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# Information Ecosystem Assessment of First Time Youth Voters In Myanmar's 2020 Election



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# Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CSM II	Civil Society and Media II project
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DMG	Development Media Group
DVB	Democratic Voice of Burma
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FTYV	First-time Youth Voters
GAD	General Administration Department
IEA	Information Ecosystem Assessment
KII	Key Informant Interview
MRTV	Myanmar Radio and Television
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NLD	National League for Democracy
RFA	Radio Free Asia
TV	Television
UEC	Union Election Commission
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
VE	Voter Education
VOA	Voice of America

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# 1. Executive Summary

An estimated five million youth will become eligible to vote for the first time in Myanmar's November 2020 elections. This notable change in the electorate comes in parallel with a significant shift in the information environment itself. Myanmar's shift to digital media has elevated the importance of Facebook in sharing election-related information among first-time youth voters (FTYV). Mobilizing youth to vote and to make informed choices at the polls is critical to Myanmar's democratic transition. This Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) was conducted to understand the specific information needs of FTYV and serves as a reference to media houses, NGOs and political stakeholders as they seek to improve outreach to this voter group. It aims to inform and improve programming through the USAID-funded Civil Society and Media project, the funding source for this piece of research.

The IEA, conducted over the course of August 2020, used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodology to reach FTYV, defined as people between ages 18-35 who did not vote in previous elections. The research team deployed an online survey, supplemented by key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Due to rolling lockdowns and travel restrictions to control the spread of COVID-19, all KIIs and FGDs were conducted via telephone or online. See page 8 for more detail on research methodology.

## Summary of Key Findings:

### ***Facebook is “best” source of information for elections, but television is still most trusted***

Among FTYV, 83% of survey respondents cited Facebook as the best channel to receive elections information. In Myanmar, Facebook and the Internet are virtually interchangeable. Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focused Group Discussions (FGD) confirmed that information flows fluidly among Facebook users, who receive and share information in their respective common interest groups on Facebook, highlighting the important role of informal social media networks, which function as information sharing mechanisms. A few qualifying facts add more nuance to this finding: 1) the online survey was distributed through Facebook, which self-selects Facebook users; 2) the emergence of COVID-19 has increased Facebook use and the number of Facebook users; 3) respondents and interviewees were well aware of disinformation common to the platform, diluting their trust in information received via social media.

The survey was supplemented by KIIs, which confirm that overreliance on social media does not reach rural communities, especially those in Rakhine, Chin and Shan states with little or throttled Internet access. 31% of survey respondents identified TV as the most trusted source of information, due in part to its stability and reliability. While Internet shutdowns and throttling affect access to Facebook and the quality of information shared on social media is in question, surveyed FTYV can trust regular TV broadcasts with official information.

***Traditional media still plays a central role in inclusive voter education/elections outreach***

While social media use is now widespread, survey respondents and interviewees still cited television, print and radio as main sources of information. 49% of respondents still regularly read the newspaper, 65% still watch TV, and 36% still listen to the radio. Moreover, insights from interviews and FGDs show that voters in Rakhine, Chin and Shan, affected by Internet outages, those in rural areas with limited access to Internet and digital communications infrastructure, and internally displaced persons may be excluded from information distributed solely on social media. Though traditional media is essential to inclusive quality information, this sector, especially those at the local and regional level, is struggling to survive financially. Sustainability of the traditional media sector will determine which voices are heard in elections-related and other discourse.

***FTYV demand health, livelihood and education-related information over elections information***

64% of survey respondents ranked health-related information in their top three information needs, followed by livelihood information at 51% and education information at 49%. Political and election-related information followed, with 41% and 35% respectively. The high ranking of health-related information needs is almost certainly tied to the emergence of COVID-19 in the lead-up to and during the study. Respondents want to better understand COVID-19 risks and related preventive measures. However, the additional high rankings of livelihood and education information show that voters want information that directly impacts and improves their day-to-day lives. Full of generalized promises that are not translated into “bread on the table” issues, elections-related information does not currently meet those needs.

***FTYV need localized information on political parties to cast a more informed vote***

Turning to the elections information needs specifically, most youth from the interviews and focus group discussions claimed that they do not have enough information about the election

other than the announcement to check for the voter lists and a few campaign activities initiated by the main parties such as the NLD (National League for Democracy) and USDP (Union Solidarity & Development Party). They have rarely heard of other political parties in their regions and rarely read news. With little or incomplete information on who can really do what for their region, interviewees and FGD participants said they have little agency in their voting decision. In survey responses on elections information needs, 47% of respondents cited the need to know how to research political parties and candidates; 34% wanted more information on the candidate nomination procedure; 33% need more information on how to check rules and regulations; and the 27% of respondents cited the need for information on how to cast a ballot and how to find out more on voting procedures, respectively.

### ***Lack of access, resources hinders elections information sharing beyond UEC***

While 78% of survey respondents report that they received “enough” information to cover their information needs, the insights from interviews and focus group discussions show that participants received limited elections information and that in fact, a huge gap around elections information still remains. Interviews with CSO representatives and media professionals indicate the UEC’s lack of transparency and lack of sharing of elections information. The role of the UEC on different levels is critical to shape the information flows for the upcoming election, but the UEC’s ability to reach out to the public is still weak. While other information channels have emerged to fill that vacuum, they face their own challenges. Facebook, as discussed, is widespread but not entirely inclusive. Media houses struggle with resources to conduct comprehensive election coverage outside Yangon. And CSOs are hampered by a lack of collaboration with the media, as well as administrative blockages that prevent them from conducting voter education activities at the township level.

The above trends illustrate challenges in the form of inclusion of rural/displaced populations and access to transparent, quality information. But they also illuminate opportunities in the form of increased access to digital platforms and a clear interest on behalf of youth voters to learn more about local political parties. Internews hopes these findings will be useful in informing future development interventions and ultimately improving the civic engagement of first-time youth voters.

## 2. Introduction

The 2020 election planned for 08 November 2020 is widely expected to be a challenge for the Myanmar government, not only because of COVID-19 and its related social and economic impact, but also because of rising identity politics among the country's main ethnic minorities. The 2015 election was regarded as the first step towards a democratic transition, ending nearly five decades of military rule with a landslide victory by the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by pro-democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Since then, tension between the government and ethnic minorities has risen, with the presidential appointment of chief ministers in ethnic minority states where ethnic political parties won.

There is hope that the upcoming 2020 elections will be a more meaningful democratic exercise than the last.<sup>1</sup> The voters will choose from a slate of over 90 political parties registered with the Union Election Commission (UEC), including the main parties such as the NLD or the Union Solidarity & Development Party (USDP), as well as 90 other political parties, which include ethnic-based political parties mainly competing in ethnic minority states. There have been mergers between smaller ethnic political parties to form a unified platform, noticeably in Mon and Kayah states<sup>2</sup>. In the 2015 election, voters made their choices based on the party (as opposed to individual candidates). In the current political context, citizens' voting patterns in the 2020 general election may differ according to a report by the central executive committee of the NLD<sup>3</sup> and the outcome of the 2020 election is bound to be influenced by ethnic politics, which plays a key role in the process of Myanmar's political transition.<sup>4</sup>

Notably, an estimated five million youth will become eligible to vote for the first time in 2020. With access to mobile phones and social media use, particularly Facebook, very prevalent among the young generation, mobilizing youth to vote is an investment in Myanmar's democratic transition, as mentioned by the diplomatic missions of four Nordic countries.<sup>5</sup> It is important to grow consistent voting habits in young people and highlight First-time Youth Voters (FTYV) as a unique and an important group, shaping their perceptions for electoral democracy. To improve voter education and electoral communications, it is essential that election organizing bodies, political parties, civil society organizations and media understand FTYV's information needs, media consumption habits and preferred platforms, trust in information sources and how they share information with others.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.irrawaddy.com/datetime/will-2020-election-shape-myanmars-democracy.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections/karen-parties-coordinate-campaigns-maximize-votes-myanmar-election.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/voting-patterns-change-2020-warns-ruling-party.html>

<sup>4</sup> Zhu Xianghui (2016), General elections in Myanmar from the perspective of inter-ethnic relations: contest and adaptation

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/mobilizing-young-first-time-voters-investment-myanmars-future.html>



As such, this assessment aims to understand the Information Ecosystem of First-time Youth Voters in Myanmar. The term Information Ecosystem refers to a loose, dynamic configuration of different sources, flows, producers, consumers, and sharers of information interacting within a defined community or space. For anyone interested in improving information access, flow and uptake in target communities, an understanding of Information Ecosystems is increasingly recognized as being key to the design of appropriate and effective interventions. This Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) of FTYV was adapted to inform the USAID-funded Civil Society and Media II project's election programming.

This assessment identified which platforms FTYV access for information, how they engage and share information with their peers and the sources that they trust most. The findings will also inform political actors, information providers and policy makers of the information ecosystems surrounding FTYV to design suitable programs with the aim to maximize political participation of FTYV across Myanmar.

### ***Contextual Media Landscape Situation***

In 2012, the abolishment of censorship of print media resulted in changes in Myanmar's media landscape.<sup>6</sup> As a result, many privately owned media entered the media market. An Internews study of media content distribution in Myanmar counted 1300 national, ethnic based and regional based media in Myanmar, in comparison with 45 news agencies according to the Ministry of Information.<sup>7</sup>

***Traditional Media:*** Although the print media continues, they have been struggling to survive and make a profit. Interviews with media professionals indicate that some media outlets have stopped producing print newspapers, and some have reduced their frequency of production. Most urban cities have access to various television broadcasting channels, but there are limited channels available in rural areas. People in rural areas must rely on external cable networks to surf a broadcasting channel using a set top box. The radio is used as a main source of information in the areas where internet service is not available, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas.

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<sup>6</sup> UNESCO (2016), Assessment of media development in Myanmar

<sup>7</sup> McElhone (2016), Myanmar media content distribution Landscape

**Digital:** Since 2013, the Myanmar government has allowed development in the telecommunication industry by issuing licenses to service providers. Since then, Myanmar has experienced the rapid growth of mobile and internet usage with the market entry of three new operators<sup>8</sup> forcing dramatically increased competition. This expansion of the country's telecommunication infrastructures has led to mass proliferation of smart phones, with Myanmar's citizens accessing smartphones daily. According to the Internet World Stats's June 2020 report, the figure of Internet users and Facebook users is virtually interchangeable – a 41% penetration rate, with over 22 million users. It generally reveals that the internet is Facebook and vice versa in Myanmar. However, stable and reliable access to electricity is limited. People in conflict-affected areas who are fleeing from civil war rely on solar panels for electricity. And access to mobile devices does not always mean access to reliable internet. The government maintains a full or partial internet shutdown in eight townships in Rakhine and Chin State.

**Challenges to Freedom of Expression:** Although changes to the media's legal framework have been singled out as a vital part of the reform process, the old controls over the new digital information sharing system remain.<sup>9</sup> Interviews with media professionals reveal that media freedom has deteriorated under the current administration. Journalists are often prosecuted under section 66 (d) of the Telecommunications Law, which criminalizes online defamation. Myanmar has slid downward in the World Press Freedom Index, from ranking 131 in 2017 to 139 in 2020.<sup>10</sup> A variety of media development conferences have opened a dialogue between different stakeholders on media reform, but discussions are still underway.

