

ELECTIONS ISSUE BRIEF

TOWARDS CREDIBLE AND PEACEFUL ELECTIONS

SECURING YOUR TICKET TO VOTE: WHY PARTICIPATING IN THE EXHIBITION OF THE PROVISIONAL VOTERS REGISTER IS A MUST

Elections and electoral processes are integral to democracy and provide citizens with the means to choose their leaders. Therefore, citizens participation is crucial in the electoral process. The Exhibition of the Voters Register (EVR) are critical to maintaining the integrity and credibility of elections in democracies worldwide. These enable citizens to verify their registration details and correct errors, ensuring everyone eligible can vote. EVR is practiced in both established and emerging democracies to help build public trust in the electoral system for transparency and inclusivity.

In Ghana, the Electoral Commission (EC) organizes EVR every election period to display the Voters Register (the official list of individuals eligible to vote in an election) at various polling stations for public verification. Participating in the EVR is crucial for every registered voter, as it guarantees their ability to select their preferred parliamentary and presidential candidates. First-time voters, in particular, should engage in every stage of the electoral process to confirm their eligibility and ensure their participation in the 2024 elections.

Consequences of Not Participating in the Exhibition of the Voters Register

Despite the efforts of the EC and its team to ensure its credibility, both human error and technological limitations can affect the accuracy of the voters register. Therefore, as a first-time voter, failing to verify your registration details during the EVR can have adverse consequences:

- **Your Name could be omitted from the voters register:** Registering as a first-time voter or having your name on the voters register from previous elections does not guarantee that it will still be on the list^[1]. Human and technological errors can result in omissions.

If you arrive at the polling station on election day and find your name missing, insisting on voting could lead to confrontations and the involvement of security, causing stress and unpleasant experiences.

- **You may not know your exact polling station location:** The EC assigns polling stations after registration, which can be identified during the voter exhibition . You will not know your polling station location if you fail to verify.
- **Incorrect details:** If you do not participate in the EVR , errors in your personal details may go uncorrected [2].
- **Election Day delays and frustrations:** Not verifying might lead to delays and frustration on election day if there are issues with your details, as highlighted by the case studies in the box [3].
- **Uncorrected mistakes undermine the voters register’s accuracy:** Mistakes in the register, such as omitted names, incorrect details, deceased voters, and wrong polling stations, remain uncorrected if voters do not participate in the EVR, which affects the register’s accuracy and integrity. Therefore, participating in the exhibition of the Voters Register will enhance the credibility of the register and voters’ eligibility to vote for their preferred parliamentary and presidential candidates [4].

Case 1: Missing Names

“I was shocked to find my name missing from the EC’s official voters register at my polling station yesterday, Saturday, September 26, 2020. To my surprise, another voter couldn’t find his name. This is the first time since I became a voter that my name has ever been absent from the register.”

Case 2: Election Day delays

“Voters Register mix-up causes a 2-hour delay in voting in Amenfi West.”

Case 3: Verification Issues

“In 2016, two people in Bolgatanga failed in the verification process and were given indication forms to be sent to the EC’s regional office for further re-registration processing.”

Trends of Exhibiting the Voters Register in Ghana (2016-2020)

The electoral process in Ghana consists of pre-election, election and post-election activities. However, most citizens are only engaged in election and some pre-election activities, including voter registration, transfer of votes and exhibition of voters register, as found in Figure 1.1.

