

EXECUTIVE

W

**A Public Assessment Of President Obasanjo's
Government Policy Statements And Actions**

A

T

C

H



MAY 2000

**...promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom
of expression in Nigeria.**

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is the ninth report under the Executive Watch Project of Media Rights Agenda, a non governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression.

Media Rights Agenda is a member of Transition Monitoring Group (T.M.G) a coalition of human rights, non-governmental and civil society organisations formed in August 1998 for the purpose of developing integrity in the electoral process by monitoring on the prosecution of the political programme.

Under the Executive Watch project, Media Rights Agenda monitors the activities and policies of the Executive arm of government particularly the Presidency, to ascertain the popularity such activities and policies enjoy among a wide spectrum of Nigerians.

This report was written by **Osaro Odemwingie**, Publications Officer for M.R.A, while **Ademoyewa Johnson**, Campaigns Officer at M.R.A, conducted the research exercise for the report. **Mercy Epete Jones**, Litigation Officer at M.R.A. provided the secretarial services for the project.

The project is supervised by **Edetaen Ojo**, M.R.A.'s Executive Director.

EXECUTIVE WATCH

INTRODUCTION

Executive Watch is a project of Media Rights Agenda through which it monitors the activities and policies of the Executive arm of Government, particularly the Presidency, to ascertain the popularity such activities and policies enjoy among a wide spectrum of Nigerians.

The overall objective of the project is to monitor Nigeria nascent democracy by keeping track of the Executive's performance and popularity and serve as a feedback to the government to enable it serve Nigerians better.

The monitoring exercise is being carried out on a monthly basis and it involves identification of some major policy decisions, comments and actions of the Executive, particularly President Olusegun Obasanjo, during the preceding months.

This is the ninth report under this project. It addresses one year of President Obasanjo's administration in Nigeria. The respondents in this report is limited to the Lagos area. It is, however, hoped that this shall be broadened in future to include respondents from other states all over the federation including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

Lagosians Score President Obasanjo Low, As National Assembly Gets The Blame For Rift With Executive

One year into the new democratic dispensation that emerged in Nigeria last year May 29, Lagosians after a hard look at the journey so far say there is little to cheer about and that greater challenges lie ahead. Specifically, Lagosians in assessing President Olusegun Obasanjo's performance in his first year in office rate him 'Fair'.

Lagosians also have put at the doorsteps of the Legislature, the blame for the often tempestuous relationship between it and the Executive. However, only a little over one-tenth of Lagosians fear that this problem and several others bedeviling Nigeria could lead to a re-lapse to military government.

These views of Lagosians are the outcome of a survey carried out by Media Rights Agenda, under its Executive Watch project. The survey was conducted between 15 and 22 May 2000, and it involved the administration of 800 close-ended questionnaires.

On assuming office last year after a dark Military era, President Obasanjo while not promising to perform magic, however, urged Nigerians to be hopeful assuring that the new system of government would bring a new lease of life. Despite the promises, the country has, however, passed through the fire of ethnic strife, insecurity of lives and property, religious mayhems, unemployment crisis and a continued break down of social amenities.

While some of these problems, among which is the hitherto endemic fuel scarcity, appear to have

been tamed for good, some other very fundamental ones are still rocking the survival boat of the new dispensation.

The first question sought to know how respondents would, on a general basis, assess President Obasanjo's one year in office. Respondents were to choose between the options of Bad, Fair, Good and Very Good.

The second question, however, asked respondents to rate President Obasanjo government's performance in the following specific areas: Education, Accountability and Transparency (Anti-Corruption), Labour Relations, Human Rights, Fuel Supply, Electricity Supply, Economy and Unemployment. Other areas are Freedom of Expression, Religious Affairs, Social Amenities, Foreign Policy and Security of Lives and Property.

Question three sought to know respondents' rating of the performance of the National Assembly in terms of their adherence to their Constitutional roles. In both questions 3 and 4 Respondents were to score the President between the options of Below Average, Average, Above Average and Excellent. Question four sought to know who the respondents believe is to blame in the frosty relationship between the Executive and the National Assembly.

Other questions asked if respondents think that Nigeria may relapse to military rule, and if respondents support President Obasanjo's frequent trips abroad to campaign for debt relief and foreign investment.

Lastly, respondents were asked if they support government's decision to hands-off the administration of Federal Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of education.

The questionnaires were distributed among people of three broad categories. These include people without formal education up to Primary school level; those with Post-primary education; and those with Post Secondary education in the ratio of 150, 200 and 450 respectively.

Out of the 800 questionnaires distributed, 709 were returned while 91 were not returned. This shows a return rate of 88.6% and a mortality rate of 11.4%.

Of the 709 respondents, 140 of them were in the group of respondents with primary school education or below; 170 with post primary school education background and the rest 399 with post secondary school education background.

Although respondents acknowledged the enormity of problems besetting the country at the inception of the present government, 444 of the total respondents, representing 62.6 %, rated the administration's performance as "Fair".

Broken into the three sub-groups, the 444 respondents who rate the administration performance as "Fair", is made up of 100 respondents in the group with primary school education or below; 120 respondents are from the group with post-primary school education background; and the rest 224 respondents are from the group with post-secondary school education background.

With respect to the government's performance in specific areas, the President got a high Excellent score only in Fuel Supply. He got a 66 per cent Excellent score. His subsequent Excellent scores went beyond the 10 per cent mark only in Foreign Policy where he scored 14.5 per cent and respect for Freedom of Expression where he scored 18.6 per cent, respectively.

Similarly, his Above Average scores went beyond the 20 per cent mark only in Labour Relations where he scored 30.3 per cent; Human Rights where he scored 21.1 per cent; and respect for Freedom of Expression where he scored 21.2 per cent.

President Obasanjo's predominant Average scores were recorded in his performances in the following areas: Education, 57 per cent; Accountability and Transparency (Anti-Corruption), 36.1; Labour Relations, 53.5 per cent; Economy, 40.2 per cent; Social Amenities, 41.3 per cent; Security of Lives and Property, 41.1 per cent; Foreign Policy, 52.2 per cent; Human Rights, 54.5 per cent; Electricity Supply, 50.2 per cent; and respect for Freedom of Expression, 51.6 per cent.

The President similarly scored high Below Average marks in the following areas: Education, 31.8 per cent; Accountability and Transparency (Anti-Corruption), 38.2 per cent; Electricity Supply, 84.3 per cent; Economy, 40 per cent; Security of Lives and Property, 50.4 per cent; Unemployment, 77.4 per cent; and Religious Affairs, 64.5 per cent; Social Amenities, 48.9 per cent.

Response to the question that asked how well has the government performed in some fundamental issues, on education respondents scored President Obasanjo Average with 404 respondents out of 709 respondents, representing 56.9 per cent; 226 respondents scored him Below Average, this represents 31.8 per cent; 62 respondents scored him Above Average, representing 8.7 per cent. The rest 17 respondents scored him excellent, this present 2.6 per cent.

Considering that Accountability and Transparency (Anti-Corruption), form the corner stone of the present administration's focus, the predominant scores of Below Average and Average by the government gives an indication that the vast majority of Lagosians are yet to see a manifestation of this crusade.

Asked how respondents would rate the performance of the National Assembly in terms of their adherence to the constitution. Three hundred and twenty three respondents representing 45.5 per cent rated it Below Average; 235 respondents, representing 33.2 per cent rated it Average; while 114 respondents representing 20.4 per cent rated it Above Average; 7 respondents representing 0.9 per cent rated it Excellent.

On the frosty relationship between the Executive and the National Assembly, 587 respondents representing 82.8 per cent puts the blame on the door step of the National Assembly; while 122 respondents, representing 17.2 per cent said the Executive should be blamed for it.

With respect to the question that asked respondents whether they fear a relapse to military rule given the pockets of crises Nigeria has constantly been going through since the advent of the new democratic government, 108 respondents representing 15.2 per cent indicated "Yes". The remaining 601 respondents representing 84.8 per cent answered "No".

Out of the 108 respondents who indicated the possibility of a relapse to military rule, 55, representing 50 per cent credit the adoption of Sharia law in some Northern states and the subsequent controversy as the harbinger. This is followed in a distance second by fear of the lingering and often tempestuous rift between the Legislature and the Executive which 20 respondents see as a convenient excuse by military adventurists to attempt power seizure.

Other likely excuses for military take-over are the unresolved restiveness of militant ethnic groups activities, 6 points; unresolved Niger-Delta crisis, 11 points; unsatisfactory prosecution of the anti-corruption crusade.

On whether respondents support President Obasanjo's frequent trips abroad campaigning for debt relief and foreign investment, 502 respondents representing 54.6 per cent said 'No' while 322 respondents, representing 45.4 per cent said 'Yes'.

On the question whether respondents support government's decision to hands off the administration of Federal Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, 379 respondents representing 53.5 per cent said 'No', while 330 respondents representing 46.5 per cent said 'Yes', the government can hands off the Federal Colleges

BACKGROUND

Alexandra Pope once posited that: "For forms of government, let's fools debate, what is best, is best administered". What the learned gentleman was trying to convey is that there is inherently no form of government that guarantees fulfillment of the people's aspiration, be it an authoritarian or feudal government, communism or democracy. To him the temperament and vision of the leaders determine the success or otherwise of the government.

But some people would consider Alexandra Pope's position to be an exercise in sterile academism. To them, democracy is the beacon of good governance. This is essentially so for two basic reasons. The first is because of the elaborate provisions it makes for the psychological appeasement of the people by way of giving them the dignity of having been given a say in deciding who does, or who does not, govern them. It is obviously with this at the back of his mind that former American President Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a "government of the people, by the people, for the people." The other reason is the checks and balances provided for leaders in a democratic setting. These make democracy the chief appeal as a form of government to many people all over the world. Hence several countries of the world are fast embracing democratic rule. It is believed that autocratic rule is archaic, barbaric and old fashioned. This was one of the basis for the Africa leaders at the 35th O.A.U Summit in the Algerian Capital of Algiers to pass an anti-coup resolution which says any government that comes to power in any African country through a coup d-etat, would be diplomatically isolated. In effect such a leader, would not be admitted as a member of O.A.U.

