



2019 PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION
CANDIDATES'
AGE PREFERENCE

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Content



Executive summary.....	4
Background.....	5
Survey Findings.....	6
Conclusion.....	12
Survey Methods.....	13
Fig 1. Preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate.....	6
Fig 2. Reasons for the preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate.....	7
Fig 3. Maximum preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate.....	8
Fig 4. Preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate with respect to Gender, Geo-political zones and Age.....	8
Fig 5. Poll on whether Nigeri’s current political structure encourages young professionals to contest for public offices such as governorship and presidential positions.....	9
Fig 6. Preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate with respect to Gender, Geo-political zones and Age.....	9
Fig 7a. This figure shows what would influence the choice of who or what party to vote for in the 2019 elections.....	10
Fig 7b. This figure shows what woul influence the choice of who or what party to vote for in the 2019 elections.....	11
Fig 8. This figure shows the major factors militating against young proffessionals from contesting for public office.....	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abuja, Nigeria. June, 2017

A new poll conducted by **NOIPolls** in partnership with **Business Day Media** has revealed that Nigerians would prefer middle-aged candidates for the country's 2019 presidential elections. Spurred by the recent victory of French President, Mr Emmanuel Macron and increasing discussions in the social space, particularly the **#NotTooYoungToRun** Campaign led by the youth advocacy organisation YIAGA, this latest poll sought to glean the perceptions and opinions of Nigerians regarding their age preference for presidential candidates in the 2019 elections.

Interestingly, the poll found that **64 percent** of Nigerians say they would prefer to vote for a presidential candidate between the ages of **40 and 50 years**; and this was followed in a distance by **15 percent** who prefer candidates between **51 and 60 years**. Specifically, ages **50 years (33 percent)** and **40 years (21 percent)** constituted the highest precise age preferences cited by Nigerians. Similarly, almost half of those interviewed (**48 percent**) expressed their preference for middle-aged presidential candidates, and when probed on why the reasons for their preference, **44 percent** say "they combine youthful energy and maturity", while **23 percent** say "they are more mentally alert". Similarly, **35 percent** expressed support for young candidates; and further cited the following reasons for their preference: "they bring new and fresh ideas" and "they are more vibrant than the elderly".

Furthermore, the poll revealed that **73 percent** of Nigerians are willing to support independent candidacy. In other words, even though there currently isn't any provision for independent candidacy in the country's Electoral Act, Nigerians say they would be willing to support individuals who may decide to run for elective positions on their personal strength, without being affiliated to any political party. In addition, when asked about what would influence their choice of candidates or political parties in the 2019 elections, **almost 5 in 10 Nigerians (49 percent)** say they would vote for candidates who have "**Integrity**". This was followed by **27 percent and 18 percent** who stated that their voting decision would be influenced by "Track record and experience" and "Political agenda or manifesto" respectively.

Finally, the poll sought to examine some of the factors militating against young professionals from participating in politics, and top amongst the factors identified include: Financial constraint (**40 percent**), Godfatherism and political cabal (**23 percent**), Lack of experience (**15 percent**) and Lack of political platforms (**10 percent**). We hope that the results and findings from poll would begin to stimulate conversations and debates, and have implications on electoral reforms, particularly on the issues of age restrictions and independent candidacy; internal political party reforms and the wide youth inclusiveness question, party candidate selection limits and criteria, and strengthen advocacy for the **#NotTooYoungToRun** Bill amongst others. These are some of the key findings from the 2019 Presidential Candidate Age Preference Poll. The poll was conducted in the week commencing May 22nd, 2017.

BACKGROUND

The use of the catch-phrase: **‘Youths are the leaders of tomorrow’** has constantly been called to question in the leadership and socio-political discourse of the Nigerian state. The question has always been- **when exactly would tomorrow come to allow young people take over the mantle of leadership?**

Chief Anthony Enahoro, a man that is arguably one of the most respected supporters of independence and founding fathers of Nigeria was barely 30 when he moved the historic motion for “self rule” in the Federal House in February 1953. Yet, current evidence shows that a young adult of that age cannot be found among the Senators of the 8th Assembly today because Section 65 (1)(a) of the 1999 constitution sets the age of 35 as the minimum age for election into the Nigerian senate. Barack Obama made history as the first black president of the United States of America, at age 47. Similarly, in 2015, Justin Trudeau surprised the world by becoming the Canadian Prime Minister at age 44. Today, the news revolves around a former investment banker, Emmanuel Macron, who has defied all odds to become the youngest President of France at the youthful age of 39 years.