**Challenges to Public Access to Information:** Interviews with media professionals also show the challenges media organizations are encountering in accessing information and reporting on elections. The media itself deal with problematic access to information through the Union Election Committee. Moreover, resource limitations (mainly budgetary), limit in-depth election reporting. Election reporting is resource intensive and requires enough staff and budget to finance travel to areas outside Yangon. In addition, the websites of media in Rakhine State are being blocked because of armed conflict in the area and restrictions on travel and movement during this period also affect the ability to provide information to audiences. All these factors can adversely affect free access to quality information and the implementation of free and fair elections.

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*“The information accessible to the public is very limited and travelling is restricted in some areas due to security concerns. Some locals affected by the civil war do not even know there is an election coming up, because they focus on ensuring food and shelter.” - Male Journalist from Rakhine, KII*

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<sup>8</sup> In 2014, Ooredoo and Telenor were licensed and Mytel entered as fourth telecommunication operator in 2017.

<sup>9</sup> <https://teacircleoxford.com/2019/11/04/myanmar-media-in-transition-legacies-challenges-and-change-edited-by-li-sa-brooten-jane-madlyn-mcelhone-and-gayathry-venkiteswaran-iseas-singapore-2019-407-pages/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/myanmar>

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Information Ecosystem Assessment Approach

The Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) is a tool developed by Internews which can be tailored for the local context, themes and access factors. An information ecosystem itself is a complex, adaptive system that includes information infrastructure, tools, media producers, consumers, curators and sharers. These are complex organizations of dynamic social relationships through which information moves and transforms in flows. The IEA employs a descriptive research design in order to describe the information needs, trust, flow and sharing habits among youth first-time voters, with mixed quantitative and qualitative methods. The IEA offers a framework of eight dimensions to study information ecosystems, as follows:

**Information needs** – Are the information needs of all groups being served?

**Information landscape** – What infrastructure is in place to support information production and flow?

**Production and movement of information** – What infrastructures are in place to support information production and flow?

**Dynamic of access** – What are the power structures in the environment, and how can they affect how the information flows?

**Use of information** – What do people do with the information they receive?

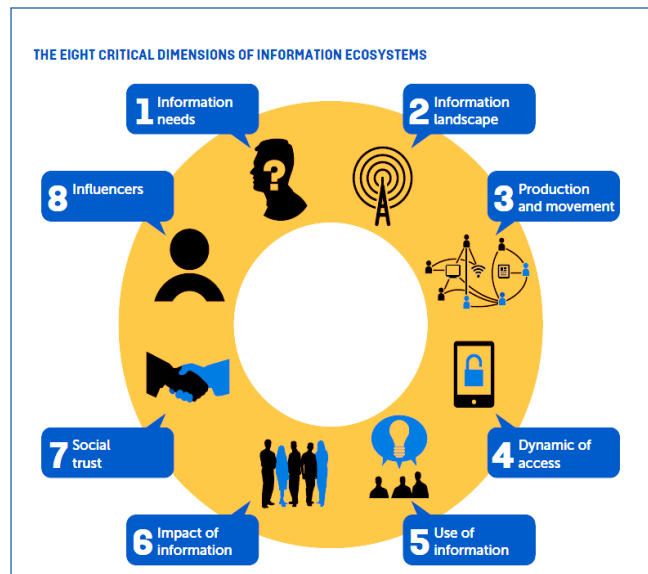


Figure 1: The eight critical dimensions of Information Ecosystems

**Impact of information** – What impact does this information have on the community?

**Social trust** – Whose information do individuals trust?

**Influencers in the community** – Which voices are loudest or most influential?

## ■ 3.2. Research Process

The study employs a descriptive research design in order to describe the information ecosystem among FTYV, with a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative approaches which is inferential.<sup>11</sup> The sampling frame is based on 2014 population and housing census data in order to identify first-time youth voters. Because this IEA was conducted with the goal of informing CSM II programming, the specific target group was FTYV who access CSM II media beneficiary (Public Information Fund grantee) content.

At the time of this study (August 2020), government restrictions on travelling and social gatherings were re-imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in different townships of Myanmar. Therefore, only remote data collection was feasible for this study.

### **Methods of data collection**

At the initial stage, an in-house desk review was conducted to explore the existing studies. A survey questionnaire was the main instrument employed for quantitative data collection. The survey was developed on the Google Forms platform to reach respondents and collect data online. Subsequent Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted over the telephone and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held online with the scope to complement the survey results with qualitative information to benefit from in-depth understandings and further insights.

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<sup>11</sup> It is proposed based on the lessons learnt from previous IEA-PPS experience against the nature and characteristics of IEA initiative by Internews.

### A. Desk Review

After initial consultations with key media and civil society stakeholders on the IEA approach and methodology, Internews conducted a desk review of existing studies to determine final research scope and design. The research team identified and reviewed available resources published by the organizations working around elections and in support of conflict-affected communities. The review showed that there is a limited number of studies that explore information needs, flow, trust and sharing among FTYV in Myanmar.

### B. Quantitative Data Collection

The survey questionnaire was developed to reflect key indicators to illuminate the changing realities on the ground including audience preferences and distribution channels that develop over time (digital access among youth or innovation programming on online/digital platforms). The questions were based on the IEA standard questionnaire developed by Internews. The survey was comprised of 48 questions including demographics data, constructed in different question types including polar-questions, multiple choices, linear scale and open-ended questions. The final draft questionnaire was translated from English to Burmese in Unicode and Zawgyi font themes. Lastly, the survey was built into a Google form linked to an MS Excel sheet, with survey entries set to automatically populate the Excel sheet. The link to the online questionnaire was posted on the Facebook pages of CSM II's 18 media partners, who represent national, regional and ethnic media outlets, to reach the most representative audiences from different locations across Myanmar up to the reach of saturation level within a certain period of time. This convenience sampling method specifically reached FTYV who access CSM II media partner content and social media pages. While this is not statistically representative of all FTYV, because a primary goal of this IEA is to inform CSM II programming, the method was deemed appropriate. See [Annex 1](#) for details.

**Sampling Unit** - Youth First-time Voters aged 18-35 who represent the audiences of the CSM II project's media partners (PIF grantees) across the country. Those who voted in previous elections were excluded from the sample.

**Sampling Design and Samples:** To obtain valid and reliable data, the study used a convenience sampling design, which was feasible for remote data collection from male and female youth from different States and Regions. A survey questionnaire was posted on CSM II beneficiary partners' Facebook pages. A total of 245 responses were collected over six days, and the responses were validated by requesting further information on participants' age and whether they were first time voters. After data cleaning, 150 responses were kept for analysis, and they represent all regions and states of Myanmar. Please see the table below for further disaggregation of the survey data.

*Table 1 FTYV segregated by location, gender and age*

State/Region	Sample Size						
	Female (18-23)	Male (18-23)	Do not specify (18-23)	Female (24-35)	Male (24-35)	Do not specify (24-35)	Total
Ayeyarwady Region	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
Bago Region	1	2	2	-	-	-	5
Chin State	2	5	-	1	1	-	9
Kachin State		2	-	-	1	-	3
Kayah State	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
Kayin State	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Magway Region	-	5	1	1	3	-	10
Mandalay Region	1	8	-	-	1	-	10
Mon State	-	3	-	-	-	-	3
Rakhine State	3	13	1	1	9	-	27
Sagaing Region	-	4	-	-	4	-	8
Shan State	17	13	3	2	2	-	37
Tanintharyi Region	-	2	-	-	2	-	4
Yangon Region	5	18	1	1	3	-	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>150</b>

**Data Entry and analysis:** All respondent data was aggregated in Excel data sheets linked to a Google Form. Data collection was undertaken from August 30 to September 5 2020. After validating respondents were between ages 18-

35 and first-time voters, a total of 150 responses were processed for analysis and visualization using MS Excel.

### C. Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative portion of the research was developed after survey data collection to form a more complete picture of FTYV information trends and preferences. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed to elicit more open-ended responses from both focus groups and KIIs. A pilot interview was conducted, and the questionnaire was finalized by integrating the feedback of the interviewers based on the pilot test. The final version of the questionnaire was reviewed and translated from English to Burmese. See [Annex 2](#) below.

Two focus group discussions (FGDs) in Mon State and Mandalay Region with 10 FTYV (5 in each FGD; Female 9/Male 1) and 18 Key Informant Interviews (KII, Female 7/Male 11) were conducted to form a more nuanced understanding of the quantitative outcomes. First-time youth voters, CSOs and local media partners located in Myanmar were identified and selected for Key Informant Interviews and FDGs with the support of the project focal persons from Internews and the core researcher. Over the course of three days, two researchers conducted telephone interviews with the selected interviewees. The interviewers asked participant consent for use of their information in the study before the start of the interviews. During the interviews, researchers took systematic, detailed notes and transcripts. This qualitative data was then coded manually for open questions and thematic analysis.

### D. Limitations in quantitative and qualitative data collection:

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, during the study, there were travel restrictions for cross-region and state travelling and many townships in Yangon were under semi-lockdown. Restrictions on social movements imposed limitation on data collection in the field and face-to-face interviews and FDGs. Therefore, this study mainly depended on telephone interviews, online meetings and an online survey. Furthermore, the following other challenges were encountered, which contributed to overall delays in the research process:

- Remote data collection using online platforms posed an additional difficulty in controlling the online audiences to directly reach out to the target sample, as well as quality assurance. For instance, although a total of 245 responses were received, only 150 respondents were eligible for inclusion in this study, validated by asking a confirming question whether they are FTYV or not. Despite a detailed description of the target group being highlighted when the survey was shared, 39% of respondents were ineligible, either not falling within the target age range (18-35) or not first-time voters.
- Though careful consideration of inclusion of female respondents was planned for the survey, only 24% of responses came from women.
- Having the programming codes for Myanmar fonts, both Zawgyi and Unicode, made online data collection, processing and analysis inconvenient.
- Access to internet or mobile phone is limited especially in remote places and conflict-affected areas which may have limited the number of respondents from those areas. However, the survey respondents covered all 14 States and Regions which was due to dissemination of the survey through CSM II's media partners across Myanmar.
- Organizing FGDs was rather challenging because the researchers did not use local enumerators nor fixers on the ground. The researchers conducted only two FGDs, one in Mon State and one in Mandalay Region, with the support of their network of local contacts. The participants were not familiar with Zoom, so the process of setting up the app and introducing the platform to participants individually, some of whom had poor internet connection, was time consuming. However, once the participants became familiar with the tele-conferencing, the virtual format did not impact the quality of the discussion.
- Making appointments to interview key informants via phone was difficult and it took time to confirm their availability.



## 4. Key Findings

### 4.1. Information Needs

Amid the coronavirus outbreak across the country and continued conflict in areas such as Northern Shan and Rakhine States, timely and accurate information is essential for people to ensure their safety. People need to be aware of existing risks of COVID-19 and preventive measures of COVID-19, as well as their local situation. In this context, **FTYV interest in elections information is quite low in comparison with the need for other information related to health, livelihood and politics.** However, the survey was conducted in August 2020, so this may be related to the relatively early stage of the pre-election period.

According to the survey results, interviews and group discussions among first-time youth voters, their information needs depend on their field or status. For instance, students prioritized education, those who are from the medical sector cited health, those who are struggling to secure solid employment opportunities are interested in livelihood information and those who have close connection with and studying in the political field are interested in elections and political information.