It is also worthy of note that with three decades of military rule (1966 – 1979) and (1983 – 1999), Nigeria has been brutalized and bastardized in the face of the outside world. In this age of democracy sweeping through the entire world, no one is left in the doubt that military rule is an aberation and a phenomenon with more vices than virtues, if any.

There had been occasions when Nigeria's military rulers have aborted series of moves to restore Nigeria to a civilized system of governance, democracy. For example, General Yakubu Gowon refused to hand-over to civilians in 1976 as promised. On three occasions, General Ibrahim Babangida postponed

handing-over to an elected government. When he finally ‘stepped aside’, he left the country in a mess never witnessed before in the country’s history and handed the government over to an unelected interim government. Like a pack of cards, the Interim National Government collapsed to the whims of General Abacha, who until his death was planning to succeed himself and thereby perpetuate his regime. In this circumstance, it comes as no surprise that development has been a victim of authoritarianism in Nigeria. A country whose founding fathers had work relentlessly for a Federal system of government with decentralized powers, but which the military turned into a Unitary State.

That Nigeria is long overdue for a democratic governance is not in dispute. Everyone, both old and young, civilians and military populations, except for small cabal, have since agreed on the need to restore democracy in Nigeria with utmost urgency and have fought tooth and nail in its quest.

For the new democracy to be sustainable, we must draw some lessons from the past mistakes and be able to guide against the future of the new democracy. It is with this as a motivation that Media Rights Agenda has undertaken this project: “Executive Watch”. The project seeks to monitor the new government of President Obasanjo to guard against possible derailment. It is to act as a feed back to President Obasanjo on what the populace, cutting across all sections of the society, feel about his policies and decisions, and also their reaction to his statements on crucial state matters.

Media Rights Agenda was involved in activities aimed at developing integrity in the electoral process during the transition by monitoring and reporting on the prosecution of the political transition programme and as well monitoring and reporting on the media coverage of the process to determine the extent of fairness exhibited by them in giving each political party equal access to air its views. (see Media Scorecard and Airwaves Scorecard , Media Rights Agenda, (January, February, March, April, May and June, 1999)).

OBJECTIVES

That Nigerian recently passed through one its most trying periods in her political history is not debatable. With that experience in mind, and a desire to ensure the success of the present civilian democratic government, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is undertaking to monitor some major activities and policies of President Olusegun Obasanjo the aims of which are:

- to ascertain the popularity such activities and policies enjoy among a wide spectrum of Nigerians
- to ascertain how well the government is carrying along the Nigerian people who had given all to ensure the enthronement of a civilian democratic government.

The overall objective being, not only to keep track of the President’s performance and popularity, but also serve as a feed back to the government to enable it, accordingly, serve Nigerians better.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TOPIC

On assuming office last year after a dictatorial military era, President Obasanjo while not promising to perform magic, however, urged Nigerians to be hopeful assuring that the new system of government would bring in a new lease of life. Despite the promises, the country has, however passed through the fire of ethnic strife insecurity of lives and properties, religious mayhems, unemployment crisis and break down of social amenities. While some of these problems among which is hitherto endemic fuel scarcity, appear to have been tamed for good, some other very fundamental ones are still rocking the survival boat of the new dispensation.

METHODOLOGY

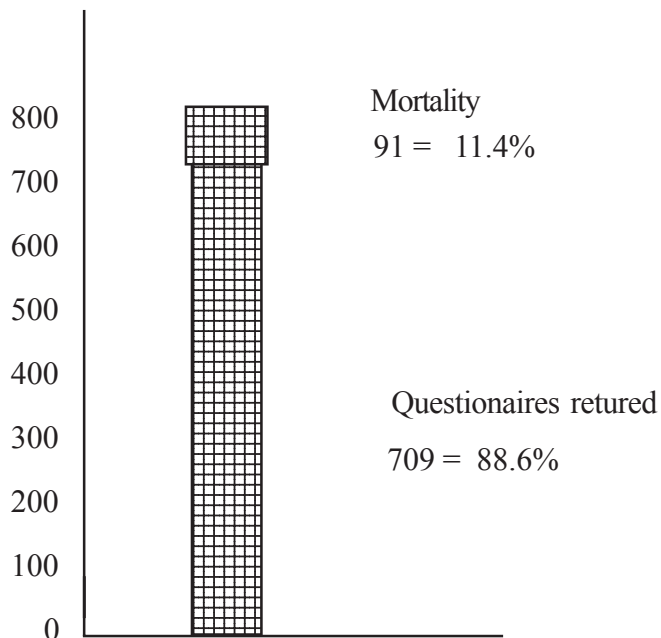
- This is the ninth report under this project and response sampling is restricted to Lagos State.
- It involves the administration of structured questionnaires of eight
- The sample comprises 800 respondents aged between 18 years and above both male and female.
- The sample is made up of three sub-groups of persons which include people with non-formal education /those who attained primary school level, post-primary school level, and post-secondary school level.
- The three sub-groups are represented in the sample in the ratio of 150, 200 and 450 respectively.
- The sub-group of non-formal education/primary school level were assisted by MRA's researchers to read and interpret the questions and elect appropriate options according to the preferences of the respondents concerned.

PRESENTATION OF RESULT

ACHIEVED SAMPLE

Sample sizes Sample groups	Nos of questionnaires administered	Nos of questionnaires recieved and %	Nos of questionnaires not received and %
Non formal/ primary school level	150	140 93.3%	10 6.7%
Post primary education	200	170 85%	30 15%
Post secondary education	450	399 88.7%	51 11.3%
Grand Total	Cummulative 800	Cummulative % 709 88.6%	Cummulative % 91 11.4%

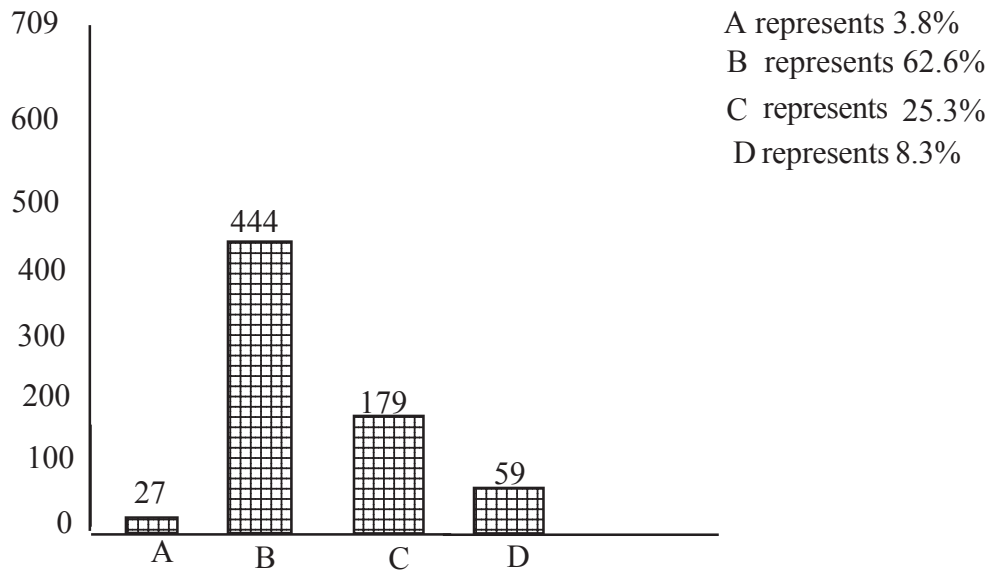
QUESTIONNAIRE RATE OF RETURN /MORTALITY



Q1. How would you assess President Obasanjo's one year in office?

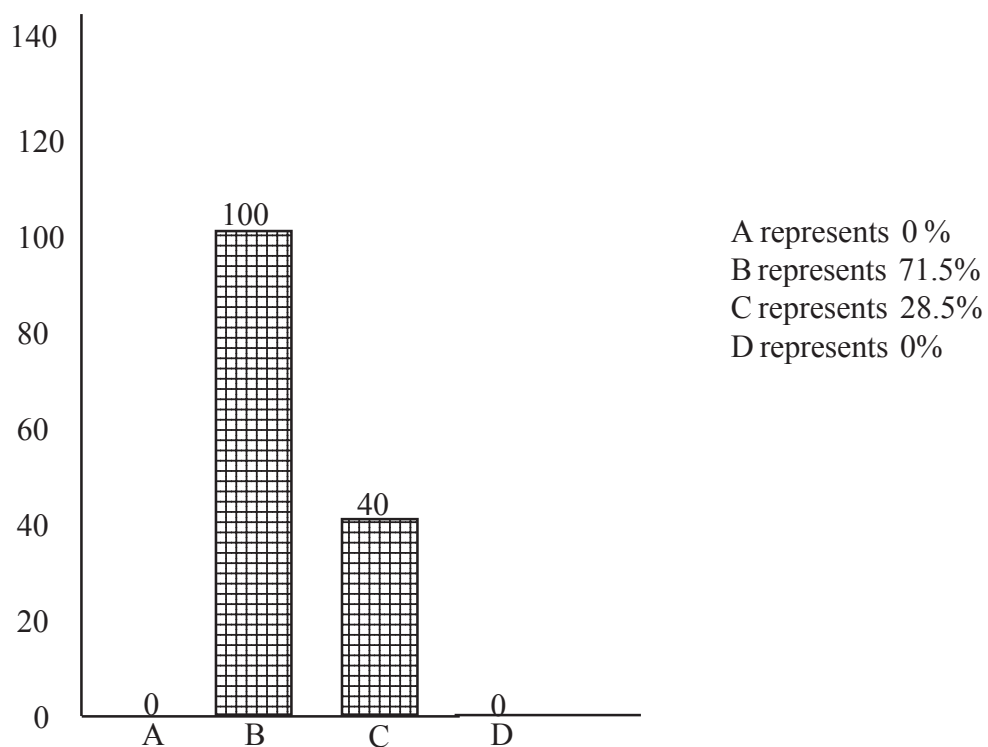
- (a) Bad**
- (b) Fair**
- (c) Good**
- (d) Very Good**