One wonders if there’s any hope for young Nigerians aspiring for elective leadership positions in the country. Nonetheless, one significant ray of hope for the Nigerian youth today is the bill referred to as the #NotTooYoungToRun Bill, seeking to lower the constitutional age requirement for contesting for elections in Nigeria and seeking to usher in independent candidacy into Nigeria’s electoral process, as sponsored by Hon. Tony Nwulu representing Oshodi/Isolo II Federal Constituency of Lagos state. The bill, if passed will provide more political space for Nigerian youths, by according them with eligibility to vie for political offices in Nigeria.

However, there are some critical question that beg for answers: (1) Are Nigerian youths ready (culturally, academically, professionally, psychologically and otherwise) to take the bull by its horn? (2) Is the political landscape conducive to promote young people with fresh ideas venture into politics? Are Nigerians ready and willing to welcome young people to lead the country into the 21st century? In light of the above, NOIPolls recently conducted a public opinion poll in partnership with Business Day Media, seeking to understand the perceptions and opinions of Nigerians regarding their age preference for the 2019 presidential candidate, as well as gauging their views on the knotty subject of Independent Candidacy. Please note that we have applied loose definition to the words: young, middle-aged (working class) and elderly (retired or about to retire) in this poll, to be guided by the perception of the average Nigerian.

SURVEY FINDINGS

We started out the poll by seeking respondents' age preference for presidential candidates in the 2019 elections. Interestingly, the findings revealed that **48 percent** of Nigerians polled indicated that they would prefer middle-aged presidential candidates, particularly in the **South-East (67 percent)** and **North-Central (63 percent)** geo-political zones of the country. This was followed by 35 percent of the respondents who expressed their preference to see young persons emerging as candidates in 2019; and as expected, respondents aged between **18 – 35 years** accounted for the largest proportion (**37 percent**) in this category. Curiously, **10 percent** of respondents affirmed their preference for elderly presidential candidates.