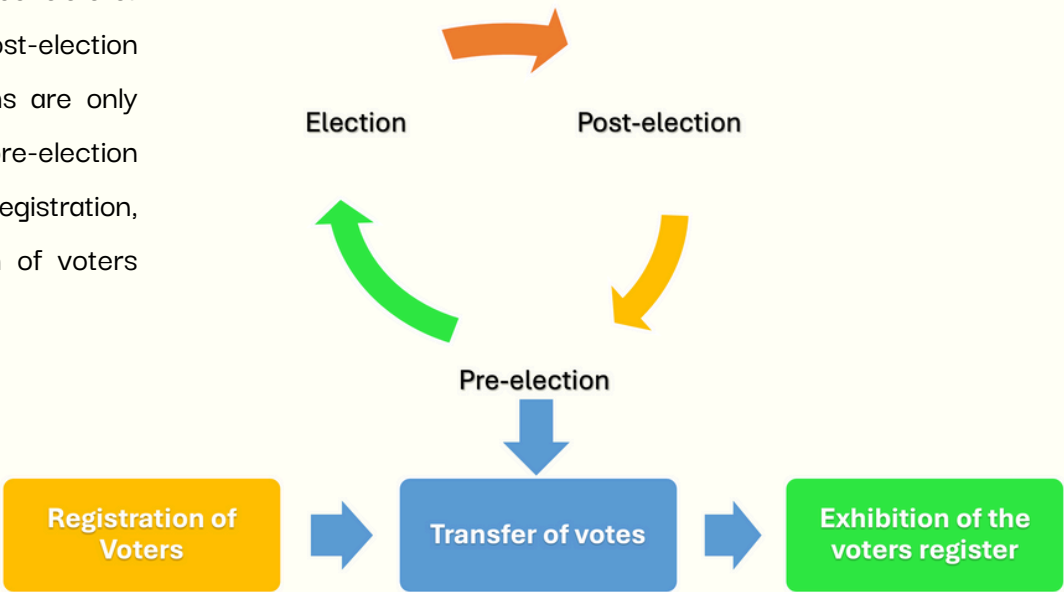
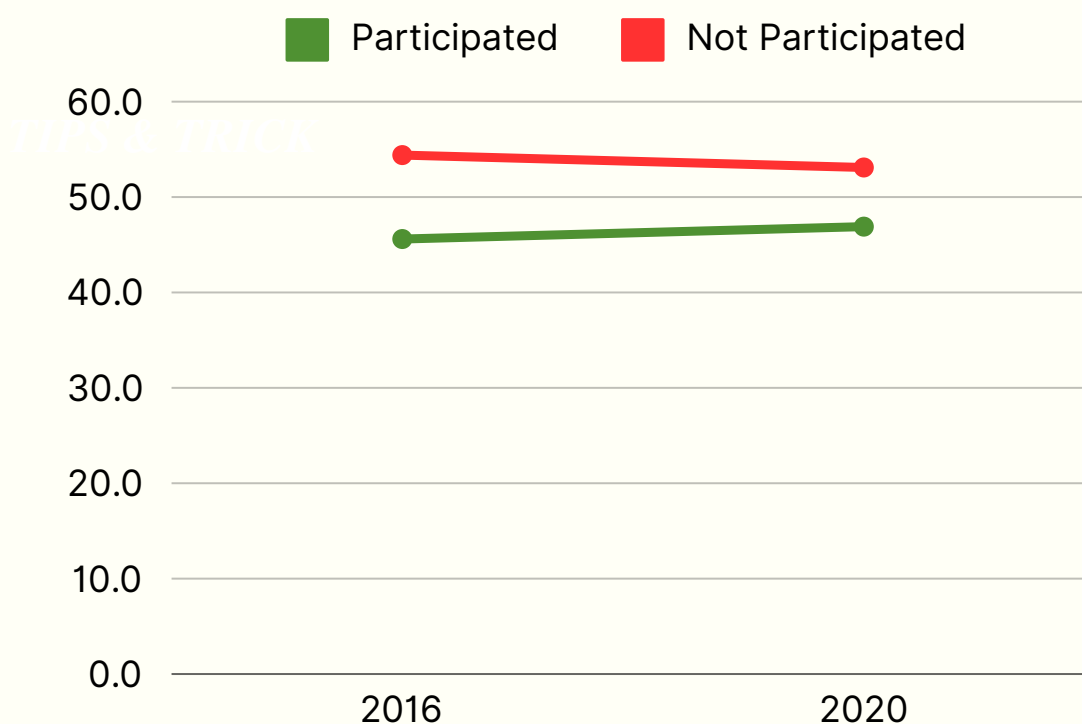


Figure 1.1: Citizen-Centred Pre-election Activities in Ghana, Source: Authors Construct, 2024

Therefore, citizen engagement is crucial not only on Election Day but also during the pre-election phase to make the voting experience smooth. First-time voters who have just turned 18 and above are encouraged to participate in these pre-election processes to ensure their eligibility for the upcoming election.