AGGREGATE RESPONSE

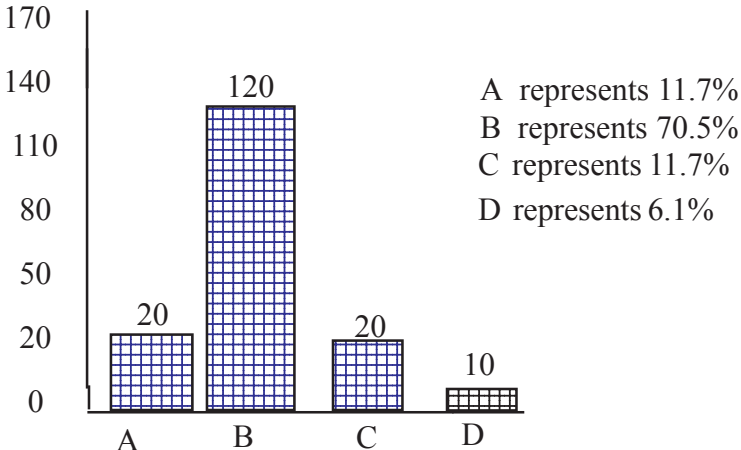


Group Responses

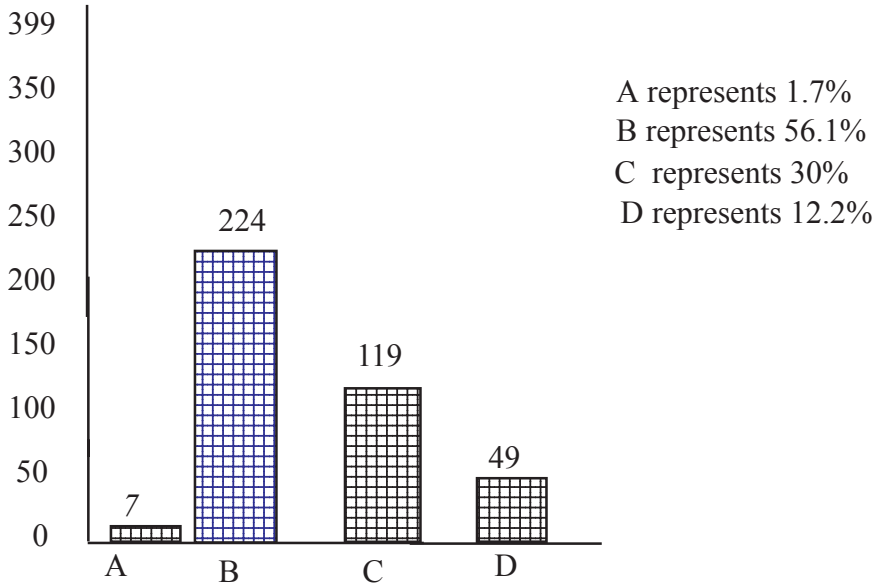
No Formal/Primary Education



Secondary Education



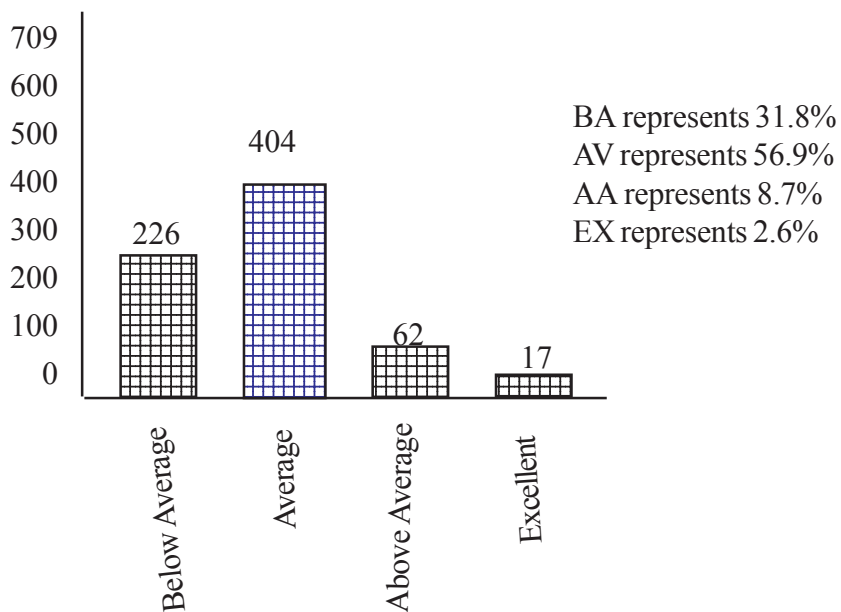
Post Secondary Education



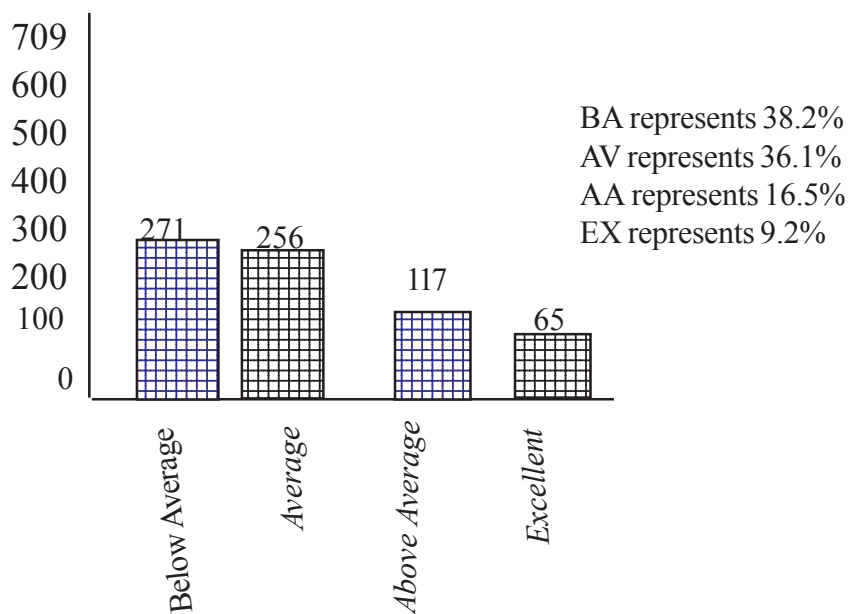
Q2. How well has the government performed in the following areas?

AGGREGATE RESPONSES

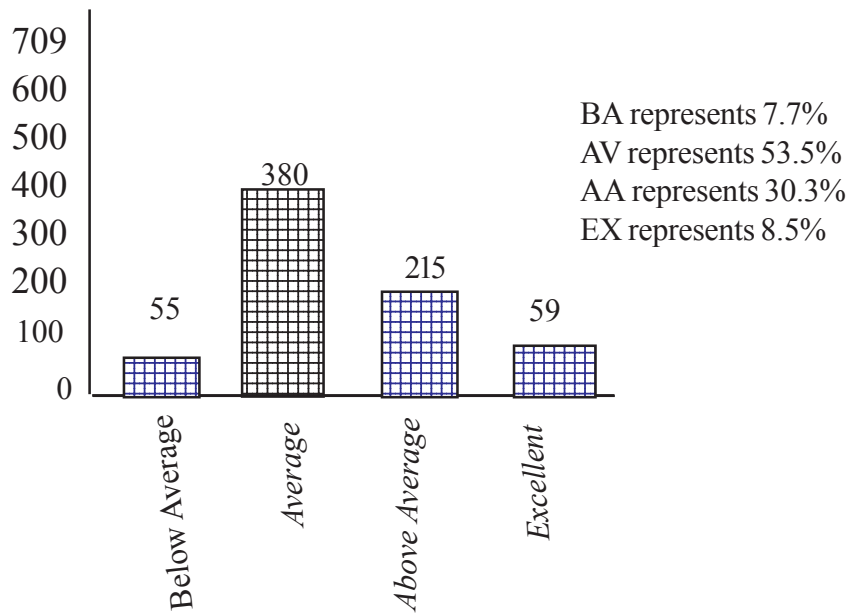
1 EDUCATION



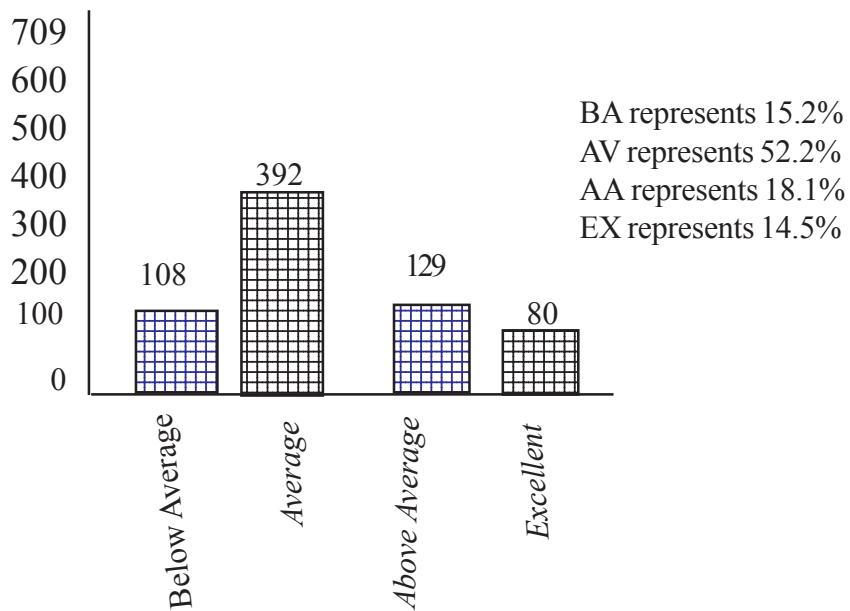
2 ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY (ANTI-CORRUPTION)