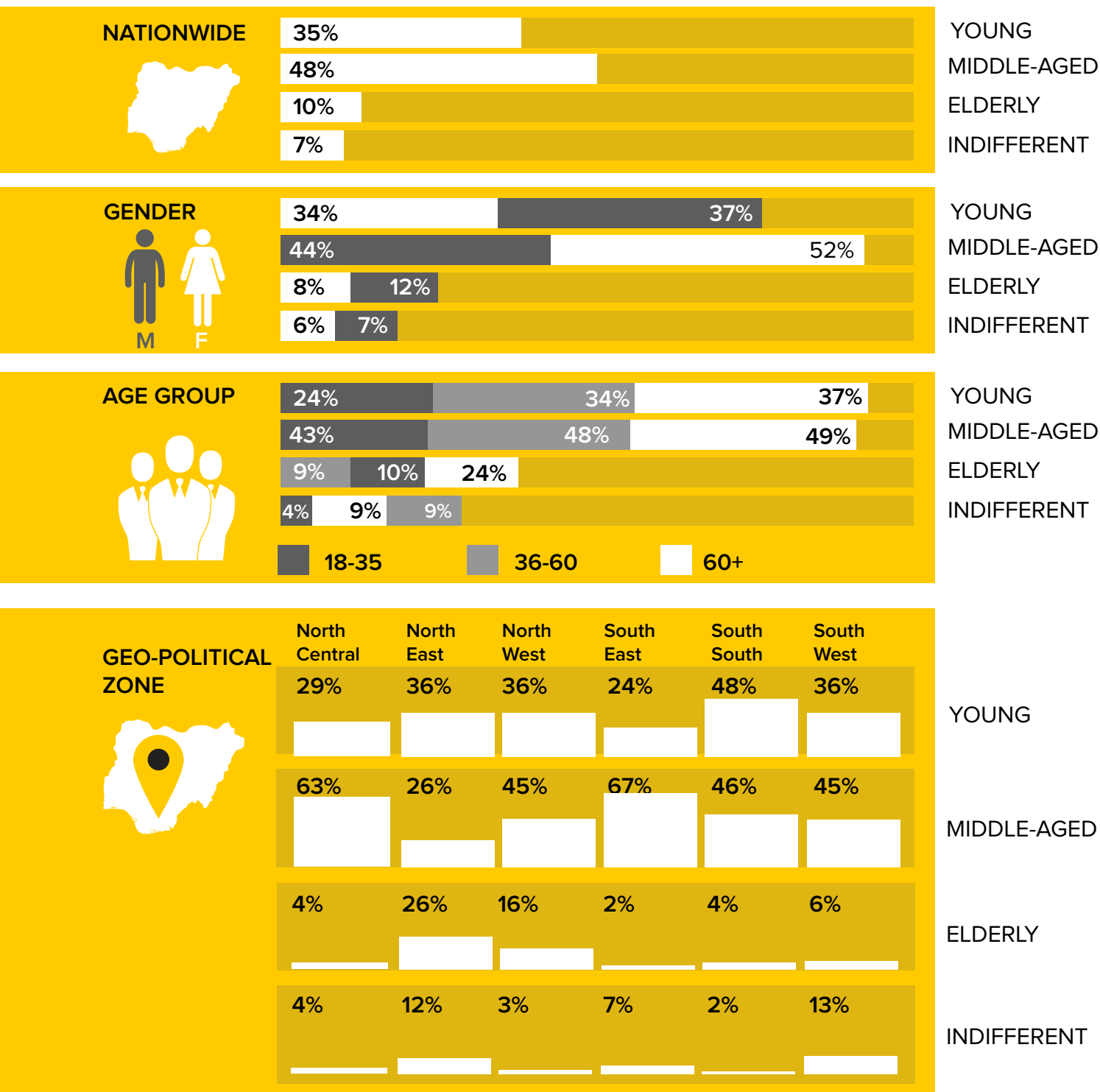


Fig 1. This figure shows the preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate

SURVEY FINDINGS

Subsequently, respondents were further probed for reasons for their preference; and of the 48 percent who desire middle-aged presidential candidates the following reasons were cited; they combine youthful energy and maturity (48 percent); they are more mentally alert (23 percent); they have the capacity to be better leaders (15 percent) and they would be more responsible (14 percent). On the other hand, those who prefer young presidential candidates justify their position by stating that young people bring new and fresh ideas (50 percent) and they are more vibrant than the elderly (30 percent), in addition 13% say the elderly ones have failed the country.