Respondents were asked about what information they most need in the current situation.

*“The information related to Covid-19 is my first prioritized information during this period.” (Female FTYV from Kayah, KII)*

*“I’m not very interested in politics, when I see NLD and USDP posts on Facebook I get a bit attentive although it is not always.” “I only get a lot of information from major parties like NLD or UNSDP. We do not have enough information about ethnic parties, so we have a little possibility to make decision about who can really do something for our region.” (Female FTYV from Mandalay, FGD)*

**Overall, health related information was the most cited information need in interviews and focus group discussions, and 64% of survey respondents cited health-related information as their top need.** The livelihood, education and political information are ranked in second, third and fourth. Elections-related information ranked fifth place, with 35% of respondents citing this as an information need.

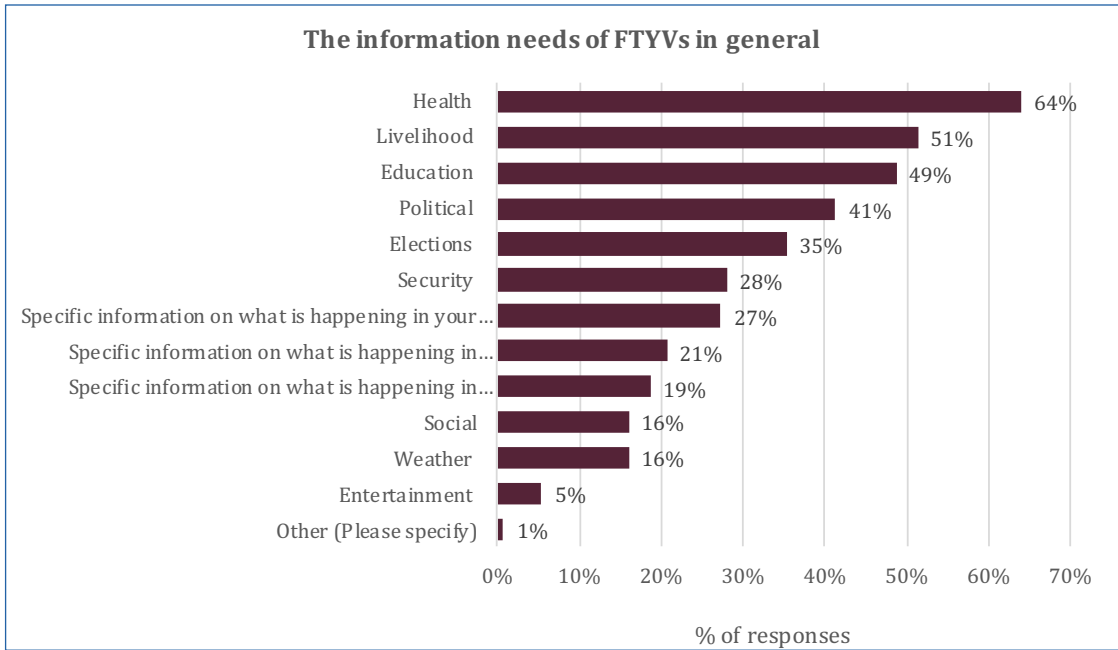


Figure 2: The information needs of FTYV in general

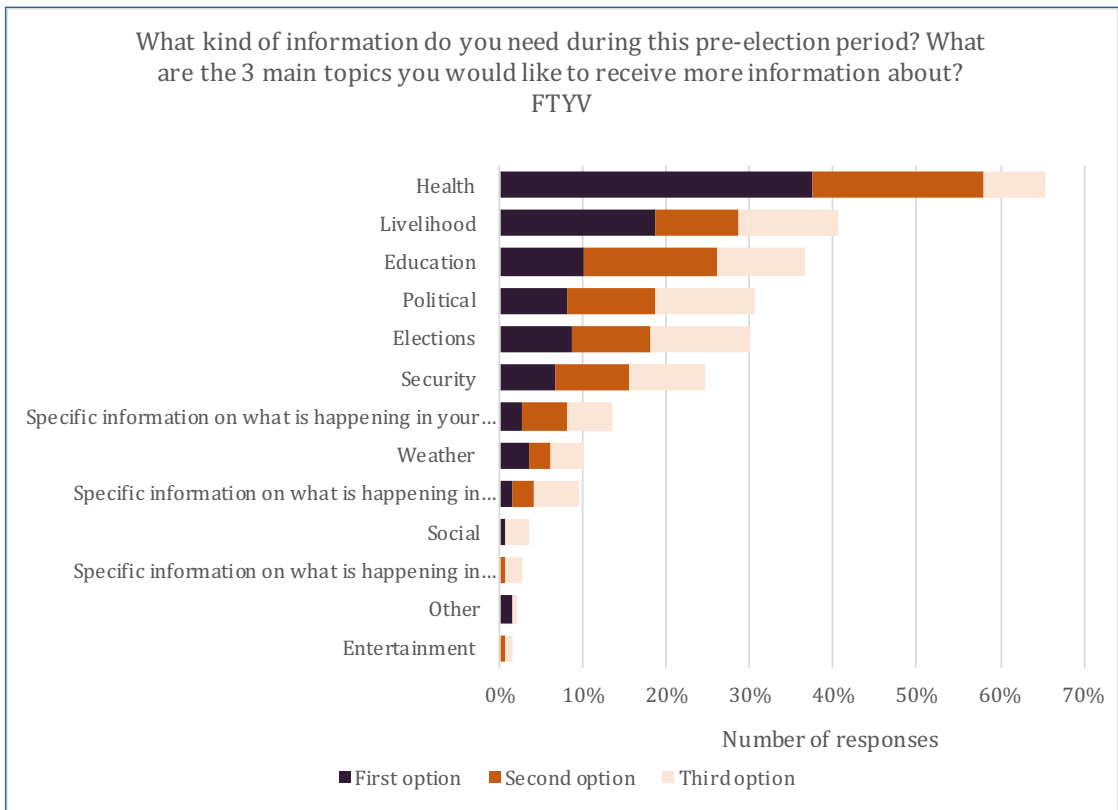


Figure 3: What are the three main topics you would like to receive more information about?

When the respondents were asked during this pre-election period what kind of information is needed by ranking the three main topics as their first, second and third priorities, health was still their main priority. **Despite the quickly approaching elections, information surrounding COVID-19 is still the most cited and of greatest concern during interviews and focus group discussions.**

In a broader sense, young people in Myanmar are struggling for educational opportunities, ways to make a living and information on how to stay healthy during the pandemic. Elections-related content is not as relevant to their immediate everyday needs.

Turning to the elections information needs specifically, most youth from the interviews and focus group discussions claimed that they do not have enough information about election other than the announcement to check for the voter lists, and a few campaign activities initiated by the main parties such as the NLD (National League for Democracy) and USDP (Union Solidarity & Development Party). They have rarely heard of other political parties in their regions and rarely read news. With little or incomplete information on who can really do what for their region, interviewees and FGD participants said they have little agency in their voting decision.

Likewise, in **the survey responses on the elections information needs, 47% of respondents cited the need to know how to research political parties and candidates; 34% wanted more information on the candidate nomination procedure; 33% need more information on how to check rules and regulations; and the 27% of respondents cited the need for information on how to cast a ballot and how to find out more on voting procedures, respectively.**

2% of responses under “Other” commented on other needs such as lack of identity cards or logistics for PWDs:

*“How can we vote without any identification cards to prove that we are citizens, can we be excluded from voting?” “Is there any special arrangement for disabled people?”*

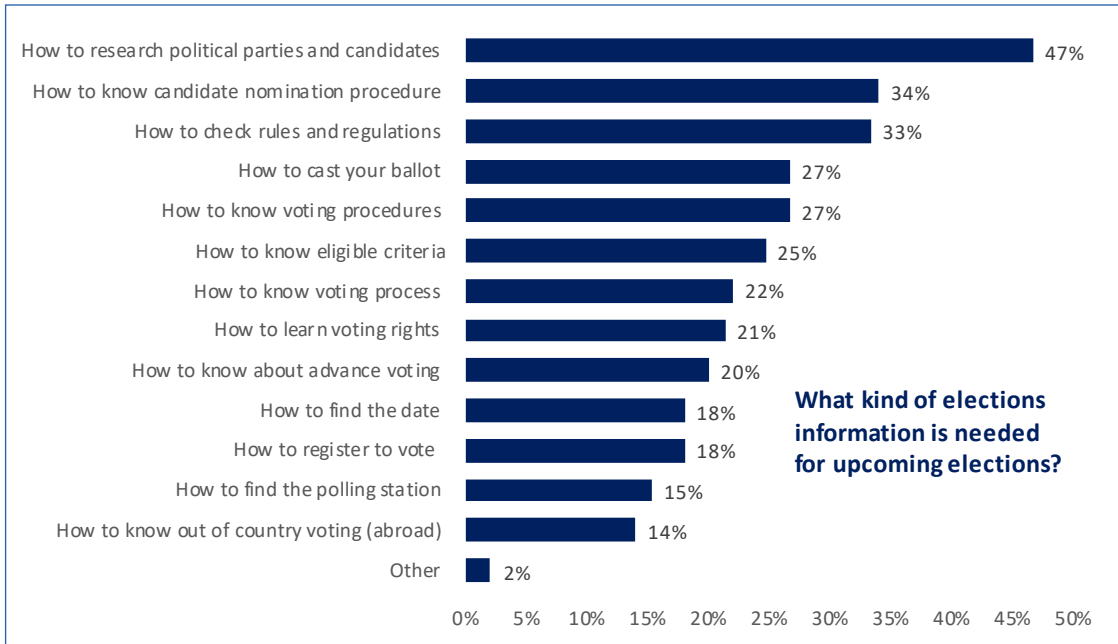


Figure 4: What kind of elections information is needed for upcoming elections?

The survey respondents also highlighted the reasons why they need elections-related information, for example:

- important to know,
- first voting experience,
- to vote as valid ballot,
- to vote for the right candidates,
- to make the right decision,
- not to make any mistakes,
- to know the qualities of the candidate,
- to take citizen’s rights and responsibilities,
- to achieve transparency in the elections process,
- to share with others, willing to understand and limited access to information.

Among FTYV, a question on whether they are even interested in voting arises. During research, it was observed that young people who have close relationships with the political environment, have a background in political education and/or are actively involved in social movements are more likely to be interested in the polls. However, among young people without these connections, **access to elections information is still low, with some FGDs and interviewees**

**noting limited access to elections information and little engagement with election-related news. These youth don't have enough information to make an informed decision, which will ultimately affect their decision to vote.**

The geographic factor plays another role in the ability and decision of FTYV to engage in the political process. Responses in the KIIs indicated that people from some areas in Rakhine State, Chin State and Shan State have lower interest because they rarely hear about elections, due to both a poor transportation infrastructure and a complete lack of or underdeveloped communications infrastructure.

## 4.2. Information Landscape

This section describes the types of media accessible to survey respondents, focus group discussion participants and key informant interviewees.

**Print Newspapers:** In the survey results, 49% of respondents reported they are still reading newspapers, however, only 29% of respondents reported that they are using newspapers as their best ways of receiving elections information. The interviews and focus group discussions pointed out that elderly people in their communities still read the newspaper to get information. In addition, interviews and FGDs with FTYV indicated that young people still find newspapers a trustworthy source of media, although they rarely use print newspapers as the best source of information.