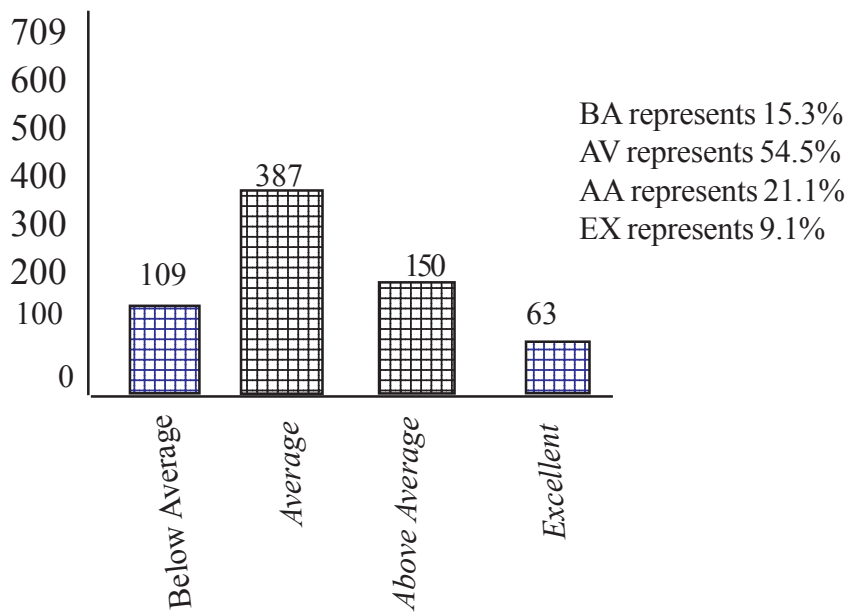
3 LABOUR RELATION



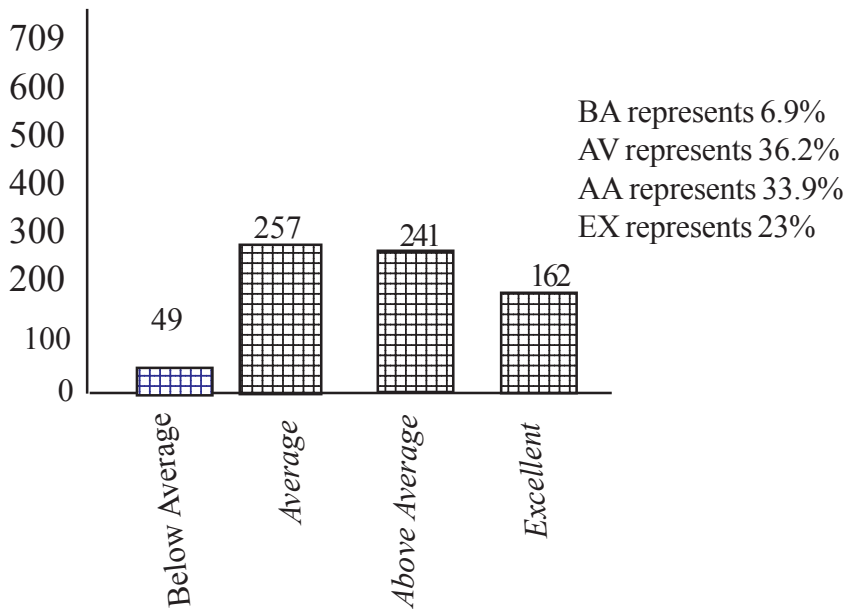
4 FOREIGN POLICY



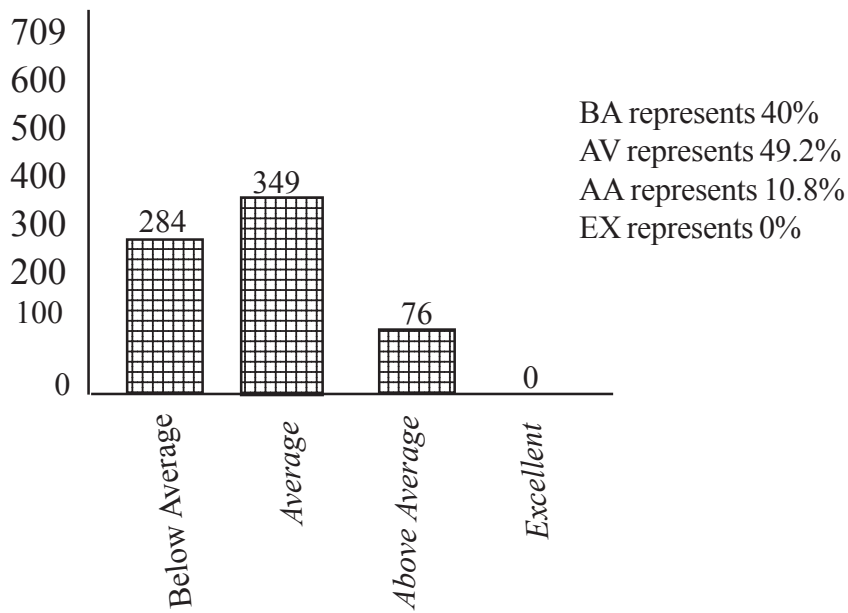
5 HUMAN RIGHTS



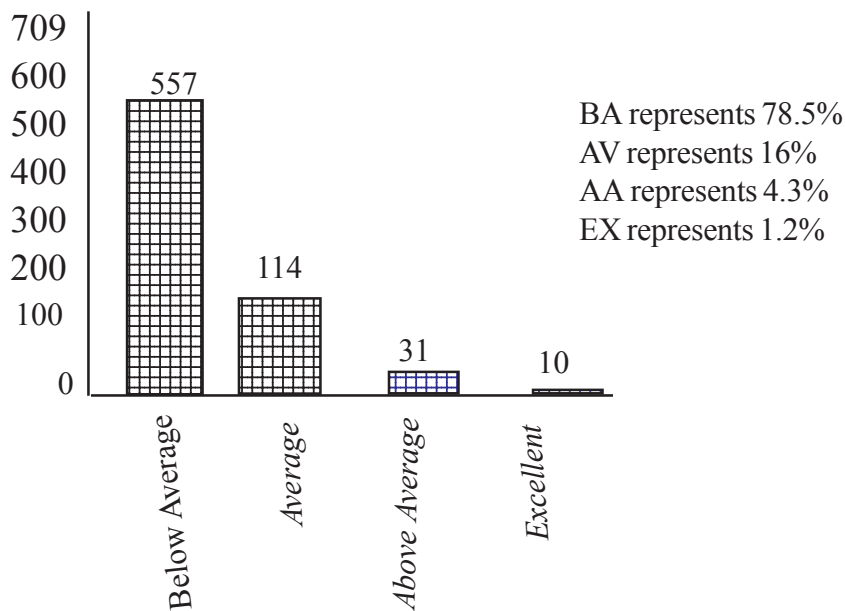
6 FUEL SUPPLY



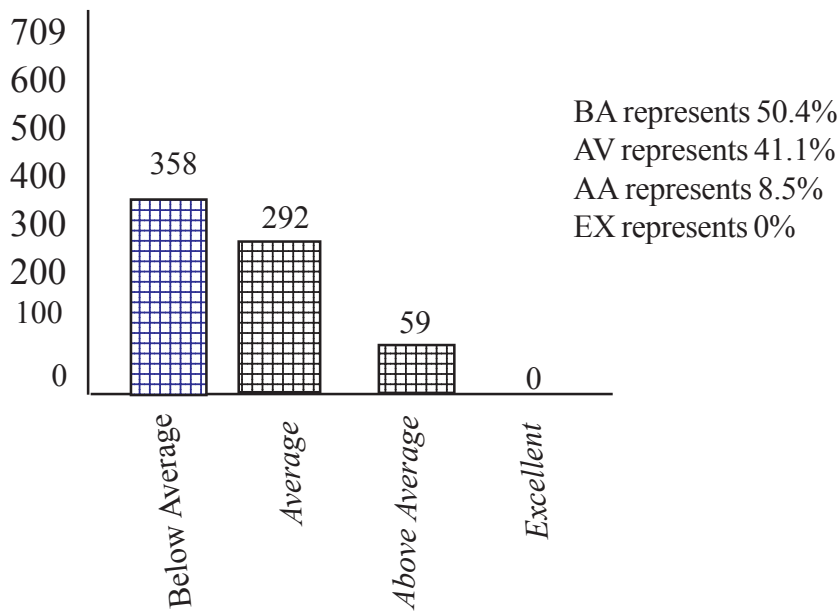
7 ECONOMY



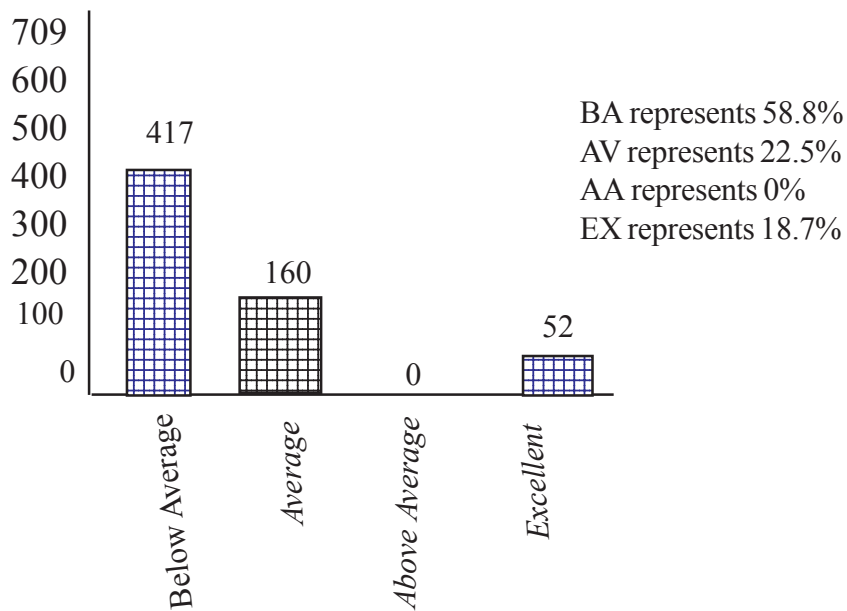
8 ELECTRICITY SUPPLY



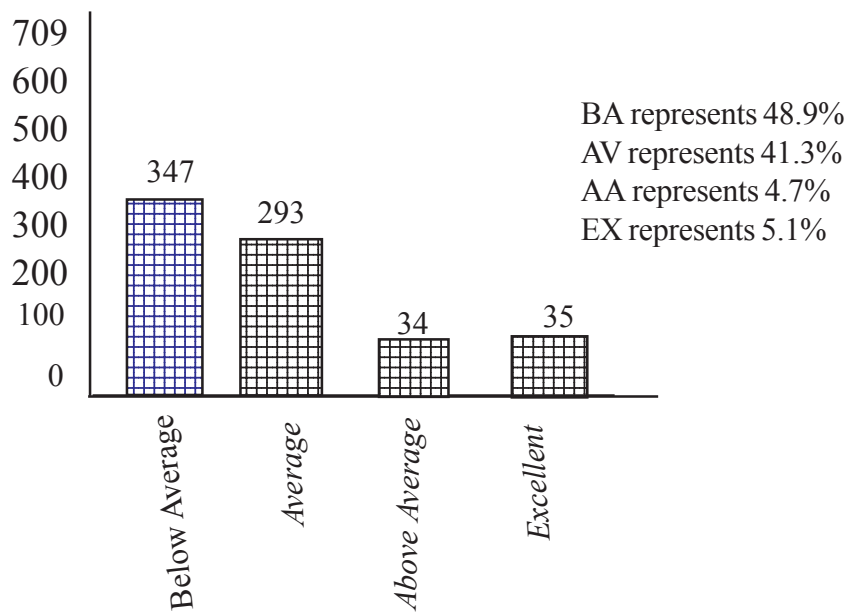
