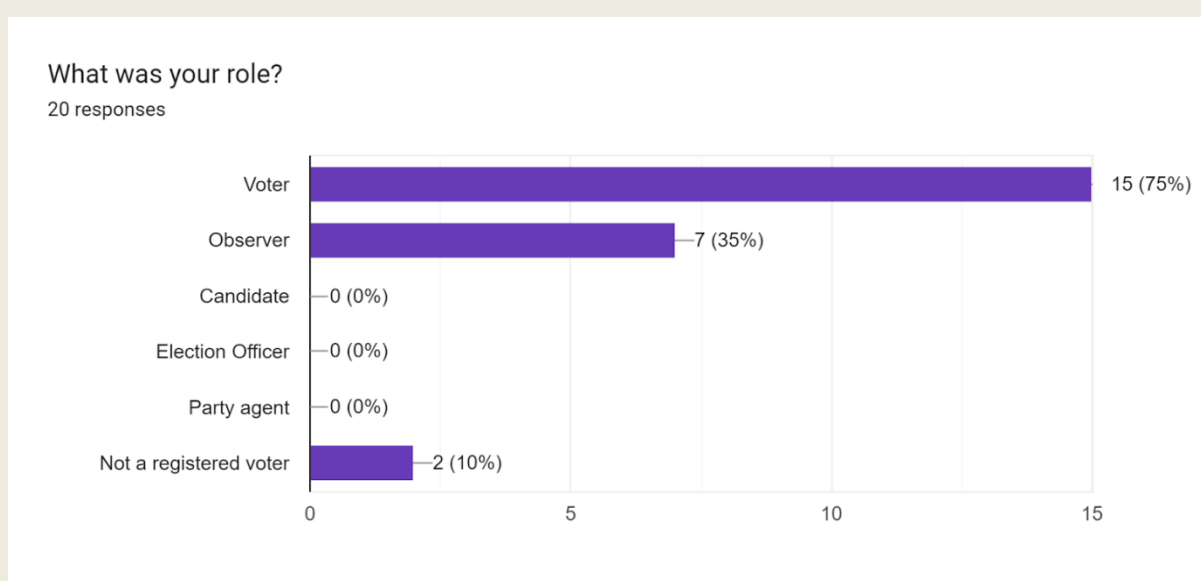
20 responses



### WhatsApp poll

<b>Voted</b>	<b>Did not vote</b>
<b>54</b>	<b>1</b>

The above results indicated that 85% of youth participated in the electoral process by voting, unfortunately, 4 indicated that they did not vote. Reasons for not voting may be attributed to apathy, failure to find their names at polling stations, and intimidation by certain individuals aligned to some of the candidates.