However, despite the critical importance of the voters register exhibition in the electoral process, it has, over the years, been marked by the following challenges:

- **Low Publicity:** The voters register exhibition has historically received limited media attention, which has made it challenging for the Electoral Commission (EC) to generate sufficient public awareness. As a result, EVR often suffer from low visibility and engagement
- **Lack of Interest:** Many people, especially first-time voters in Ghana, are unaware of the importance of the voters register exhibition. This gap in understanding reduces public engagement and the effectiveness of the EVR .
- **Low patronage:** The low publicity and public interest in the EVR leads to low patronage. For instance, some polling stations recorded as few as ten persons a day in the 2018 limited voter exhibition [5]. Also, the 2016 and 2020 EVR recorded less than 50 percent participation [6].
- **Physical vs. Electronic Verification:** During the 2020 exhibition of the voters register, only 8.8 percent of the 46.9 percent who participated verified their details using the EC's shortcode verification system. In contrast, a substantial 91.2 percent opted to visit polling stations in person to verify their details [7].



Participation in the 2016 and 2020 Exhibition of the Voters Register in Ghana

Source: Electoral Commission, (2016 and 2020)

Despite the introduction of electronic systems and shortcode verification by the EC in 2016 to make the voter exhibition process more convenient and time-efficient, a significant 91% of voters who participated in the exhibition (46.9%) still opted for physical verification at polling stations in 2020. This trend can be attributed to several factors:

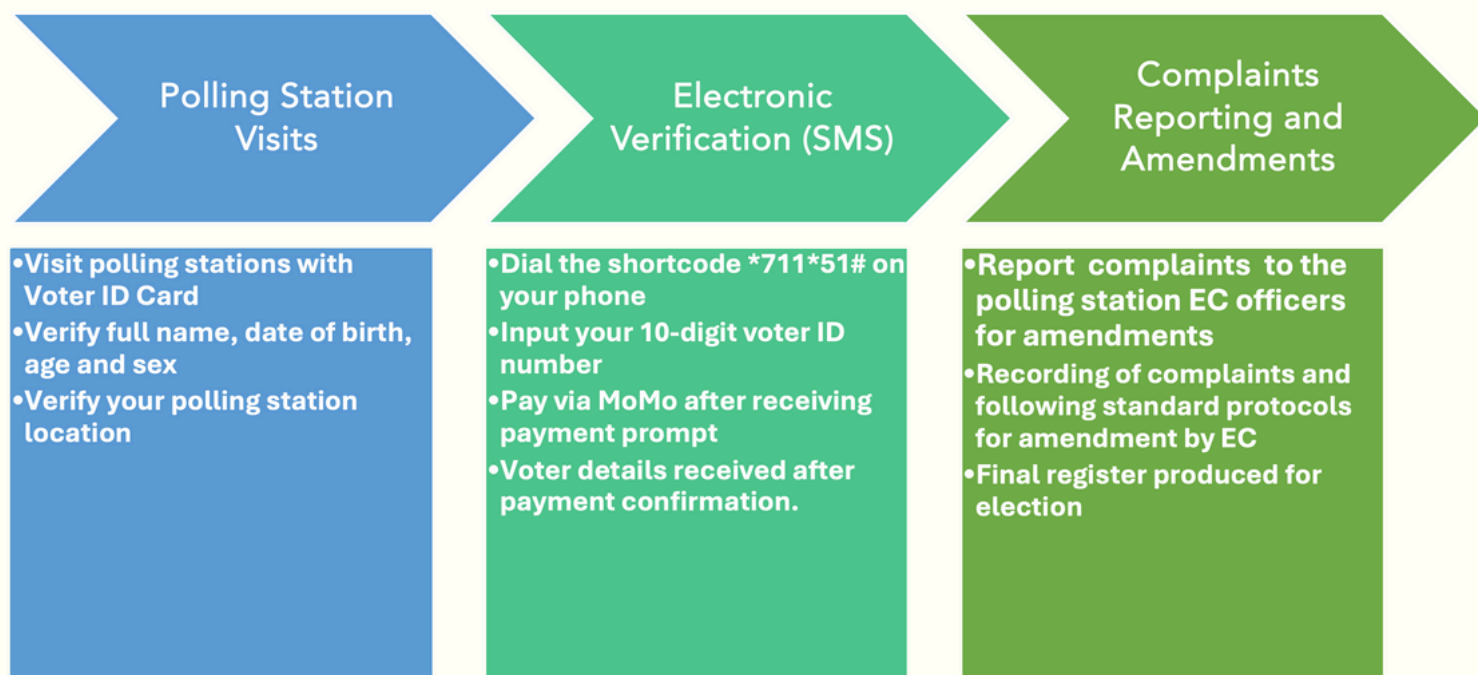
- The introduction of a new register in 2020 increased voters' interest in verifying their names in person to ensure their inclusion.
- Cost of electronic verification, which deterred some voters.
- The high illiteracy rate (26%) in Ghana (GSS, 2021) served as a limitation to the use of electronic verification [8].
- Poor network and technological errors.
- Low publicity about the electronic verification option.