9 SECURITY (LIVES & PROPERTIES)



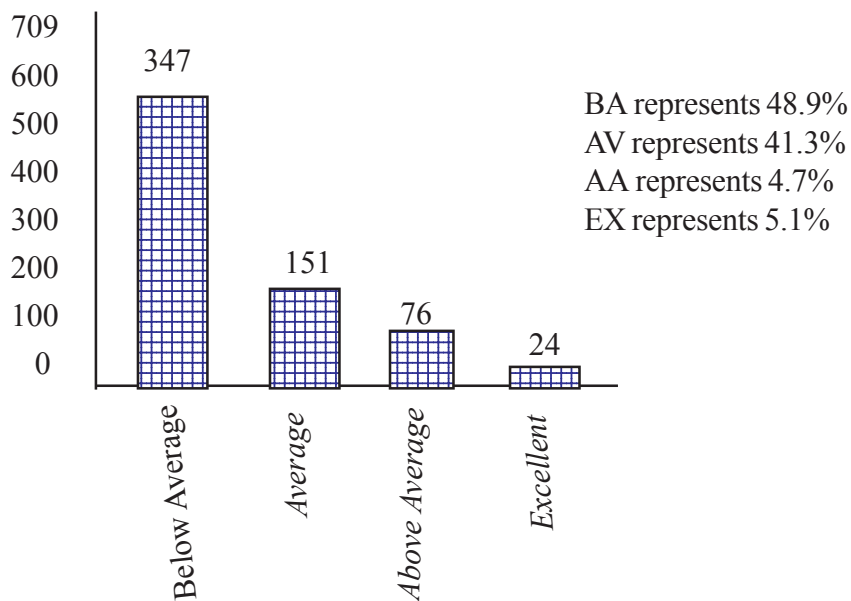
10 UNEMPLOYMENT



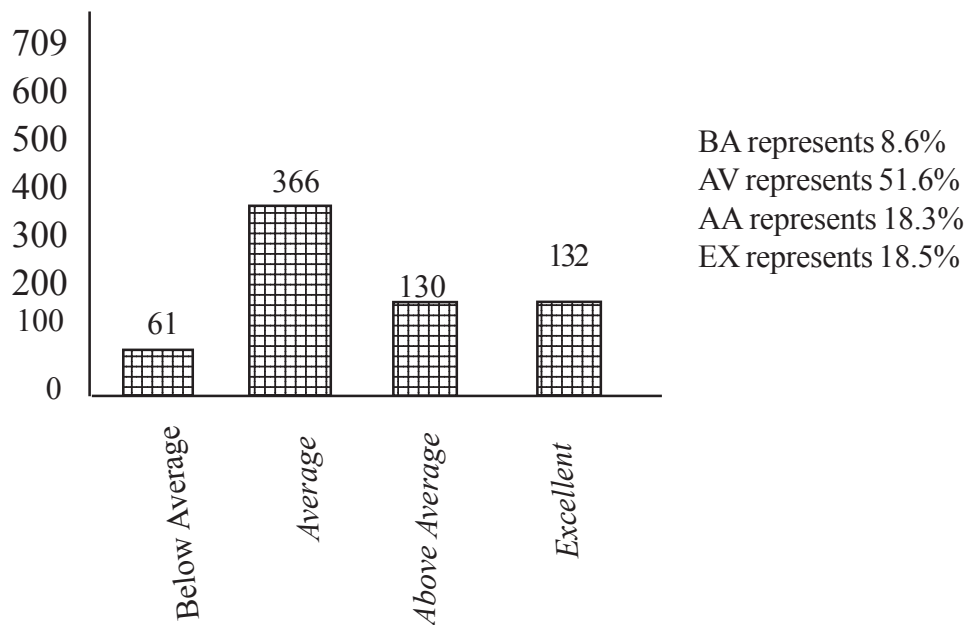
11 SOCIAL AMENITIES



12 RELIGION



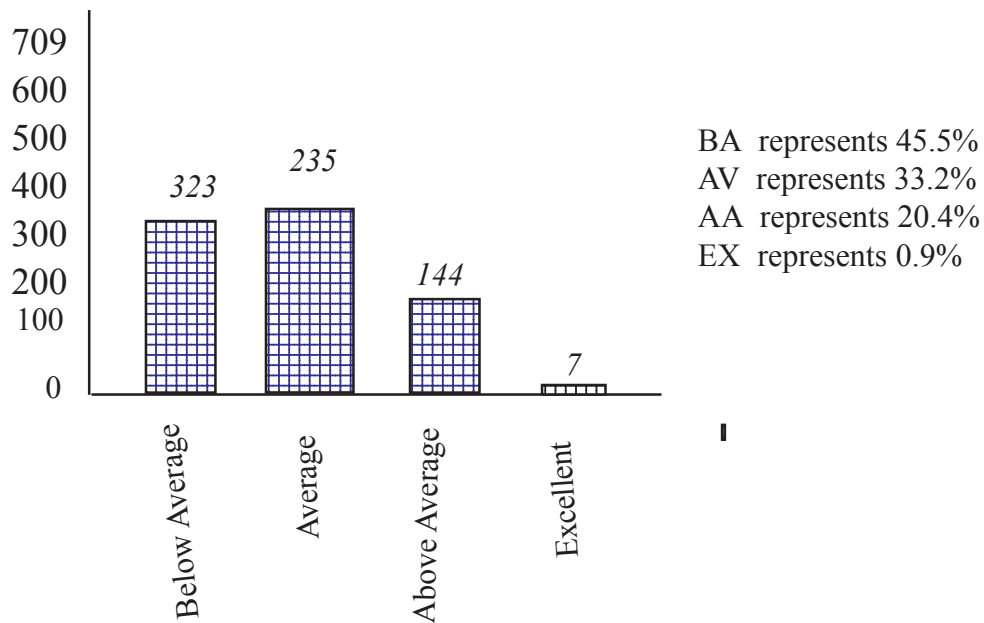
13 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



Q 3. How would you rate the performance of the National Assembly in terms of adherence to constitutional responsibilities?