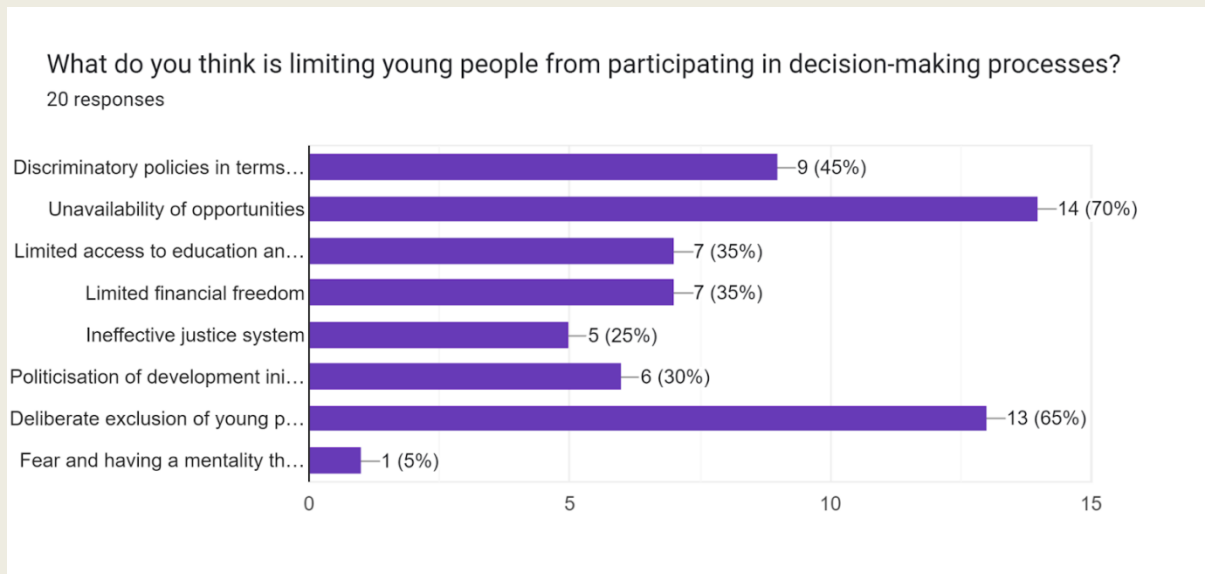


#### WhatsApp Poll

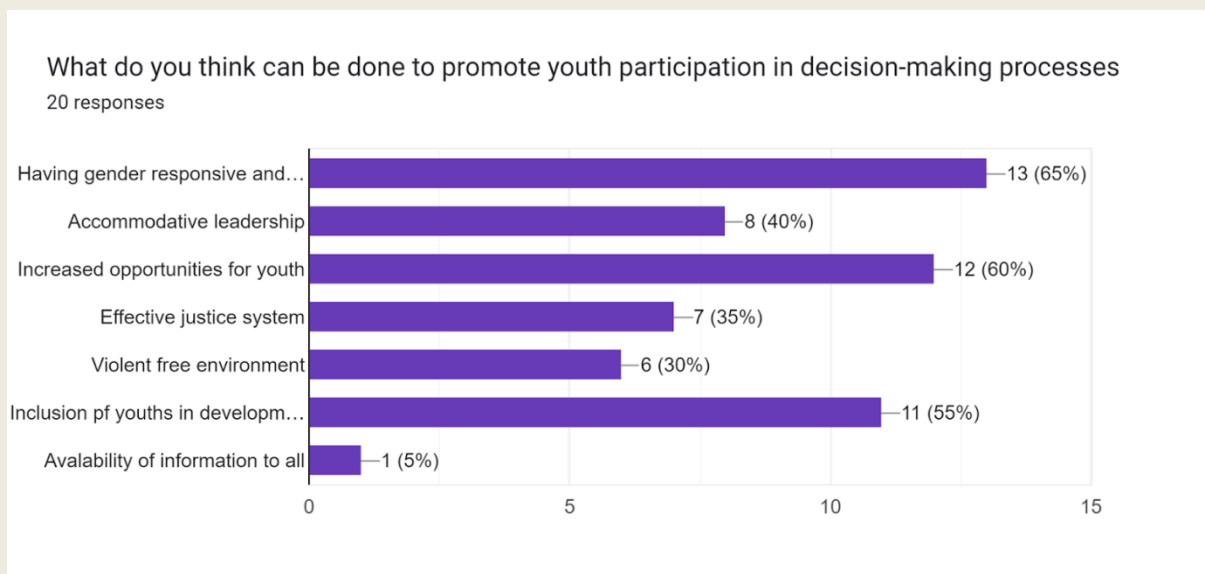
<b>Voter</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Observer</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Candidate</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Election Officer</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Party agents</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Not a registered voter</b>	<b>4</b>

Participants were also asked about the role they performed in the harmonized elections 64 indicated that they participated as voters, 15 indicated that they did not participate only as voters but as local observers, and 4 indicated that they were not registered voters. Among the youth, none of them participated as election officers, candidates, or party agents. This therefore

highlights that the participation of young people is only limited to voting and observation, while important role such as being a candidate is not accessible to youths.