**Television:** The interviews and focus group discussion found that DVB, RFA, VOA, BBC and Mizzima news programs are the most watched by participants. As the survey indicates, **TV is the most trusted source of information, with 65% of respondents are still watching TV and 47% used the medium as one of their main information sources.**

**Radio:** The focus group discussions and interview results indicated that elderly people use radio to listen to the news and younger people use radio for the entertainment purpose. 36% of those surveyed said they listen to the radio. 20% of respondents use radio as their main source of information, and 5% of respondents cited radio as their most trusted source.

**Digital:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, people tend to use internet and social media more than before, spending most of their time on Facebook as a source of news. Recognizing this, ward

offices and politicians have funneled elections information through this channel. Through the period of research, the voter list has been available primarily on social media. On April 1, 2020, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Su Kyi activated her

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*“Due to the lack of internet access, websites are being shut down by the government and journalists are imprisoned, the available news cannot cover the whole story about elections.” - Journalist from Rakhine, KII*

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Facebook account, which at the time of writing had more than 2.3 million followers. She recognized the important role of Facebook to spread her message on the challenges posed by COVID-19 and to post about the government’s plans and activities. She has called for public participation in adherence to the guidelines and preventive measures to limit the long-term impact of COVID-19.<sup>12</sup> She holds regular video conferences with frontline medical personnel, officials, and volunteers to discuss current activities, existing challenges and solutions.<sup>12</sup>

### 4.3. Production and Movement

The information flow is still uneven with weak collaboration among elections stakeholders such as political parties, the UEC and CSOs, etc. While 78% of survey respondents report that they received enough information to cover their information needs, the insights from interviews and focus group discussions show that participants received limited elections information and that in fact, a huge gap around elections information still remains.

The UEC is primarily responsible for providing elections information in the pre-election period, during the election and post-election. Interviews with CSO representatives working on elections issues and media professionals indicate the UEC’s lack of transparency and sharing of elections information. The role of the UEC on different levels is critical to shape the information flows for the upcoming election with the backing of government and support of political parties, but **the UEC’s ability to reach out to the public is still weak**. This vacuum has given rise to a number of other information sharing mechanisms.

According to the study, information flows fluidly among Facebook users, who receive and share information in their respective common interest groups on Facebook. This highlights the **important role of informal social media networks, which are functioning as information sharing mechanisms**. 83% of survey respondents cited Facebook as the best channel to receive elections information.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/virus-prompts-myanmar-state-counsellor-go-online.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/>

The interview results show that some of the large media organizations have already started producing elections stories by organizing separate teams focused solely on elections news. However, some media outlets are still struggling to produce elections coverage in the lead-up to the November polls because of limited resources. Social media may be one of the main channels to circulate information during this crisis. But questions on how to reach out to rural, remote and conflict-affected areas with lack of and limited internet access arise.

Civil society organizations are also vital in producing and distributing information in specific sectors, for example, providing voter education and elections observation and monitoring throughout the elections process in order to fill the gap and guarantee the right to information to the public. They have been using different methods and initiatives to encourage interest about elections and reaching out to rural and remote areas. Although union level UEC has allowed Civil Society Organizations to engage in election education activities, the activities can only be conducted in the townships if approved by the General Administration Department (GAD). Interviews indicate that some CSOs are conducting voter education programs, first time youth voter programs (such as Your Voice, Your Vote, Your Future), election campaigns and empowerment programs.

## ■ 4.4. Dynamics of Access

Habits of consumption are reportedly different between people from urban and remote areas, based on their underlying circumstances. The responses from the survey questionnaire, focus group discussions and interviews show that getting accurate information in some rural and remote places is difficult because news agencies do not publish content about elections and people do not have sufficient, if any, information about the candidate. Internet restrictions on 3G and 4G services in Rakhine and Chin States, or where only 2G internet services are available, heavily impacts information access in the region. Respondents also showed concern about internally displaced people who do not own smartphones and lack access to critical information. Lack of information significantly increases their vulnerability and makes it significantly more difficult for them to vote.

Respondents were asked to list the best ways for them to receive the elections information they need. The survey results provided strong confirmation that many people frequently use social media.

When asked if they currently use the information channels they mentioned, 97% said that they currently use those channels, and only 3% said they don't use the channels mentioned. For those respondents who do not use the reported information channels, they reported that they are busy and do not have free time, poor internet connection, cannot afford the costs, security reasons and political reasons as the reasons why they do not use. Although four mobile service providers are operating across the country, there is still limited access to mobile and internet connection. The interview results informed that **in rural and remote areas, people are using informal networks as sources of information.**

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*"... it is difficult to get to government departments over the phone. For example, you have to get confirmation to write an article, but get no response and the local government is not holding any press conference due to COVID 19. I was told to send an email but did not receive any reply for days." - Female Journalist from Mon State, KII*

*"Getting information from UEC is challenging because when writing elections news, we need the information from UEC and also validation, but they have never answered my call. I have heard that they can only answer in the press conference but not on the phone call. Impossible in this Covid-19 crisis!" - Female media professional, Yangon, KII*

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When respondents were asked whether they receive enough information to cover their information needs for the upcoming elections, 78% responded yes and 22% said no. Of those who are not getting the information they need, the reasons included a communication gap and lack of transparency, living in remote areas, poor internet connection, only having access to a 2G connection, a delay in receiving necessary information in time, information not being available, that the available information isn't relevant to their areas and that they are not sure whether the information is true.



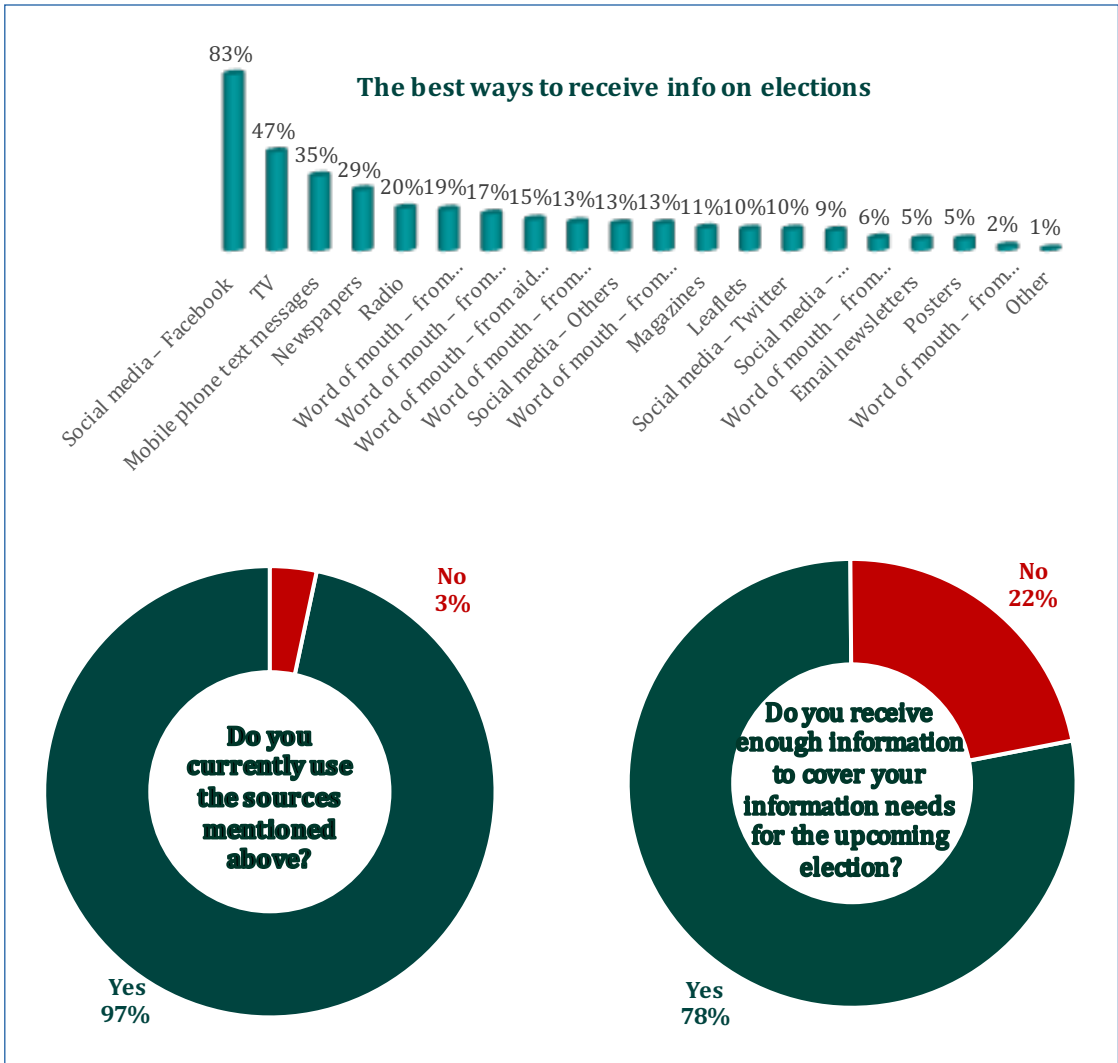


Figure 5: The best ways to receive information on elections; Do you currently use the sources you mentioned? Do you receive enough information to cover your information needs for the upcoming elections?

### 4.4.1. Access to Radio and Consumption

Radio was generally considered an important source of information only for those who are living in the areas far from access to infrastructure. People also listen to the radio when driving. Overall, radio consumption remained low. 35% of respondents currently listen to the radio while 65% of respondents do not. Of the 35% of respondents who answered yes, Cherry FM is the most cited radio channel, followed by Padamyar FM, BBC and RFA (Burmese language services of BBC and Radio Free Asia). Of those who listened to the radio, 22% of respondents rated it as absolutely essential, 15% rated it as very important as their main source of information, while 15% said it is not at all important to them.