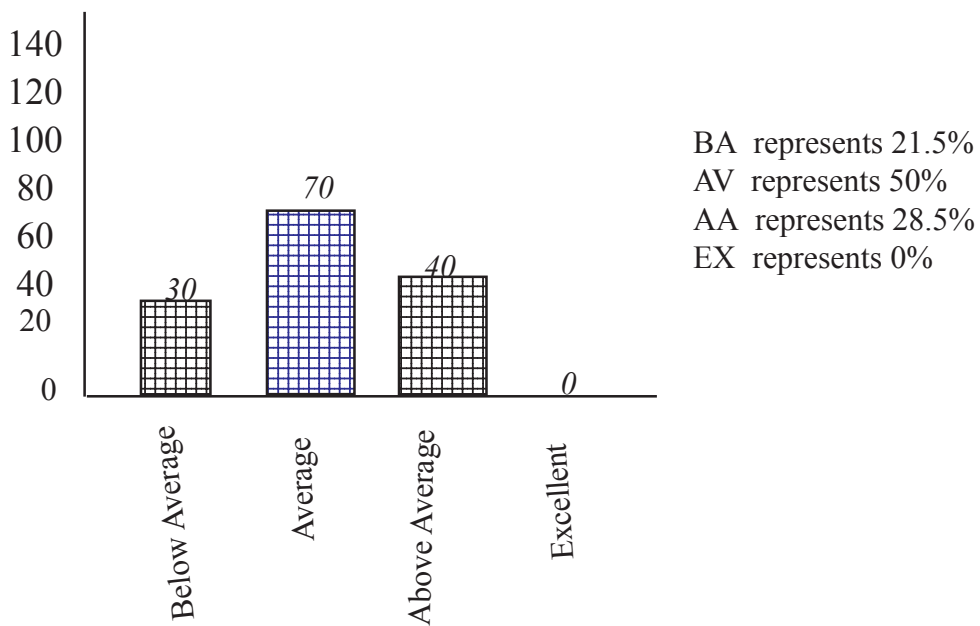
- (a) Below Average
- (b) Average
- (c) Above Average
- (d) Excellent

AGGREGATE RESPONSE

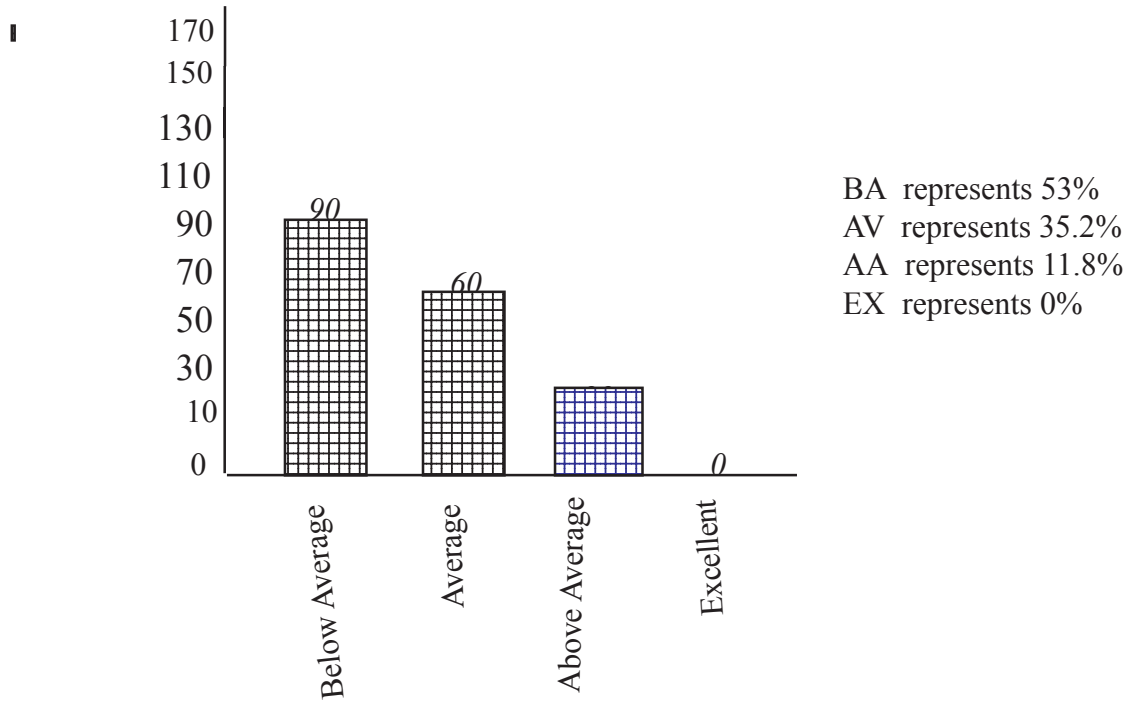


Group Responses

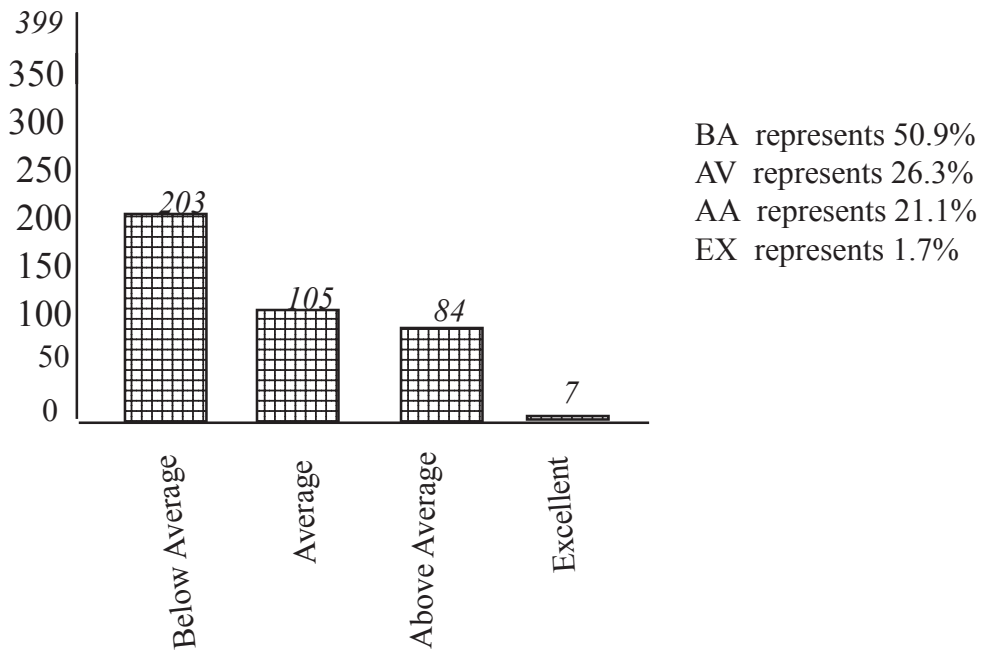
No formal/Pry. Education



Secondary Education

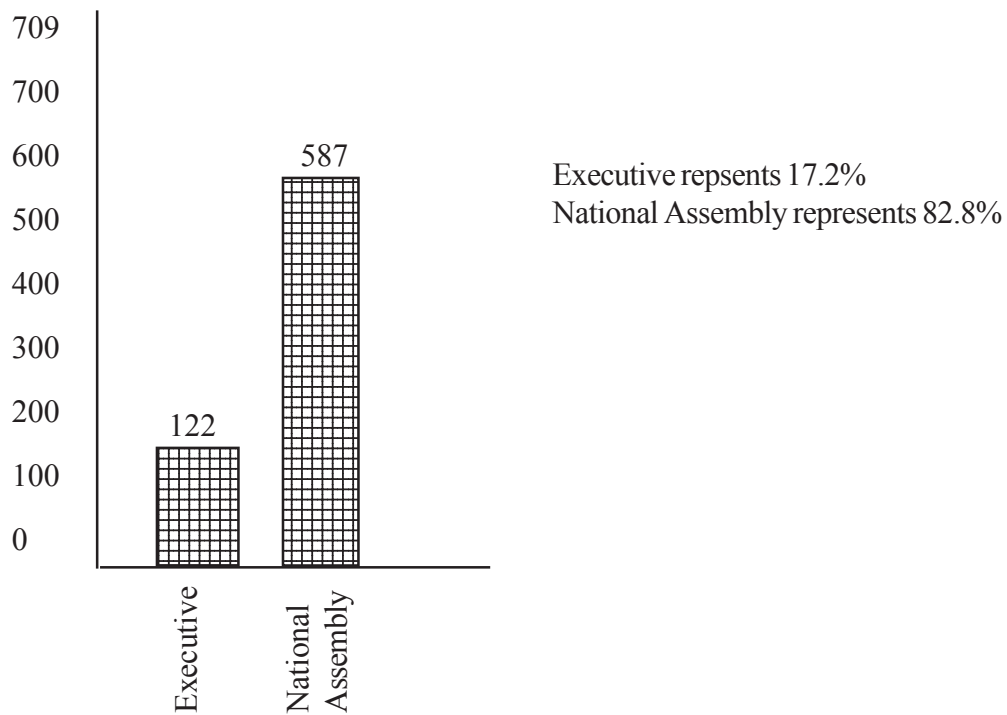


Post Secondary Education



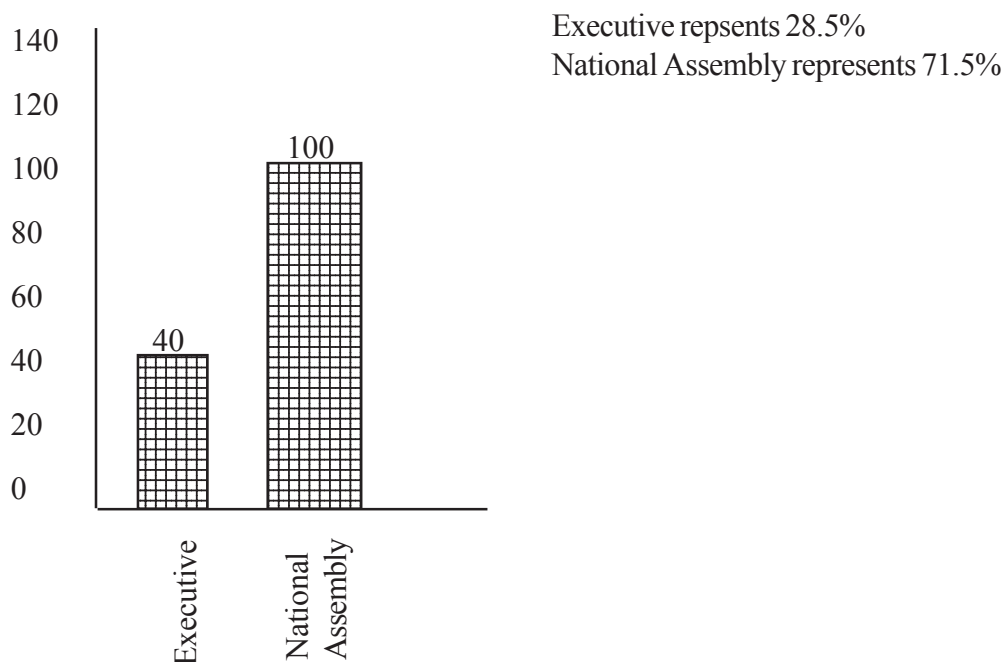
Q4. Who would you consider at fault in the frosty relationship between the Executive and the National Assembly? (A) Executive (B) National Assembly