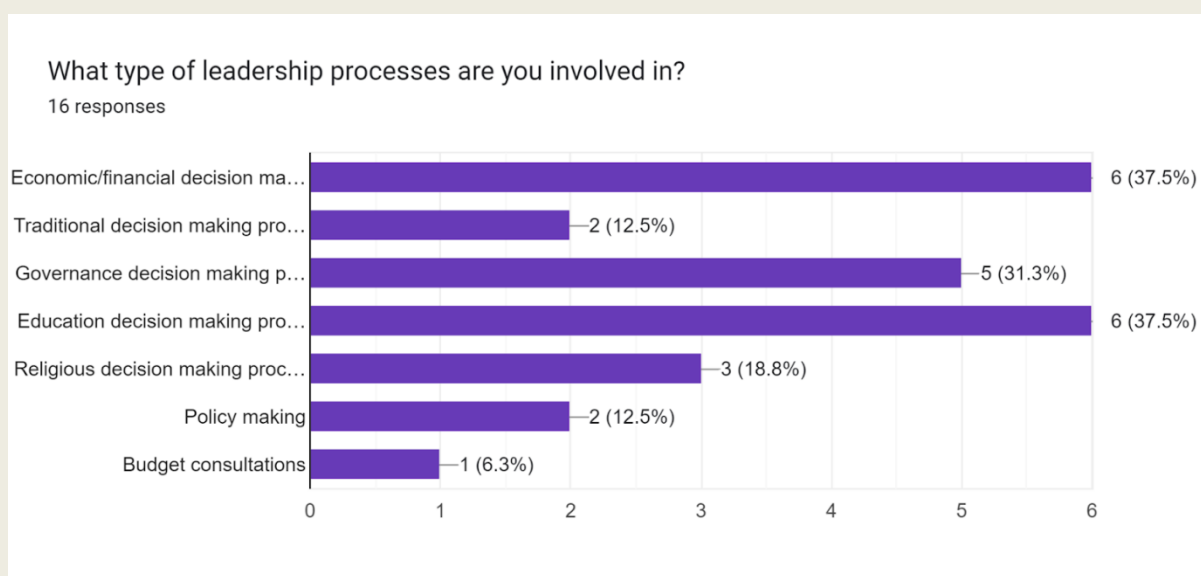
70% of the participants indicated that unavailability of opportunities is one of the most reasons why they are not participating while 65% argued that deliberate exclusion of young people in decision-making is among the reasons why youth are not participating. This was followed by discriminatory policies at 45%, limited access to education, and limited financial freedom at 35%.



WhatsApp poll

Gender responsive and youth friendly policies	21
Accommodative leadership	31
Increased opportunities for youths	27
Increased access to education	13
Effective justice system	18
Violent free decision-making processes	16
Inclusion of youths in development processes irrespective of their political affiliation.	12

Young people who responded to the survey highlighted that gender-responsive policies, accommodative leadership, increased opportunities for youths, access to education, effective justice system, and violent free decision-making processes are key in promoting youth participation. Much emphasis was on facilitating accommodative leadership, gender-responsive youth-friendly policies, and increased opportunities for youths.

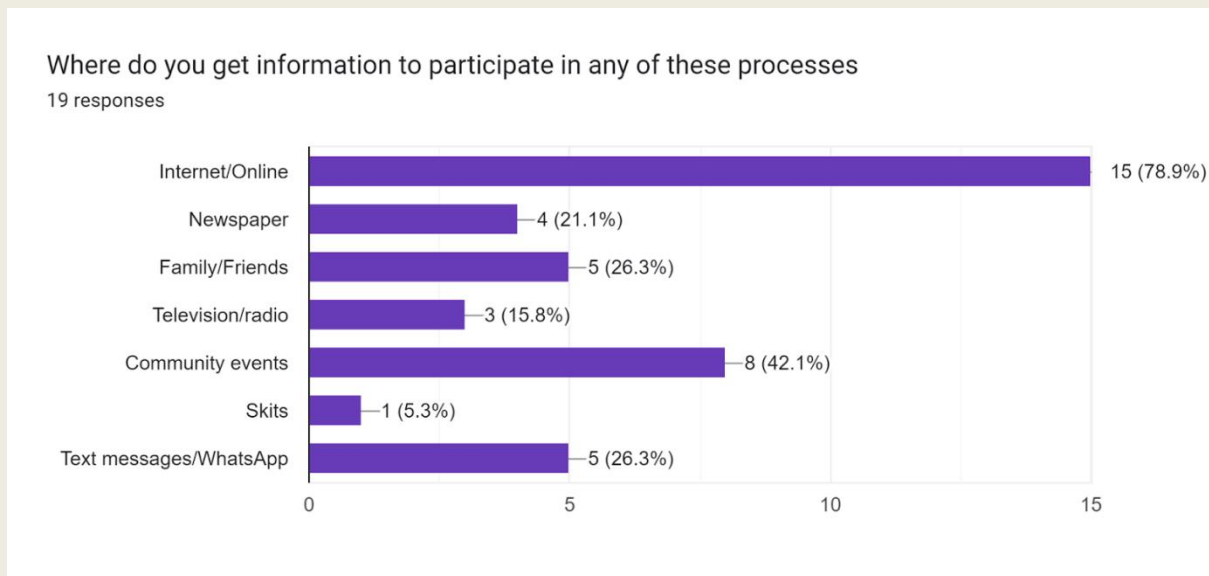


### WhatsApp poll

Economic/financial decision-making processes	1
Traditional decision making processes	0
Governance and decision making processes	5
Education decision making processes	6
Religious decision making processes	20
Budget consultations	2