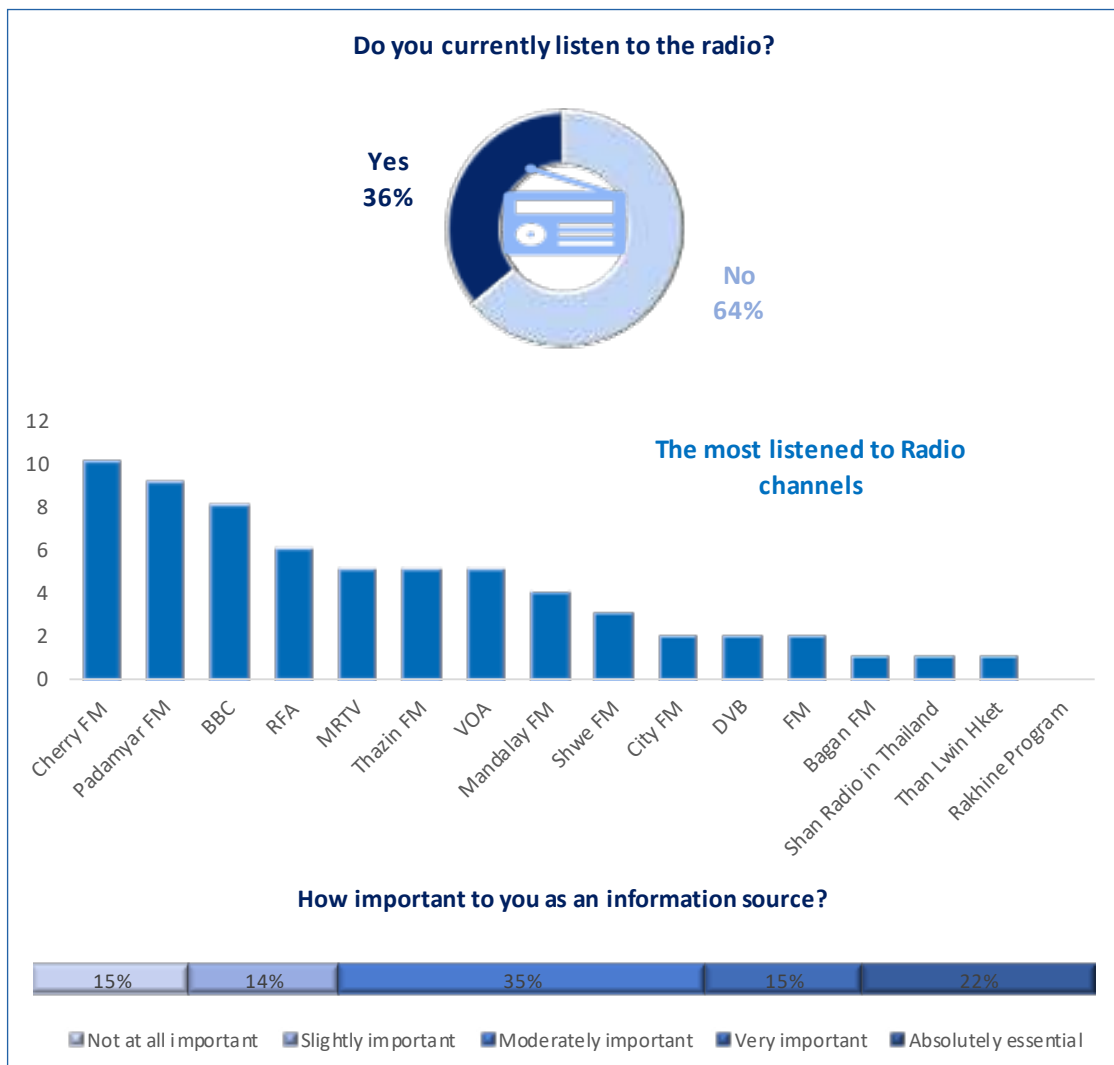


Figure 6: Do you currently listen to the radio? The most listened to Radio channels and How important to you as an information source?

### 4.4.2. Access to TV and Consumption

Television consumption was relatively high as a vehicle for news and information. 65% of survey respondents said they watch television, while 35% said they do not. Some respondents in the interviews also mentioned that they watch TV regularly. Of those who watched television, the respondents listed DVB as the most watched TV channel, followed by MRTV-4 as the second most and MRTV as the third. Television’s level of importance as their information source is very high. 56% of respondents rated television as very important and absolutely essential, and only 5% cited not at all important.

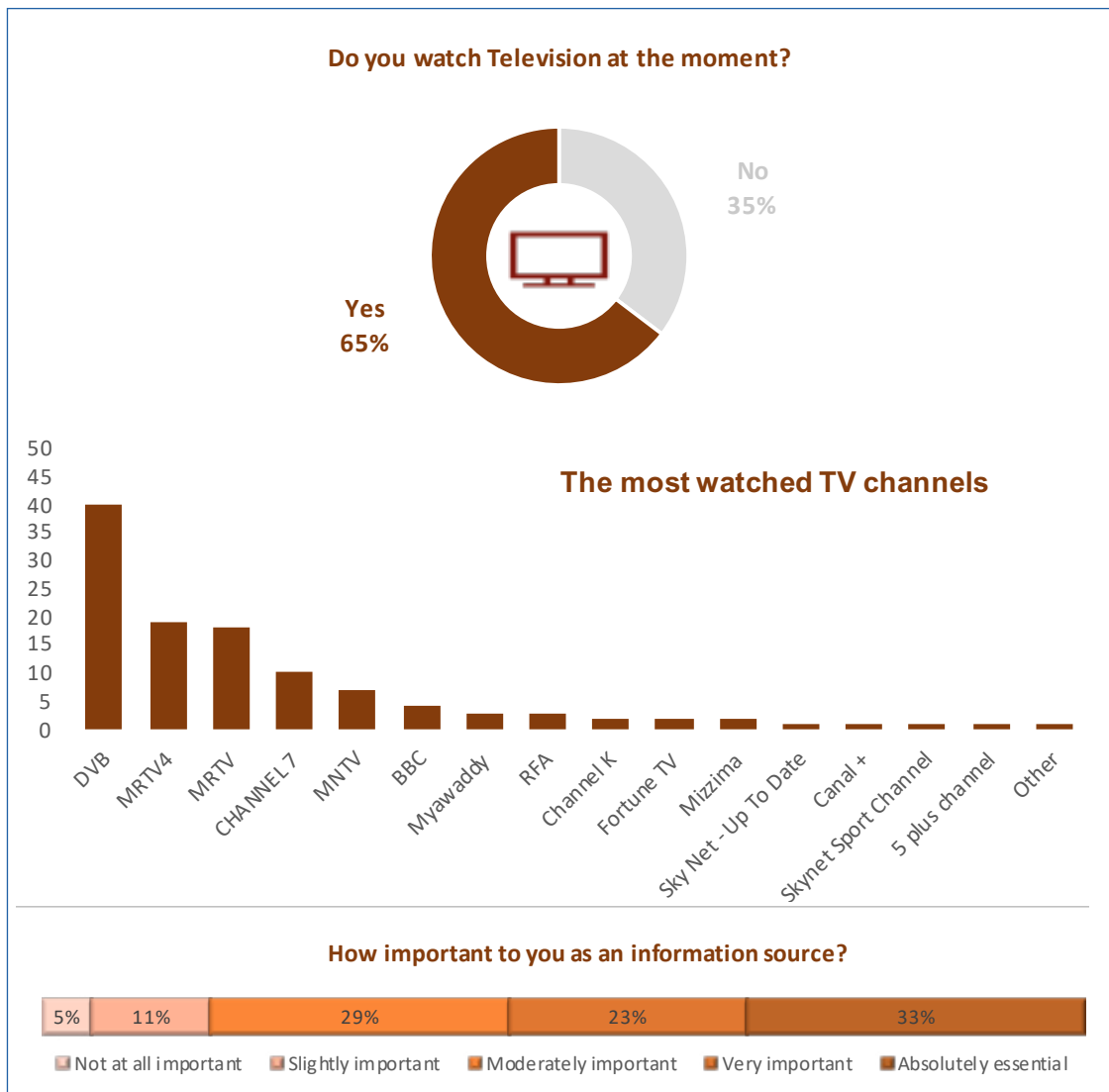


Figure 7: Do you watch TV at the moment? The most watched TV channels and How important to you as an information source?

### 4.4.3. Access to Print Media and Consumption

Despite its struggle to survive in the new media market, print media remains a solid source of information for almost half of respondents. Many people use State media as their information source. Almost half of the respondents (49%) said that they read the newspapers and 51% do not read them. Those who read newspapers cited 7Day Daily as their most read newspaper and Myanma Alin and Daily Eleven the second and third. 53% of newspaper readers rated print media as very important and absolutely essential and only 6% ranked it as not at all important.

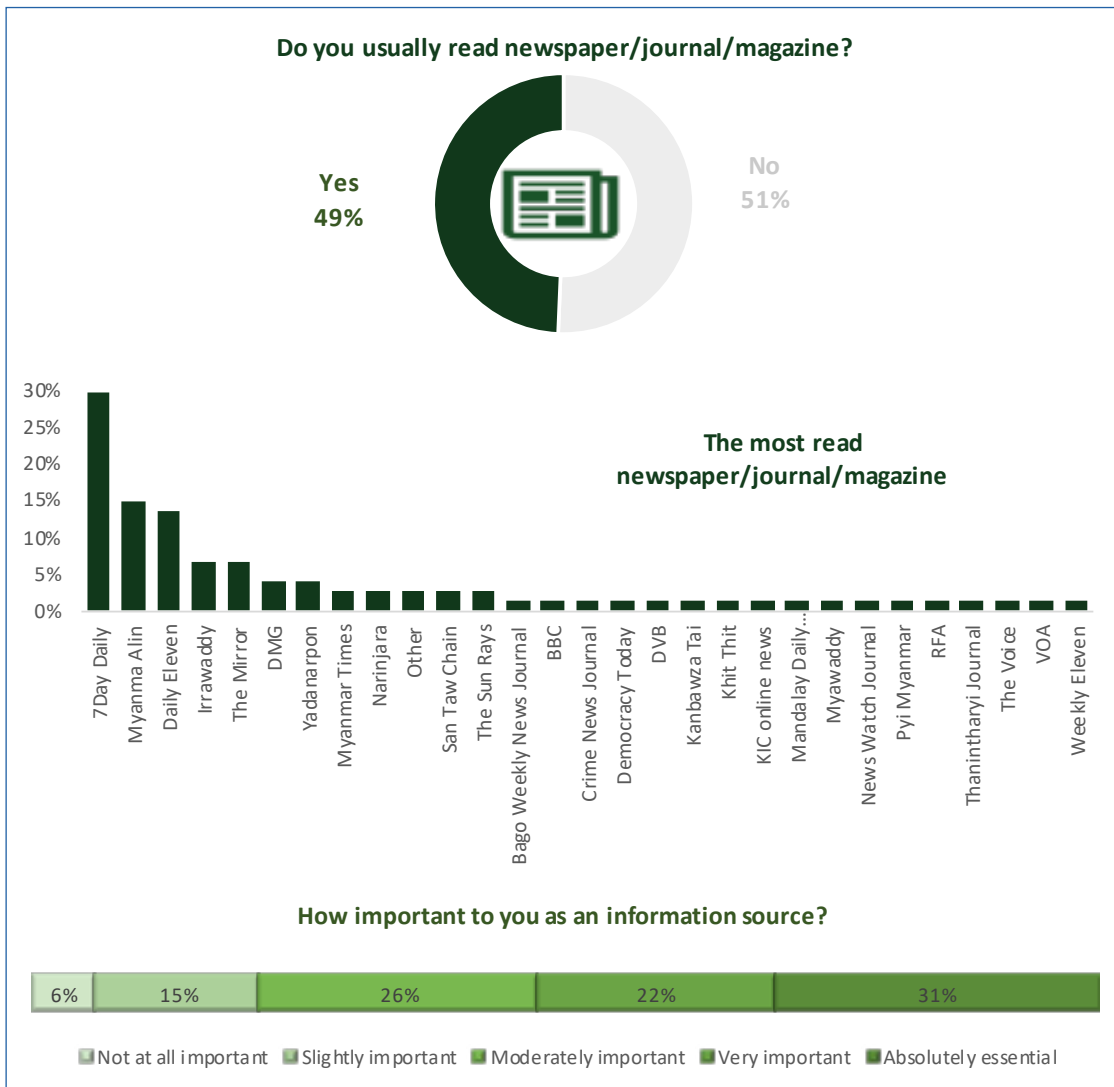


Figure 8: Do you usually read newspaper/journal/magazine? The most read newspaper/journal/magazine and How important to you as an information source?