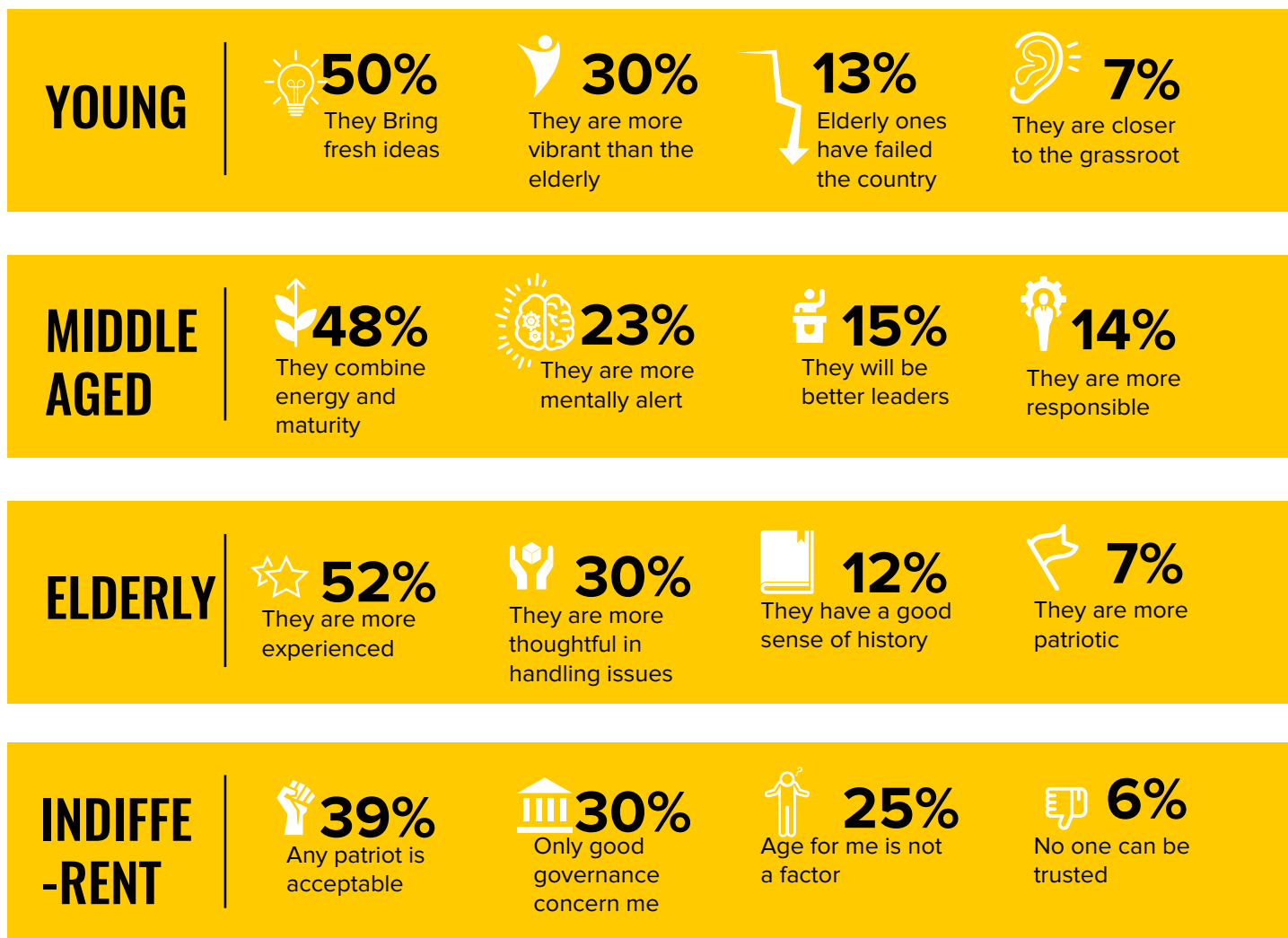


Fig 2. This figure shows the reasons for the preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate

The poll also sought the opinion of Nigerians regarding a maximum age for preferred presidential candidates for the 2019 election. Interestingly, a significant majority of respondents (64 percent) stated that they would prefer candidates between the ages of 40 and 50 years, categorized as middle-age. This was followed by 15 percent of respondents who said they would prefer presidential candidates between the ages of 51 to 60; while 7 percent said they would prefer young candidates aged between 18 to 39 years.



Fig 3. This figure shows the maximum preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate

Further analysis by geo-political zone revealed that the North-Central (75 percent) and South-East (66 percent) geo-political zones had the largest proportion of respondents who prefer presidential candidates aged between 40 – 50 years. In the same vein, respondents aged 18 – 35 years (69 percent) accounted for the highest proportion who prefer presidential candidates aged between 40 – 50 years.

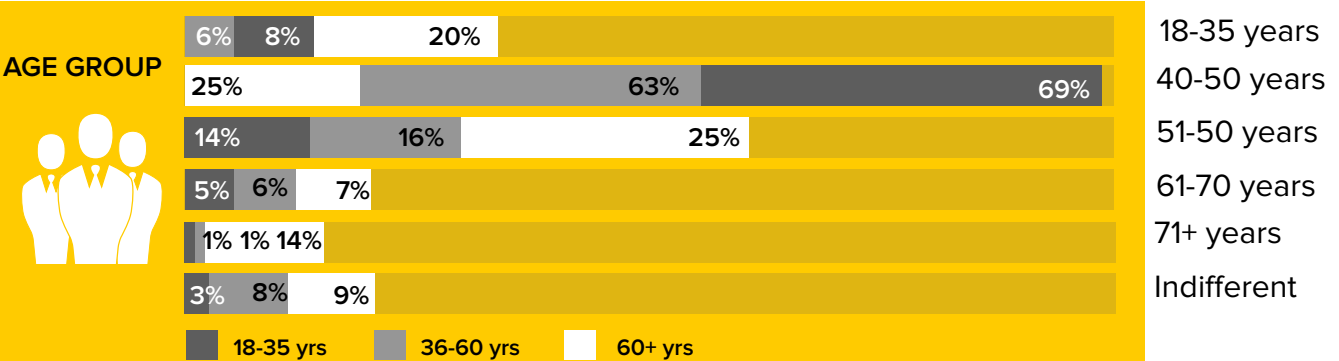


Fig 4. This figure shows the preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate with respect to Gender, Geo-political zones and Age