None of the above	22
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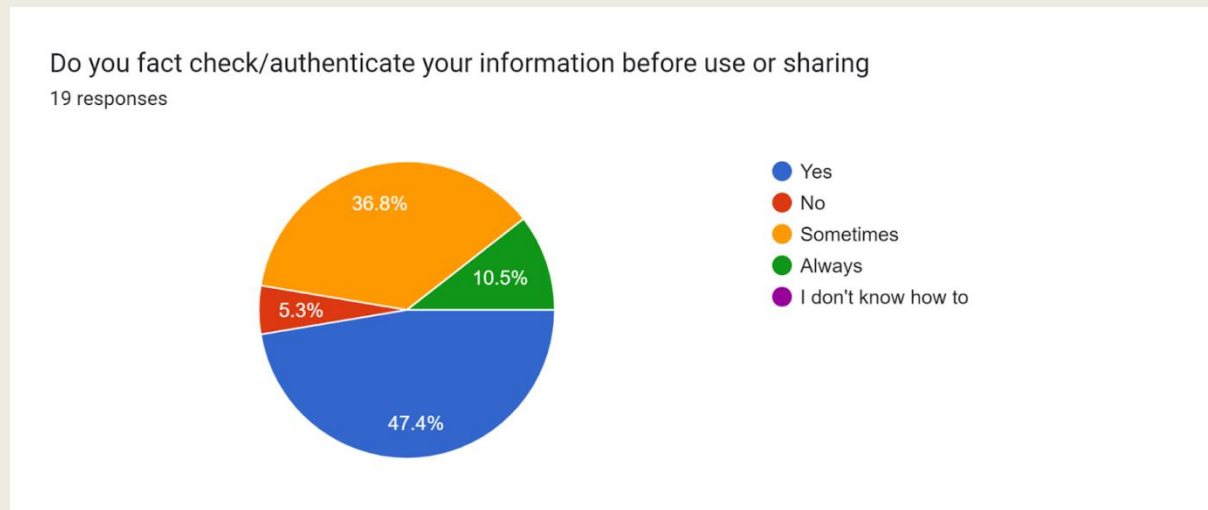
The survey outcomes showed that young people were being excluded in traditional decision making processes. Of the 73 respondents only 2 are in traditional leadership positions. Evidenced by the fact that in the Zimbabwean context and culture traditional leadership positions are mainly occupied by the elder generation who are regarded as “wisdom bearers”. This is based on the concept that grey hair is a sign of wisdom and how young people are not allowed to speak in the presence of elders . Twenty-three respondents occupy religious decision making processes and 22 do not occupy any positions of leadership. Five of the 73 respondents were in governance confirming the limited participation of young people in democracy and governance.



### WhatsApp poll

Internet / online	16
Newspaper	2
Family/friends	14
Television / radio	7
Community events	35
WhatsApp/ text messages	19
Skits	2

The survey probed on where young people get information to participate in decision making processes. The majority of respondents accessed information through community events, WhatsApp messages and from family and friends.