#### 4.4.4. Access to “Local and National” Media and Consumption

As Myanmar people relied so much on international media such as BBC, VOA and RFA during the military rule, this study asked to what extent domestic media is seen as a reliable source of information for Myanmar people. 90% of responses stated that they use domestic media ('local and national media') while only 10% mention that they do not use it. Interestingly, 79% of survey respondents said they rely on domestic media and only 21% mentioned they do not. For those who do not use domestic media, the reasons cited were lack of trust, limited access to media in their remote area, impartial news, lack of free time and poor 2G internet connection.

In terms of the channels they use, social media was referred as their first choice, TV the popular second choice, followed by newspapers.

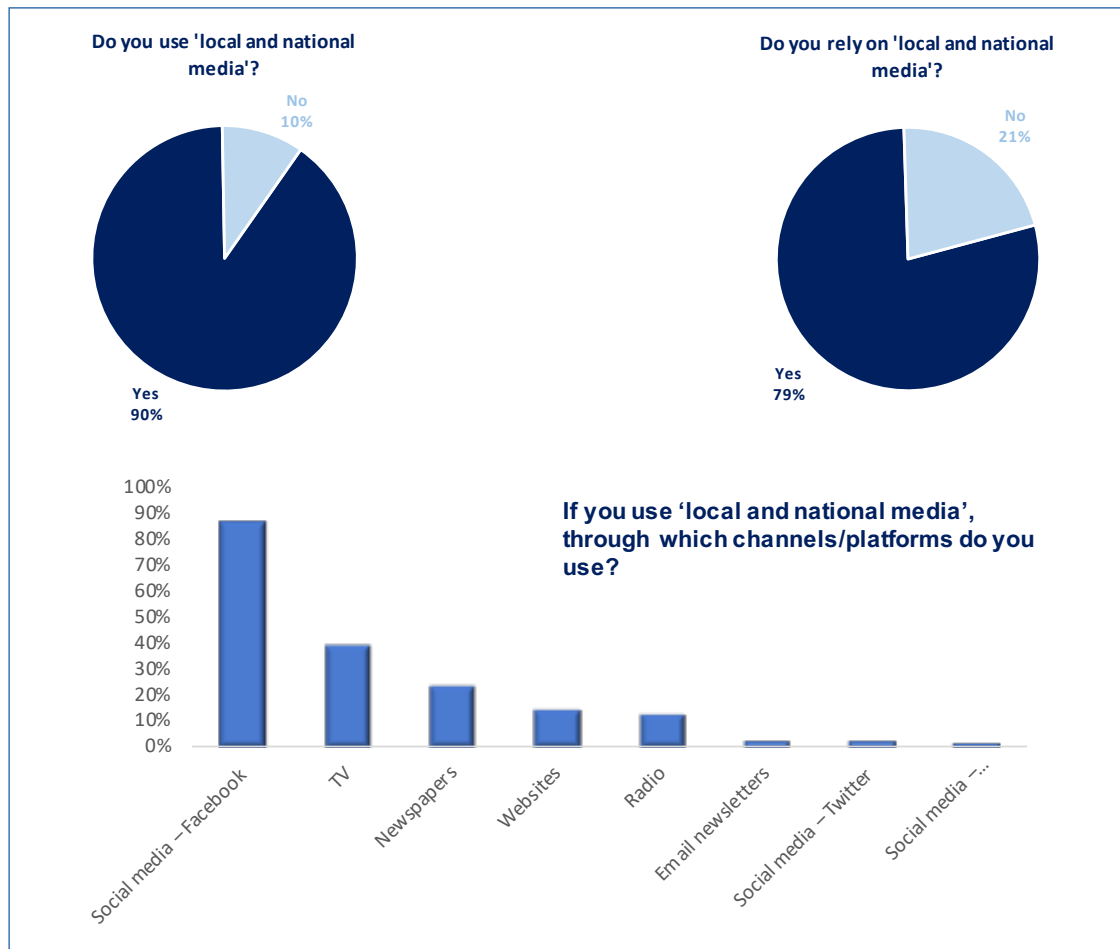


Figure 9: Do you use 'local and national media'? Do you rely on 'local and national' media? If you use, through which channels/platforms do you use?

In order to understand the elections information gap from the local and national media, the survey also collected the different kind of elections information respondents currently receive from local and national media and what kind of information they would like to receive. **The top three elections information that the respondents would like to receive and they have received are how to research on political parties and candidates (37% would like receive, 29% received), how to learn about voting rights (32% would like to receive, 43% received) and how to cast their ballot (25% would like to receive, 29% received),** followed by other categories shown in the graph below.

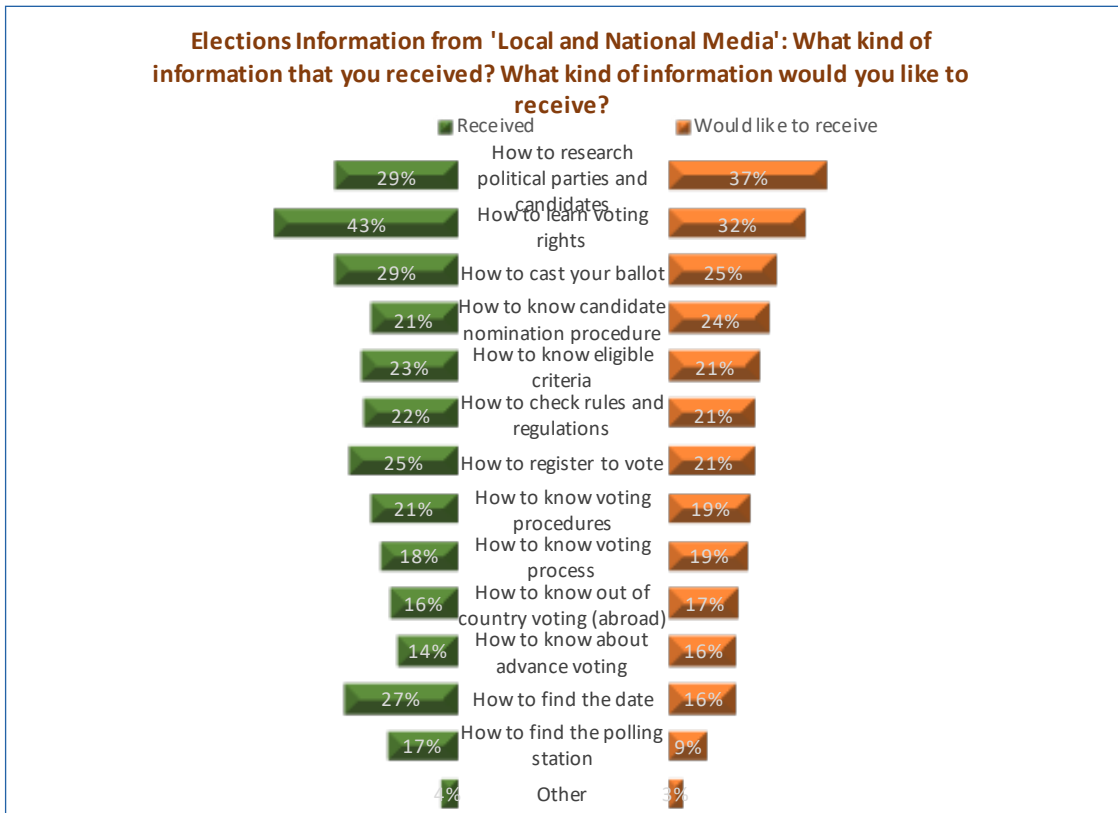


Figure 10: Elections information from 'local and national media': what kind of information that you received? what kind of information would you like to receive?

#### 4.4.5. Access to Internet & Social Media

Social media plays a significant role both for respondents to access updated information on COVID-19 and to engage in political campaigns. For those interviewed, not surprisingly, social media has become the most popular source of information and a tool for communication and sharing information. The online survey was conducted by sharing the link on Facebook pages of media partners; therefore, the respondents were asked how they access the internet to answer this survey in order to prove that access to social media. 95% of responses cited using their mobile phones, while only 3% used their laptops, an additional 1% used their work computers and internet cafés respectively. In terms of the use of social media, 95% reported that they use social media while 5% said they do not use social media.

In response to a question on what they use social media for, respondents reported getting information on COVID-19, entertainment, communication, getting news and information in a timely manner, spending leisure time, educational purposes and to know what is happening in their local area and in the world. 70% of respondents reported that social media is very important and absolutely essential, while 8% thought it was not at all important as a source of information.

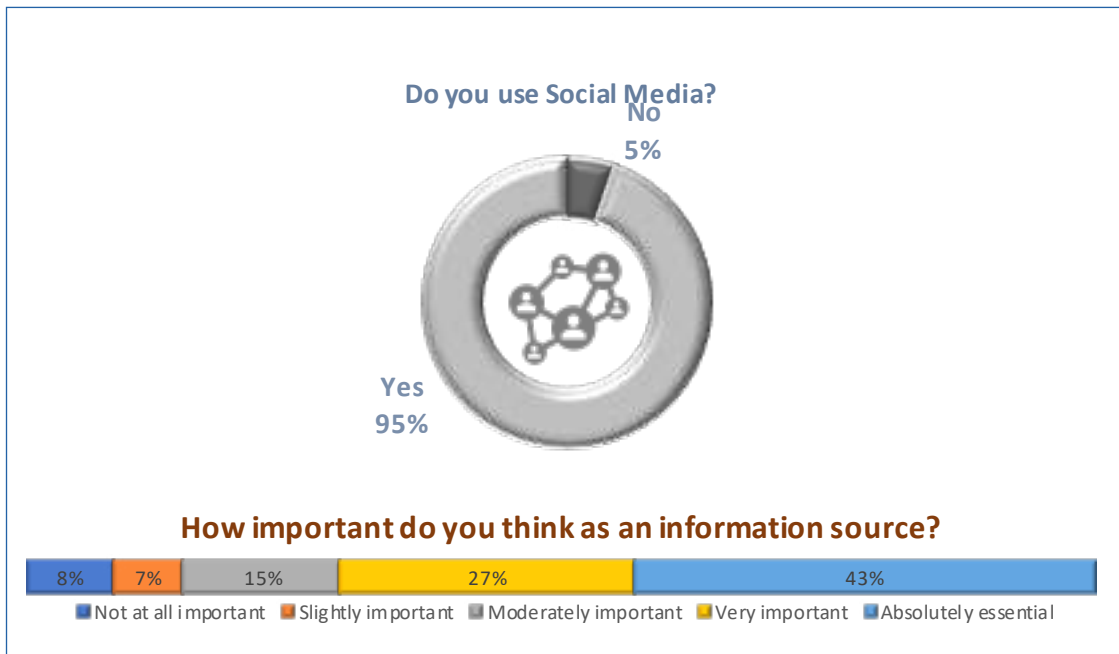


Figure 11: Do you use Social Media? How important do you think as an information source?

## 4.5. Information use

In general, people are wary of relying on information without prior verification. Corresponding to the lack of trust in the information on social media, when they were asked what do they do before using information, 60% of respondents reported that they verify with official sources while 17% verify with friends, 11% just as it is, 5% verify with relatives, 4% said other and only 3% verify with community leaders. Despite these responses, when asked to identify official sources, many interview respondents were not able to mention any official sources or claimed to have a difficulty identifying the official sources. However, they were aware that media pages with blue mark and large mainstream media like BBC and RFA are considered as official sources.