Subsequently, respondents were asked if the current political structure encourages young professionals to contest for public offices; and the findings revealed that at least two-thirds of respondents (64 percent) simply answered “No”, which highlights a negative perception regarding the lack of political space for young professionals in the country. On the contrary, about a third (36 percent) affirmed that the current political structure encourages young professionals to contest for public offices.



Fig 5. This figure shows a poll on whether Nigeri’s current political structure encourages young professionals to contest for public offices such as governorship and presidential positions.

Respondents were also asked if they would be willing to support independent candidacy in the 2019 presidential election; and a significant proportion of the respondents (73 percent) expressed their willingness to support independent candidates. In order words, even though there currently isn’t the provision for independent candidacy in the country’s Electoral Act, Nigerians are of the opinion that if such provision is made, they would be willing to support individuals who may decide to run for elective positions on their personal strength, without being affiliated to any political party. However, on the contrary, 27 percent say they will not support independent candidacy. Interestingly, across gender, geo-political zones and age groups, majority say they would support independent candidacy.

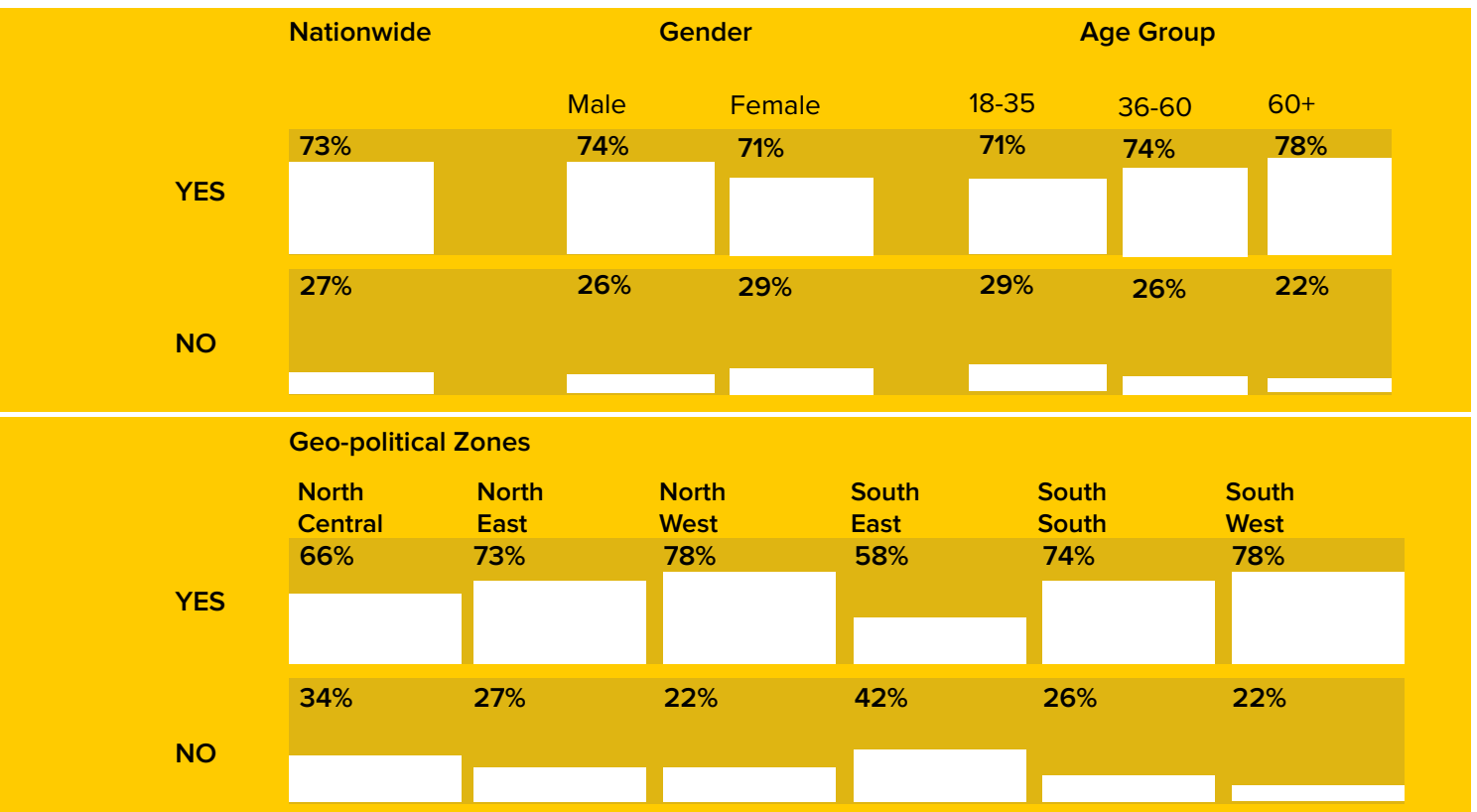
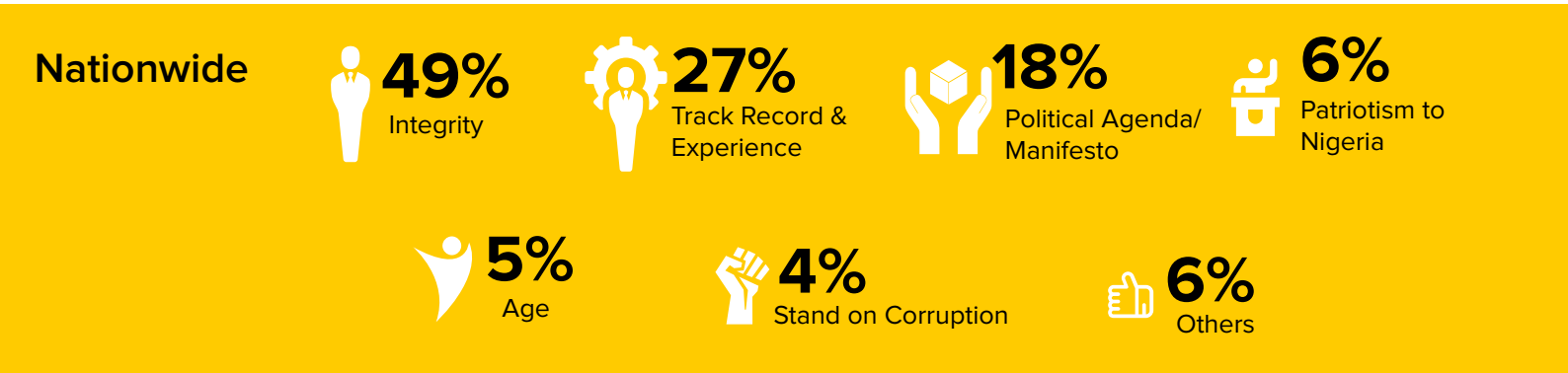


Fig 6. This figure shows the preferred age of the 2019 presidential candidate with respect to Gender, Geo-political zones and Age

Upon further probing on factors that would influence the voting decision in the 2019 elections, results from the poll revealed that almost half of the respondents nationwide cited “Integrity” as the most important factor that will ultimately influence voting decisions. This was followed by “track record and experience” (27 percent) and “political agenda/manifesto” (18 percent) to make the top three influencing factors identified by respondents.