AGGREGATE RESPONSE

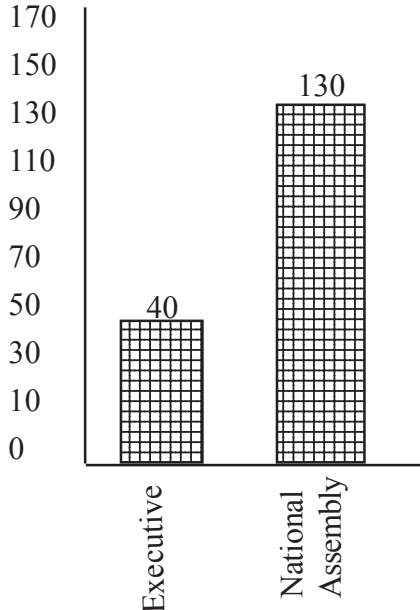


Group Responses

No formal/Pry. Education

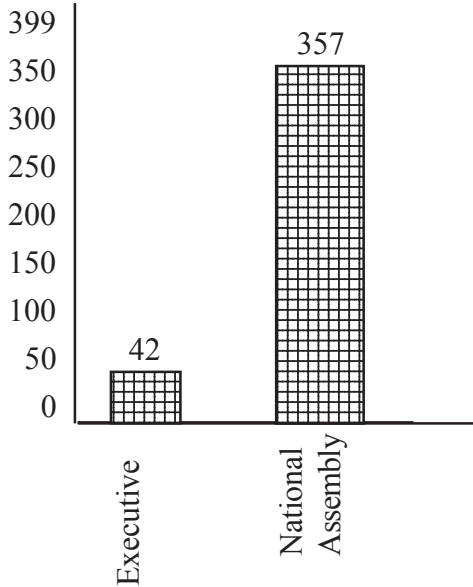


Secondary Education



Executive represents 23.5%
National Assembly represents 76.5%

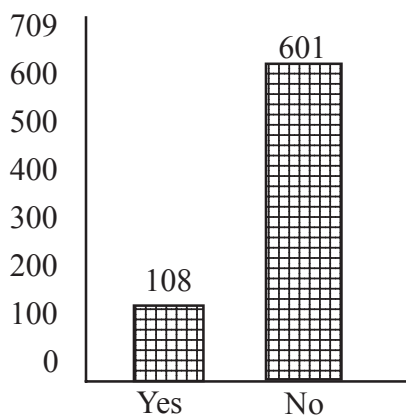
Post Secondary Education



Executive represents 10.5%
National Assembly represents 89.5%

Q5. Do you think Nigeria might relapse to military rule? ‘Yes’ or ‘No’

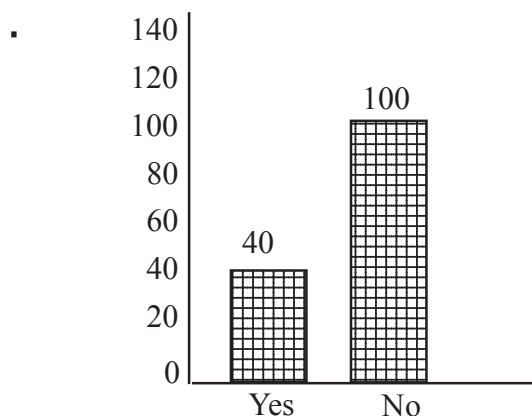
AGGREGATE RESPONSE



Yes represents 15.2%
No represents 84.8%

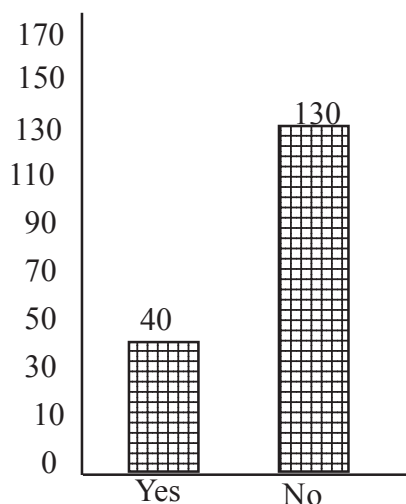
Group Responses

No formal / Primary Education



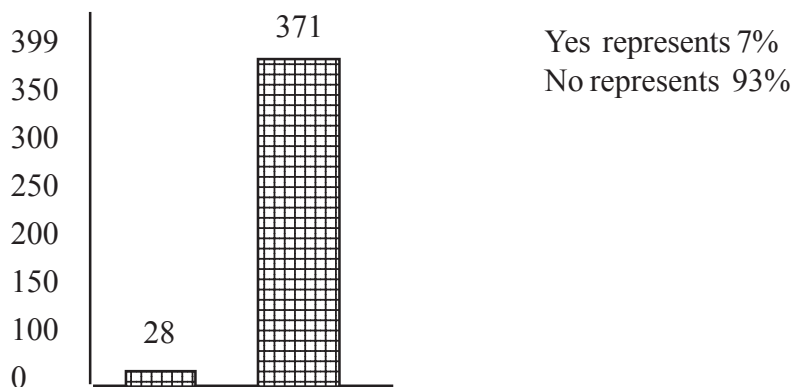
Yes represents 28.5%
No represents 71.5%

Secondary Education



Yes represents 23.5%
No represents 76.5%

Post secondary

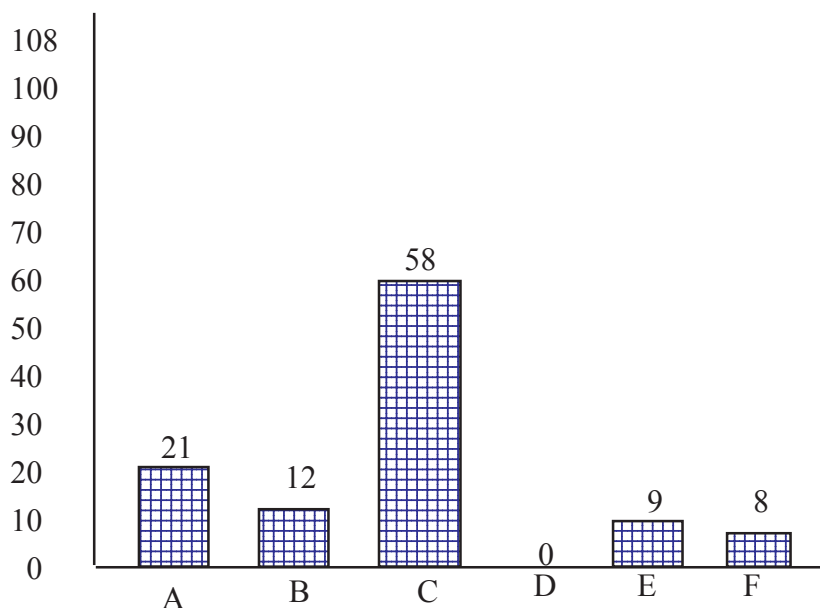


Q6. If your answer to question No 5 is ‘Yes’, rate in order of significance the following problems?

AGGREGATE RESPONSE

- (a) Conflicts between the Executive and Legislature
- (b) Unresolved Niger Delta Problems
- (c) The adoption of the Sharia law in some Northern states and the attendant crisis
- (d) The unaddressed high rate of unemployment
- (e) The poor handling of the anti-corruption crusade
- (f) The restiveness of ethnic groups such as OPC, IPC, MASSOB, Egbesu Boys etc.

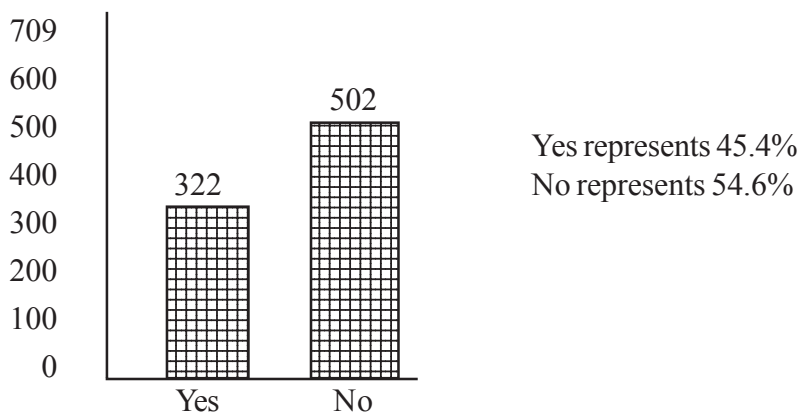
TOTAL RESPONDENTS



RESPONDENTS IN ORDER OF SIGNIFICANCE

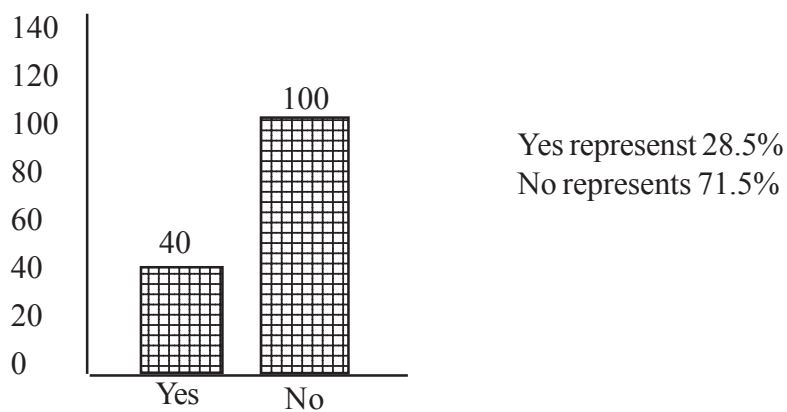
Q7. Do you support President Obasanjo's frequent trips abroad campaigning for debt relief and foreign investments? 'Yes' 'No'