The interviews result also pointed out that many verify with friends and informal networks on Facebook, groups of those who have common interests.

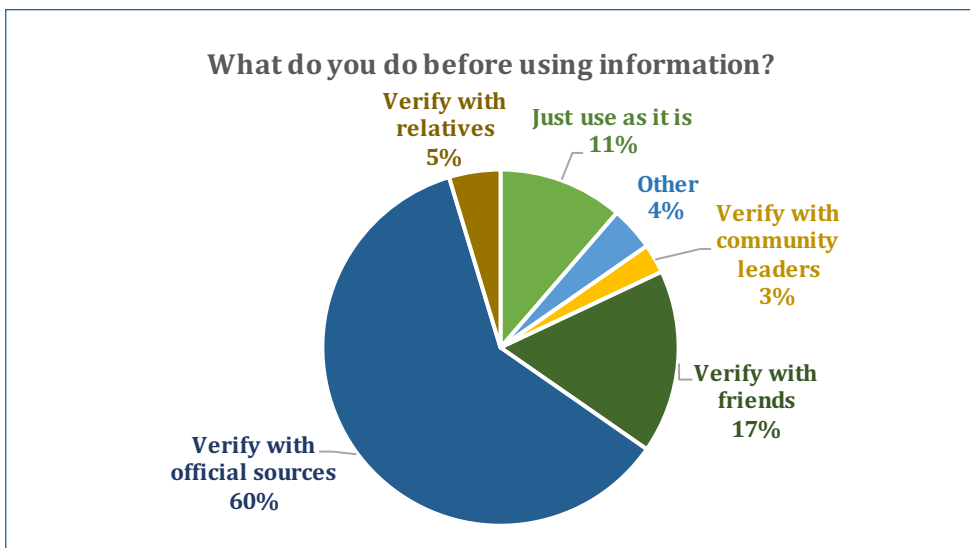


Figure 12: What do you do before using information?



## 4.6. Information Impact

The use and sharing of information on social media highlighted issues of mis- and disinformation and its proliferation on social media platforms, primarily Facebook. The interview respondents shared their experiences about the impact of the information they shared, both positive and negative. In terms of sharing information in general, only a few interview respondents said they shared information from social media with friends and family members. In contrast, when asked specifically in another question whether they usually share the information on social media, two thirds of survey respondents (67%) stated that they shared, but one third (33%) said that they do not share. When asked about the reasons why they share the information on social media, the respondents answered mostly about knowledge dissemination and sharing information to let other people know what they know. Those who do not share information cited the following reasons: disliking sharing practices on social media, they act as silent users, the spread of fake news, unpleasant criticism, personal attacks, inaccurate information, incorrect information, lack of trust, difficulty to verify with reliable and credible sources with own knowledge and lack of trust of some media.

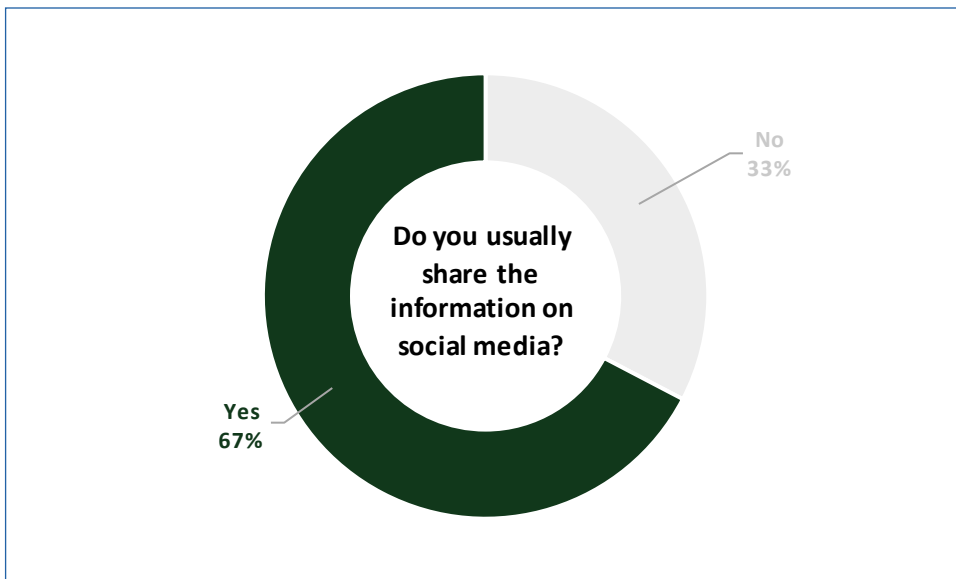


Figure 13: Do you usually share the information on social media?

## 4.7. Social Trust

During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, even some people who never used Facebook before started accessing the platform and mostly got information via Facebook. Given the circumstances, it is not surprising that the use of social media (particularly Facebook) has increased, social media was by far the first main source of information, with TV on the second place, mobile phone text messages quoted as third reference.

As a consequence of the high volume of social media usage, from the interviews and focus group discussions, the question of trust in social media and how to find official sources came up. Although there is a large amount of information available on social media, interestingly, **58% of survey respondents said that they are not sure they trust the information on social media, while 28% trust, 5% don't trust and 11% cited other responses.** Their concerns under “other” highlighted that they trust from official sources, do not trust all available information, sometime trust in some cases, trust from trusted Facebook accounts and pages, and trust some media, especially those with a blue tick.

Most respondents are confused and not sure about trust in social media and accurate information on social media. The interviewees said they only trusted the information from official sources on social media and from trusted individuals such as friends and civil society organizations. When they were asked what they do when they think the information on social media is not correct and accurate, 68% of survey respondents reported that they verify with official sources, followed by 15% who verify with friends, while 7% use it just as it is. When talking about to verify with official sources, the most difficult thing is to confirm were which sources are official sources that are most credible and reliable.

More study is needed to determine the role influencers play in information sharing. General discussions of community influencers in focus group discussions and interviews show that traditional (religious and community) leaders in remote areas are perceived as most influential. Elsewhere, FGDs and interviewees pointed to famous celebrities and social influencers active online.

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<sup>35</sup> Interview in Yangon with an EAO representative, 9 April 2019

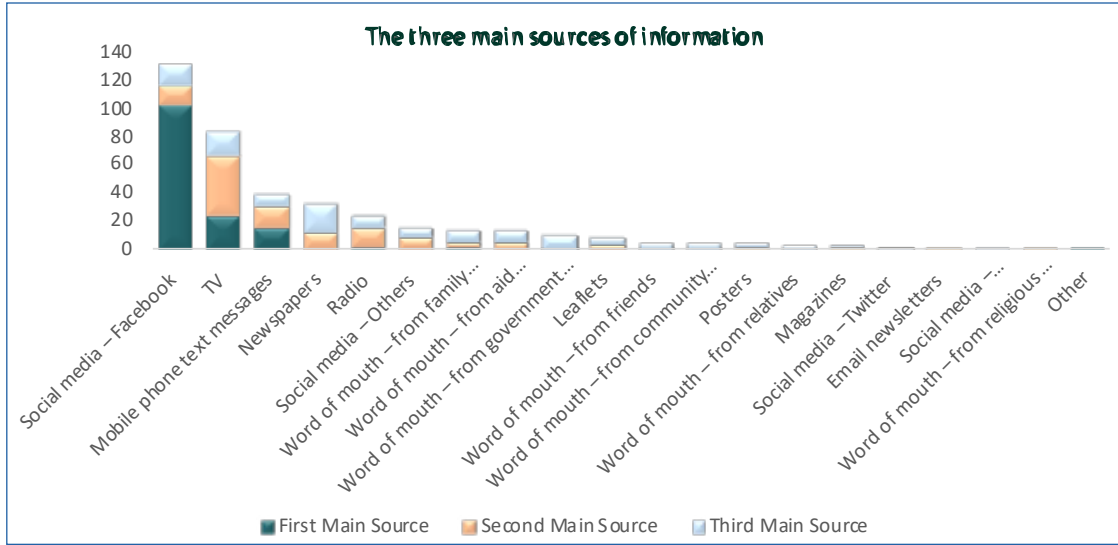


Figure 14: The three main sources of information

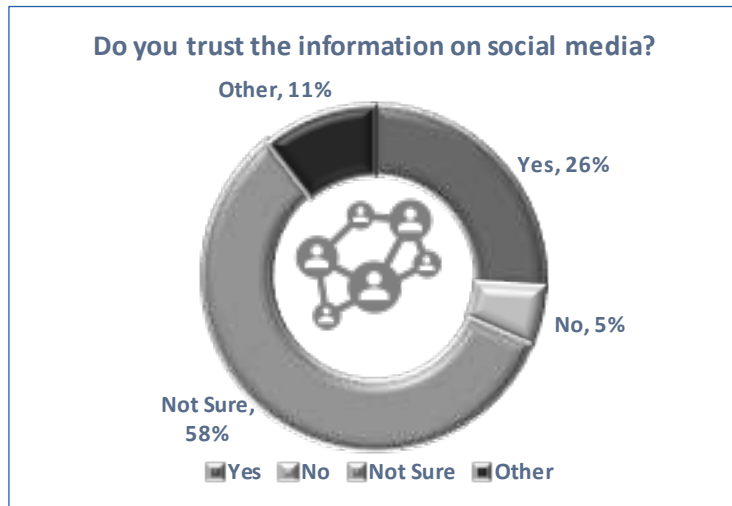


Figure 15: Do you trust the information on social media?

<sup>36</sup> Personal communication with a CSO member on 10 April 2019

<sup>37</sup> Interview in Yangon, 22 April 2019

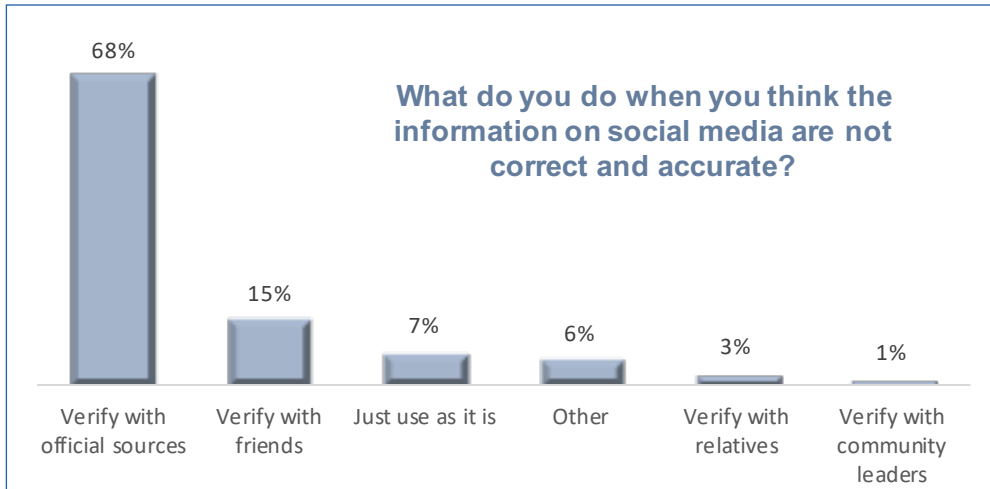


Figure 16: What do you do when you think the information on social media is not correct and accurate?