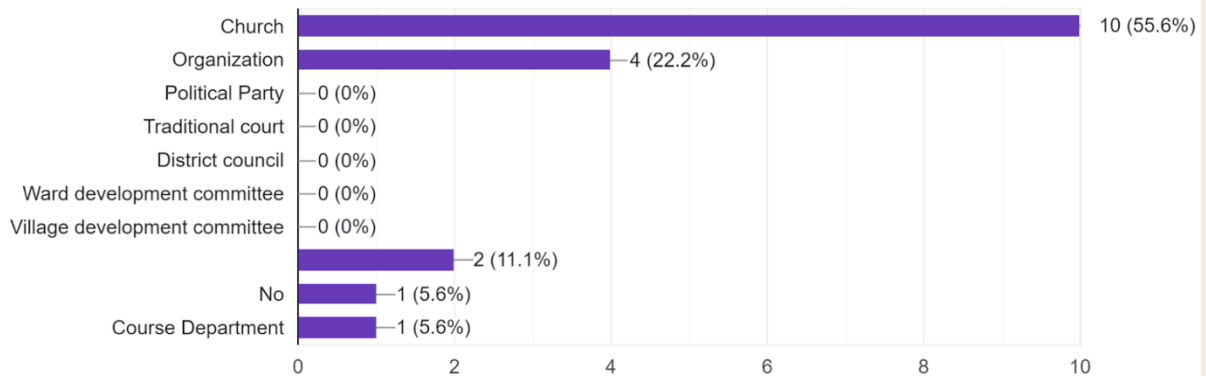
### WhatsApp poll

Always	4
Sometimes	42
No	1
Not sure how	5

Forty-two out of 52 research participants fact checked their information irregularly, Four always fact checked the information they get and 5 were not sure. Young people are vulnerable to disinformation because they do not verify their source of information, especially on the internet.

Do you hold a leadership position in any of the following positions (please select)

18 responses

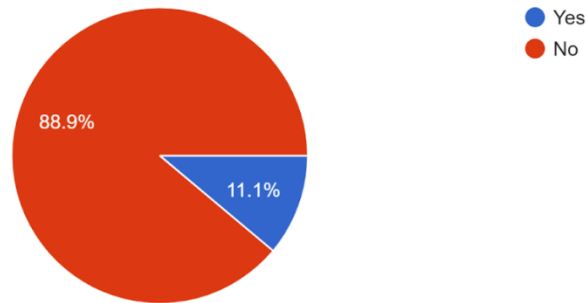


Church	26
Organization	10
Political party	6
Traditional court	0
District council	0
Ward development committee	3
Village development committee	4
None of the above	19

Results from the survey show that young people are missing in traditional courts, political parties, District committees, Ward Development committee and village development committees. Young people's participation is more dominant in religious spaces and in local organizations. Twenty of the respondents do not hold any leadership position.

Have you heard about the MENU FOR POSSIBLE COMMITMENTS developed by the Youth Democracy Cohort?

18 responses

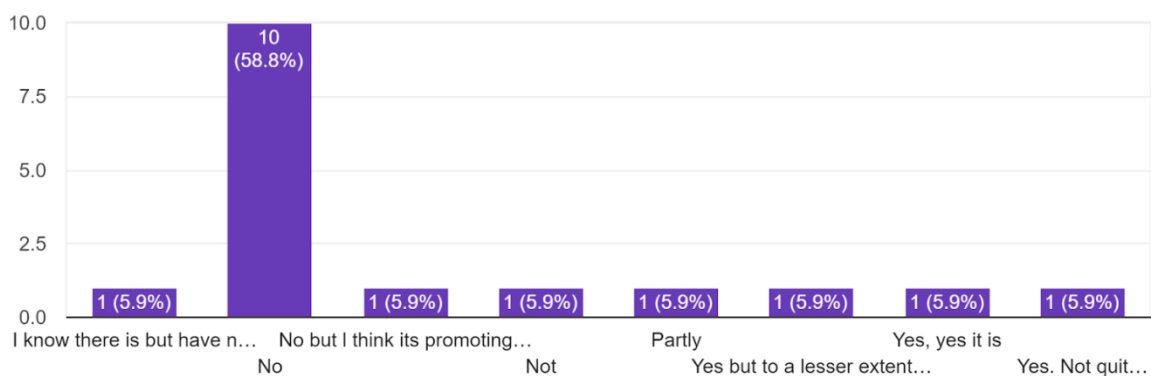


Heard	Have not heard
7	48

Knowledge on the Menu for Possible Commitments in Zimbabwe is still relatively low among young people in Zimbabwe. Results from the WhatsApp poll showed that only 7 of the 55 respondents who answered to this question had heard about the commitments. The organization through the project will raise awareness on the menu of possible commitments and their applicability in the Zimbabwean context.

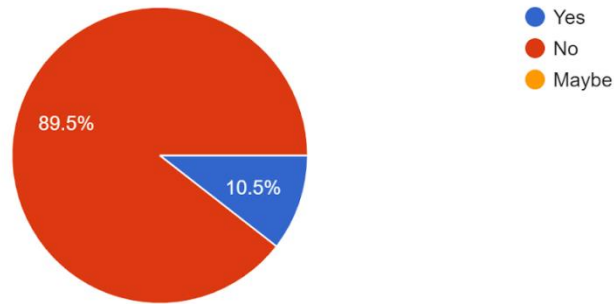
Do you know about the Youth Desk in Zimbabwe Government departments? If yes do you think the youth desk is promoting youth participation ?