Gender	Male	Female
Integrity	45%	52%
Track Record & Experience	29%	25%
Political Agenda / Manifesto	21%	14%
Patriotism to Nigeria	8%	4%
Age	4%	7%
Stand on Corruption	5%	4%
Others	8%	7%

Age Group	18-35	36-60	60+
Integrity	45%	52%	50%
Track Record & Experience	27%	26%	27%
Political Agenda / Manifesto	17%	18%	15%
Patriotism to Nigeria	6%	6%	3%
Age	5%	6%	0%
Stand on Corruption	5%	3%	5%
Others	8%	6%	6%

Fig 7a. This figure shows what would influence the choice of who or what party to vote for in the 2019 elections

Geo Political Zone

	North Central	North East	North West	South East	South South	South West
 Integrity	53%	64%	46%	47%	40%	46%
 Track Record & Experience	16%	23%	29%	29%	31%	30%
 Political Agenda / Manifesto	16%	11%	28%	17%	11%	15%
 Patriotism to Nigeria	3%	22%	4%	6%	4%	3%
 Age	6%	1%	3%	3%	11%	7%
 Stand on Corruption	11%	1%	2%	2%	3%	7%
 Others	4%	3%	9%	8%	6%	9%

Fig 7b. This figure shows what would influence the choice of who or what party to vote for in the 2019 elections

Lastly, the poll revealed that although a vast majority of Nigerians say they would support young to middle-aged presidential candidates in 2019, there are still some key hinderances preventing young professionals from vying for elective public offices. Top amongst the factors mentioned by respondents include: financial constraints (40 percent), godfatherism and political cabal (23 percent), lack of experience (15 percent) and lack of political platforms (10 percent) amongst others.

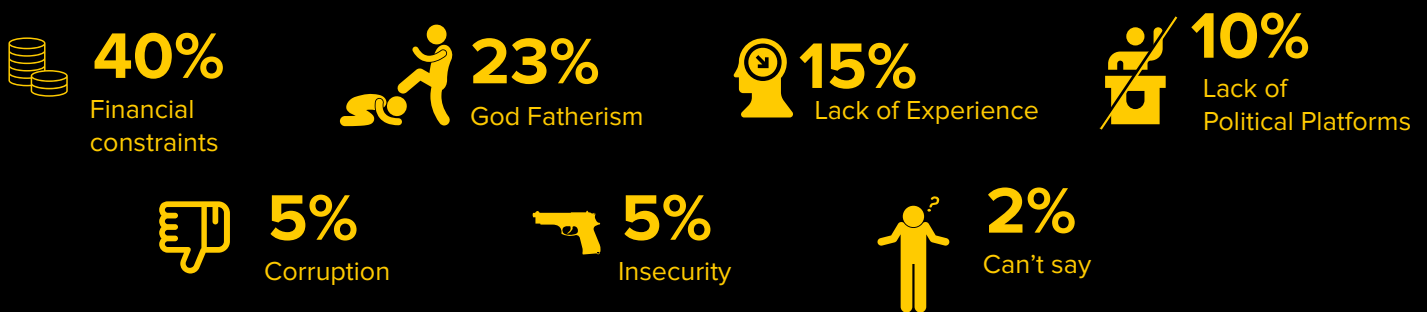


Fig 8. This figure shows the major factors militating against young professionals from contesting for public office

Conclusion

In conclusion, the poll has revealed that most Nigerians prefer young (35 percent) to middle-aged (48 percent) presidential candidates in the 2019 presidential elections; and 73 percent have expressed their support for independent candidacy. We hope that these results and findings would stimulate conversations and debates in the media and social space; and have deeper implications at least on the following: (1) electoral reforms, particularly on the discussions around age restrictions and independent candidacy; (2) internal political party reforms and the wider subject of youth inclusiveness, candidate selection limits and criteria, and (3) further strengthen advocacy for the #Not-TooYoungToRun Bill amongst others.

Finally, the statistics are clear, young people have the numbers and are becoming more active in the social space. There's need to translate active social engagement and social media activism into actual political party considerations, which would witness a massive incursion of young people into the political terrain, and taking the bull by the horn, to vie for elective positions come 2019.



Survey Method

The opinion poll was conducted in the week commencing May 22nd, 2017. It involved telephone interviews of a random nationwide sample. 1,000 randomly selected phone-owning Nigerians aged 18 years and above, representing the six geo-political zones in the country, were interviewed. With a sample of this size, we can say with 95% confidence that the results obtained are statistically precise - within a range of plus or minus 3%. NOIPolls Limited is the No1 for country specific polling services in West Africa. We conduct periodic opinion polls and studies on various socio-economic and political issues in Nigeria. For more information visit our website www.noi-polls.com or download our mobile app NOIPolls on your smartphone.