Strategies to Enhance Participation in the Exhibition of the Voters Register

- **Increased publicity:** Boosting awareness about the EVR through various media channels—such as television, radio, social media, and community outreach—ensures that more voters are informed about the dates, locations, and importance of the . Effective publicity helps reach a broader audience, including those who might otherwise be unaware of the exhibition, thereby increasing overall participation.
- **Free Electronic System (SMS) verification:** free electronic verification provides a convenient and cost-effective way for voters to check their registration details. Thus making the verification process more accessible.
- **Education of Voters on the Relevance of the Exhibition of the Voters Register:** Educating voters about the importance of the EVR can increase awareness about the benefits and necessity of participation in reducing issues on election day and contributing to a smoother electoral experience.
- **Active Political Parties Participation:** Encouraging political parties to actively participate in and promote the EVR helps mobilize their supporters and emphasize the significance of the . Political parties can leverage their networks to spread information and encourage voter engagement, thus enhancing the overall participation rate and fostering a more inclusive electoral process.

The Exhibition of the Voters Register: Processes to Verify Your Details

The Electoral Commission (EC) has scheduled the Exhibition of the voters register (EVR) from August 20 – 27, 2024, running daily from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm. During this period, voters are encouraged to visit their polling stations or utilize the electronic system to verify their details at their convenience. Figure 2.1 illustrates the exhibition process.

Figure 2.1: Processes to Verify Your Details

Source: Electoral Commission, (2016 and 2020)

Conclusion

Participation in the Exhibition of the Voters Register is crucial for a smooth and stress-free voting experience. Youth and first-time voters must engage in the EVR to secure their right to vote and have a say in choosing parliamentary and presidential candidates in the December 7 elections.

References

- [1]. My name is missing from register (ghanaweb.com)
- [2]. Exhibition of voters register ends - Graphic Online
- [3]. By-election: Voters Register mix-up causes 2-hour delay in Amenfi West - MyJoyOnline
- [4]. Exhibition of voters' register - Electoral Commission
- [5]. WANEP. "2020 Presidential and Parliamentary Election Security Report in Ghana," 2021.
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RISK OF NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE EXHIBITION OF THE VOTERS REGISTER

Your name might not appear on the Provisional Voters Register.



Your eligibility to vote in the December 7 elections might be affected.

You might be assigned to the wrong polling station or centre.



Your voting experience could be stressful due to potential confrontations and delays.

Participate in the Exhibition of the Voters Register to grab your ticket to vote