17 responses



Have you ever utilized any youth desk?

19 responses

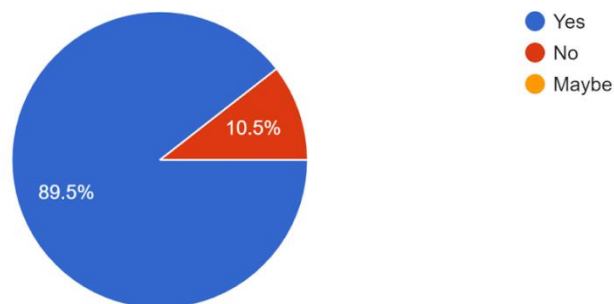


Have utilised the youth desk	Have not
0	33

Even though the Zimbabwean Government has introduced the youth desk across all Ministries at provincial and national levels only 10.5% of youth have utilized the Youth Desk. The survey showed that youths in Mashonaland East are not aware of this initiative which is there to meet young people’s needs. The lack of knowledge on the youth desk can be because youth in Mashonaland East are marginalized and do not have access to opportunities and information.

Do you think both young and old people can share power in leadership and governance

19 responses



89.5% of the youths indicated that they believe that young and old people can share power in governance and leadership while 10.5% did not agree.

## **Summary of Findings**

This section presents data on youth participation in civic and democratic development processes; highlighting the obstacles they face when it comes to participating in governance structures and their representation in governance. Data is presented using the thematic approach and analysed in relation to the findings indicating the participation of youths in development processes. Overall, youth's participation in democracy and governance in Mashonaland East is low based on the nature of the environment that does not provide equal opportunities for youths compared to older generations. Given a fair chance and equipped with the right, necessary and adequate resources young people in Zimbabwe are willing to participate. The organization strongly believes that by the end of the project young people will become aware of the Youth Desk and effectively utilize it, they will fully understand the menu for possible commitments and their application in the Zimbabwean context contributing to the overall goal of increasing young participation in democratic spaces especially as candidates.

## **Strategies to successfully and progressively share power and Zimbabwe's natural resources between the elderly to youth**

There have been cases where the elderly people in power have been stiffly holding on top of their positions without allowing or unveiling opportunities for youth to participate. The study aimed to find a way if possible for the elderly and youth to successfully share power and Zimbabwe's natural resources. The responses of participants are presented below

*“The elderly should find a common interest with youths and they must stop treating us as kids who bring nothing to the table”*

*“Engaging different age groups and letting them discuss what they think needs to be done to give youth positions”*

*“There should be awareness campaigns, hosted by youths that raise awareness on youth participation”*

## **Youth bill**

However, most youth who responded do not know that there is a youth bill and they have never heard of it. The survey highlighted the need for the organization to also educate young people on the components of the youth bill and why it is important.

## **Youth desks in Zimbabwe government departments**

One of the questions in the survey required young people to indicate if they know the youth desk (58.8%) answered that they did not know if the youth desk exists (5.9%) answered that they were not sure

However, most youth did not know that such provision exist hence they have never approached the youth desk. More awareness needs to be done to young people on provisions such as youth desks that can amplify their participation in civic and democratic spaces

## **Utilization of youth desk**

The youths were also asked if they have ever utilized the youth desk 10.5% answered that they have, and 89.5% answered that they have never utilized the youth desk

## **Recommendations**

- The evidence presented in the findings suggests that youths need capacity development to enhance their skills on public speaking, voter registration, communication skills and policy review and development to enhance their involvement in civic and democratic spaces.
- Continue providing ongoing, regular training for youths. Intervention through training and empowerment of youth on the importance of their participation in civic processes is needed to increase youth representation in decision-making spaces.
- Meaningful social changes, such as shifting patriarchal beliefs, norms, and systems take considerable time and require constant reinforcement and support. The elderly should not regard youths as followers but also as leaders. From childhood, children should be given opportunities to contribute in decision-making

## **Conclusion**

Findings from the survey will be used by the organization to inform programming and will be used as a benchmark against which the progress and impact of the project will be assessed.