AGGREGATE RESPONSE

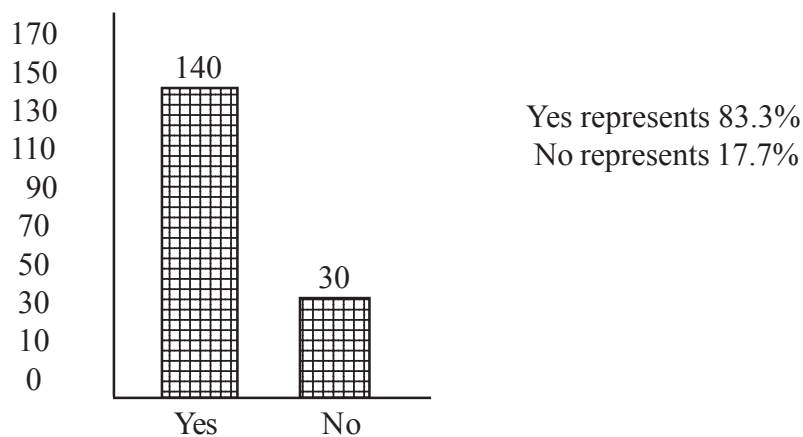


Group Responses

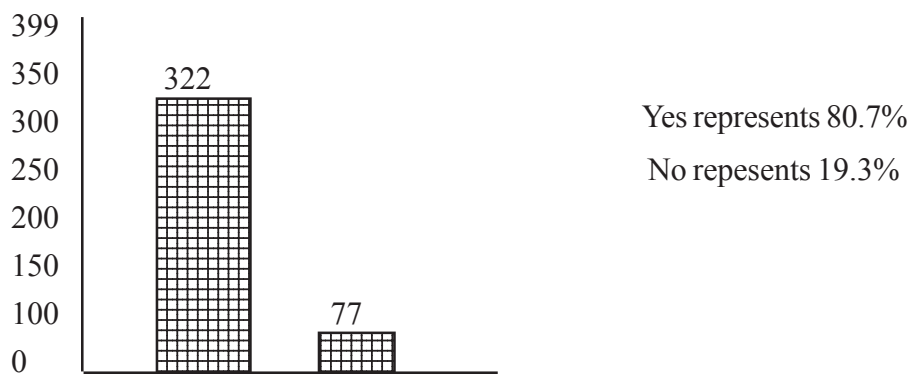
No Formal / Primary Education



Secodary Education

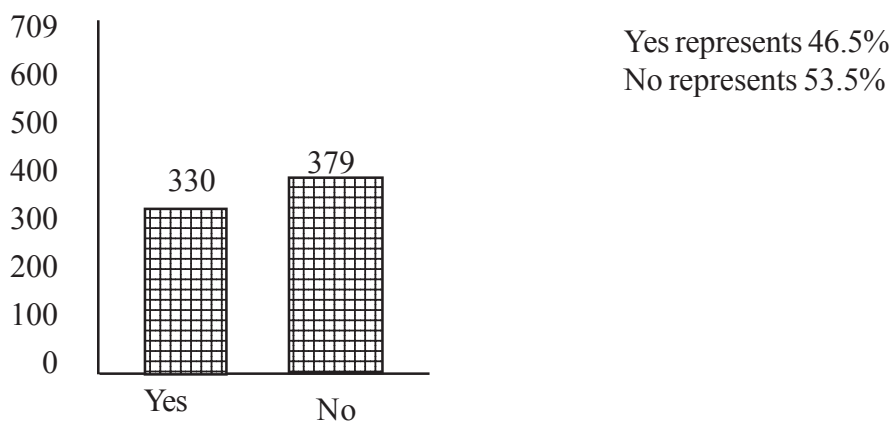


Post Seonday Education



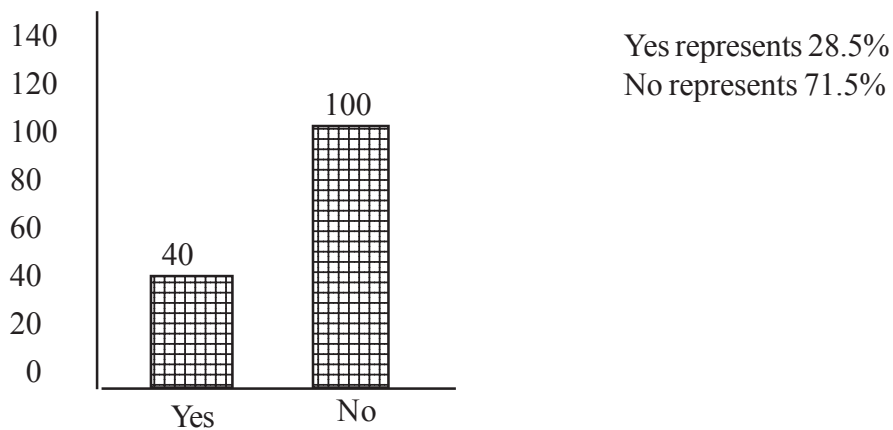
Q8. Do you support government's decision to hands off the administration of Federal Universities, Polythecnics and Colleges of Education?

AGGREGATE RESPONSE

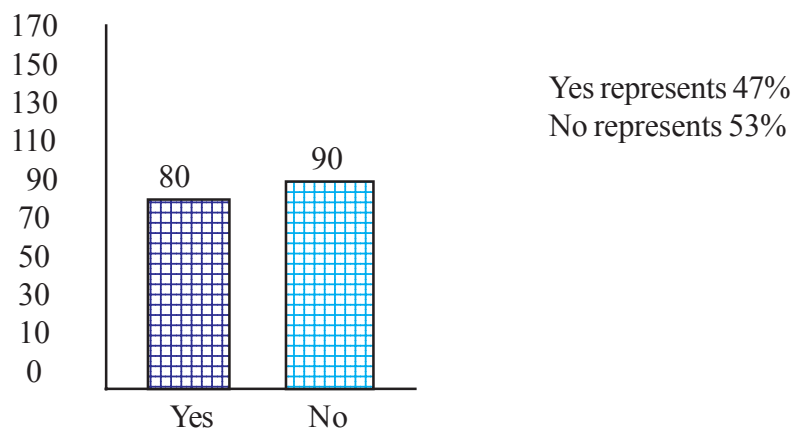


Group Responses

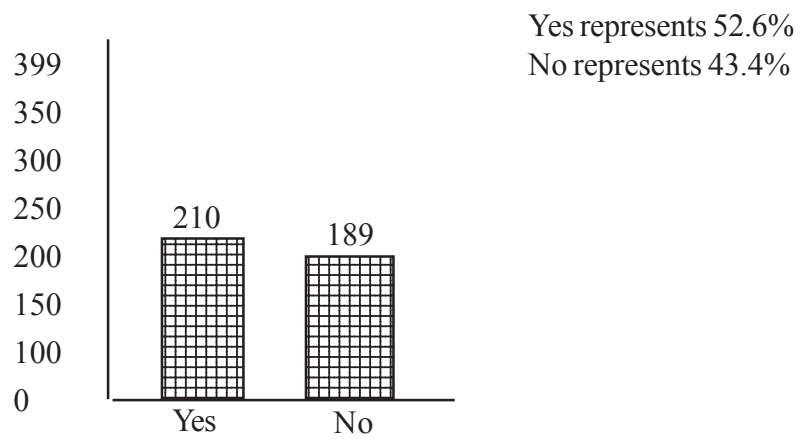
No Formal / Primary Education



Secondary Education



Posr Secodary Education





Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is an independent, non-governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. The MRA is registered under Nigerian law and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. MRA's Aims and Objectives are:

- a. to promote respect and recognition for press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria;
- b. to provide protection and support for journalists and writers engaged in the lawful pursuit of their professional duties;
- c. to promote the highest standards of professional ethics, integrity, training and conduct in the journalism profession; and
- d. to bring about a conducive social and legal atmosphere for the practice of journalism, and ensure the protection of the journalist's right not to be compelled to work against his or her conviction or disclose confidential sources of information.

Executive Committee

Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director
Tunde Fagbohunlu, Director of Legal Services
Morenike Ransome-Kuti, Director of Research
Austin Agbonsuremi, Director of Publications
Eze Anaba, Director of Projects
Tive Denedo, Director of Campaigns
Josephine Izuagie, Treasurer
Anselm Chidi Odinkalu, Member

Secretariat

Edetaen Ojo, Executive Director
Osaro Odemwingie, Publications Officer
Maxwell Kadiri, Legal Officer
Adeola Ademola, Legal Officer
Ese Acholomu, Legal Officer
Ayode Longe, Programme Officer
Ademoyewa Johnson, Campaigns Officer
Joy Kadiri, Accountant
Mercy Jones Epete, Litigation Officer
Oluwabunmi Oke, Secretary
Yunus A. Abdusalam, Administrative Assistant
Rose Aikhuele, Office Assistant

Media Rights Agenda,

44, Alhaja Kofoworola Crescent, Off Obafemi Awolowo Way, Ikeja,
P. O. Box 52113, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria
Tel: 234-1-4936033, 4936034, Fax: 234-1-4930831.
E-mail: mra@mediarightsagenda.org
pubs@mediarightsagenda.org
Web site: www.internews.org/mra