Interestingly, TV is one of the most trusted sources of information, though social media remains as the main source of information. Social media (Facebook) and newspapers were the next common trusted sources. They claimed that they trust TV because TV is a stable platform – it broadcasts regularly and in that way is able to attract regular, trusting viewers.

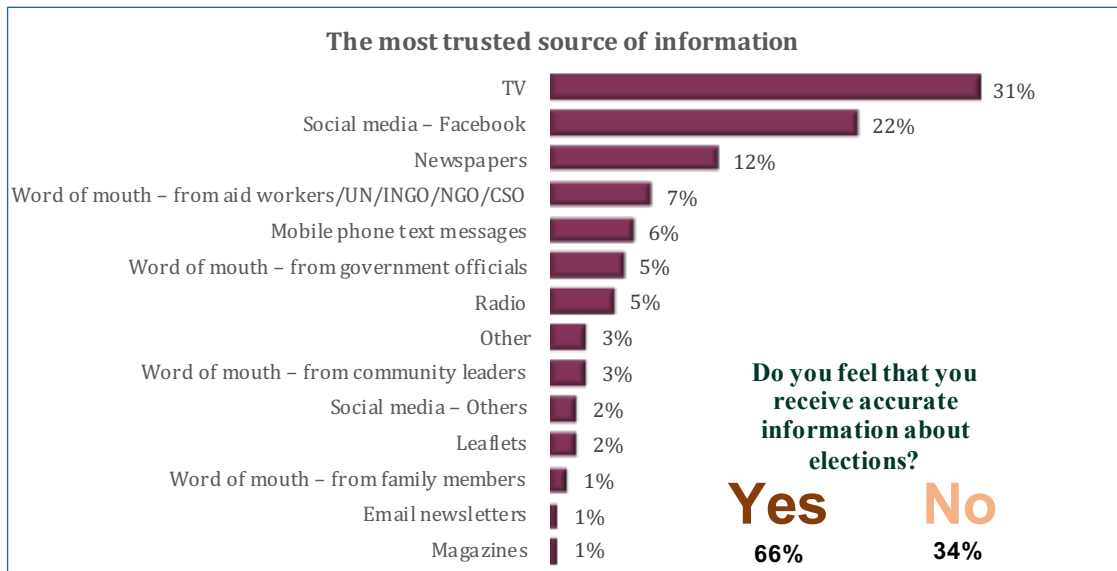


Figure 17: The most trusted source of information

## 5. Recommendations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, this assessment would like to inform political actors, information providers and policy makers of the information ecosystems surrounding FTYV to design suitable programs with the aim to maximize political participation of FTYV across Myanmar. The followings are recommendations:

### **Political Actors**

- First-time Youth Voters' (FTYV) interest in politics is ranked below health, livelihood and education. Political actors should consider using top ranked issues as part of their election campaign strategy in order to stimulate more interest in the 2020 election among FTYV. Connecting the issues that matter to FTYV with 2020 elections might win more support.
- Information needs vary according to the occupations of FTYV and therefore tailored information for each target group may be effective in reaching out to specific FTYV groups such as students or workers.
- Political parties and candidates should reach out to FTYV to better communicate about their political agenda at both organizational and personal levels, especially on the issues that FTYV are interested to know.
- Social media (Facebook) is the leading medium followed by television and radio. The role of informal networks in sharing information within communities, such as informal networks on social media, should not be underestimated.

### **Information Providers (media, NGOs and civil society)**

- Election programming should provide critical coverage of the political parties' election manifestos to analyze their policies on the top-ranked issues such as health, livelihood and education.
- FTYV are interested to know more about the candidates' background information and their political agendas. More investigative reporting and programming will be appreciated by FTYV.
- FTYV want more information about political parties and candidates especially at sub-national level (regional or state level); national media should also cover sub-national (regional or state level) electoral issues.

- Voter education (VE) seems to be insufficient for FTYV. Information providers should consider creating VE content on social media platforms such as Facebook or Viber, television and radio, including entertainment-oriented FM stations.
- As 95% of survey respondents use mobile phones to access social media (Facebook), content should be mobile friendly i.e. mobile friendly websites, low data graphics, videos and/or audio.
- Include sources of information or attribution to improve quality and credibility of information disseminated.
- Religious and community leaders as well as famous celebrities are considered influential, and they should be included in the content dissemination strategy.
- Collaborative content production between media and CSOs may result in a more effective election programming for FTYV in targeted areas or regions.

### **Policy Makers**

- FTYV want to know how they can research political parties and candidates. Therefore, online-based platforms or tools which allow citizens to conduct basic research about political parties and candidates is recommended. An online database that hosts public information about political parties and candidates may be well received.
- FTYV in remote regions such as Rakhine, Chin or Shan states seem to be less interested in elections than the rest. Access to electoral information for them should be considered a priority at state level communication efforts.
- Internet access should be universal among urban, rural and remote areas so that electorates can access electoral information equally.
- TV is the most trusted source of information for the majority of respondents and therefore this platform should be used more widely for electoral communications by various actors. More television programming targeting FTYV may be effective.
- The UEC's information sharing is seen as inadequate, especially for FTYV based in remote regions and ethnic minority states. A more active collaboration with CSOs and media in information sharing mechanism may be required.
- Newspapers are still read by 49% of respondents but they are not considered as the best source of information. Improving newspaper content may be effective in disseminating electoral communication for FTYVs.
- More voter education activities should be conducted at local (township) level where CSOs can stimulate interest from FTYV.
- Factchecking websites or services should be set up and widely promoted to counter mis/disinformation.

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# Annexes

## Annex 1

### Information Needs Assessment Survey Questionnaire

INTRO: **Good Day Sir/Ma'am.** We, Internews, an organisation that supports the development of independent media so that people can have access to the information they need, are conducting a survey. It is conducted to better understand the information needs of First Time Youth Voters so that we can better address those information needs. We would like to take about 10 minutes of your time to complete it, if you agree and are ready. Your answers will be treated in the strictest of confidence and will not be revealed to anyone.

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

Are you an FTV in the upcoming elections?

01	Where are you staying at the moment (State/Region)			
02	Age		03	Gender
05	Ethnicity			



**INFORMATION NEEDS**

05

There are many types of different things you need to know in your life. What information do you need to receive in the current situation?

- Weather
- Security
- Health
- Education
- Livelihood
- Political
- Elections
- Social
- Entertainment
- Specific information on what is happening in your State/Region
- Specific information on what is happening in National/Union level
- Specific information on what is happening in International
- Other (Please specify) .....

06	<p>During this pre-election period, what kind of information is needed? What are the <b>three main topics</b> you would like to receive more information about?</p>			
		1 <sup>st</sup> Main Topic	2 <sup>nd</sup> Main Topic	3 <sup>rd</sup> Main Topic
	Weather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Livelihood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Political	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Specific information on what is happening in your State/Region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Specific information on what is happening in National/Union level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Specific information on what is happening in International	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (Please specify – Separate question in the data collection form)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

07	<p>What kind of elections information is needed for upcoming elections?</p> <p>How to learn voting rights</p> <p>How to know eligible criteria</p> <p>How to register to vote</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to find the date</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to know about advance voting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to know out of country voting (abroad)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to know candidate nomination procedure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to research political parties and candidates</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to know voting procedures</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to check rules and regulations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to find the polling station</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to know voting process</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How to cast your ballot</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p>
08	<p>Why such information is needed?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
09	<p>How often the information about elections is needed?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once a say</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Twice a day</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once per Week</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Twice per Week</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once per month</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)</p>

10	<p>What would be <b>the best ways/channels</b> for you to receive the elections information you need? (multiple answers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Radio</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> TV</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone text messages</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Magazines</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Email newsletters</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Posters</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Facebook</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Twitter</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Viber/WeChat/WhatsApp</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from family members</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from friends</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from relatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from community leaders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from religious leaders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from government officials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from aid workers/UN/INGO/NGO/CSO</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify – Separate question in the data collection form)</li> </ul>
11	<p>Do you currently use the ways you mentioned above?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ul>
12	<p>You said you do not currently use the ways you mentioned – why not?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

13	<p>Of the way you mentioned, do you receive enough information to cover your information needs for the upcoming election?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
14	<p>You said you do not receive enough information, why not?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

**SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

15	<p>What are your <b>three main sources</b> of information? Please list your top 3 in order of importance with 1 being the most important.</p>			
		1 <sup>st</sup> Main Source	2 <sup>nd</sup> Main Source	3 <sup>rd</sup> Main Source
	Radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Mobile phone text messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Email newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Posters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Leaflets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social media – Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social media – Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social media – Viber/WeChat/WhatsApp	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social media – Others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Word of mouth – from family members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Word of mouth – from friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Word of mouth – from relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Word of mouth – from community leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Word of mouth – from religious leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Word of mouth – from government officials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Word of mouth – from aid workers/UN/INGO/ NGO/CSO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (Please specify – Separate question in the data collection form)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16	<p>Of the main information sources you mentioned, which source is your most <b>trusted source</b> to give you the information you need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Radio</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> TV</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone text messages</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Magazines</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Email newsletters</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Posters</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Facebook</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Twitter</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Viber/WeChat/WhatsApp</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from family members</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from friends</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from relatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from community leaders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from religious leaders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from government officials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth – from aid workers/UN/INGO/NGO/CSO</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify – Separate question in the data collection form)</li> </ul>
<b>ACCESS AND CONSUMPTION HABITS</b>	
17	<p>Do you feel that you receive accurate information about elections?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ul>
18	<p>What challenges do you face to receive accurate information about elections?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

19	<p>Do you rely on 'local and national media'?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
20	<p>Do you use the 'local and national media'?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>
21	<p>You said you don't use 'local and national media', why not?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
22	<p>If you use 'local and national media', through which channels/platforms do you use?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Radio</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> TV</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Email newsletters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Websites</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Facebook</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Twitter</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social media – Viber/WeChat/WhatsApp</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)</p>
23	<p>How often do you use local and national media?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once a day</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Twice a day</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once per Week</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Twice per Week</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once per month</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)</p>

24	<p>What kind of elections information that you received from 'local and national media?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to learn voting rights</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know eligible criteria</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to register to vote</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to find the date</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know about advance voting</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know out of country voting (abroad)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know candidate nomination procedure</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to research political parties and candidates</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know voting procedures</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to check rules and regulations</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to find the polling station</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know voting process</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How to cast your ballot</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know</li></ul>
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25	<p>What kind of elections information would you like to receive from 'local and national media'?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to learn voting rights</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know eligible criteria</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to register to vote</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to find the date</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know about advance voting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know out of country voting (abroad)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know candidate nomination procedure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to research political parties and candidates</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know voting procedures</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to check rules and regulations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to find the polling station</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to know voting process</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How to cast your ballot</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know</li> </ul>
26	<p>If you have any suggestions on 'local and national media', please describe for more details.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p><b>Radio Access and Consumption habits</b></p>	
27	<p>Do you currently listen to the radio?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (If you say 'Yes', please skip to question 22)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ul>
28	<p>Please name the Radio channels that you watch the most.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

29	<p>How important to you as an information source?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely essential/ Extremely important</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very important</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Moderately important</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Slightly important</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important</p>
Television Access and Consumption habits	
30	<p>Do you watch television at the moment?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (If you say 'Yes', please skip to question 26)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
31	<p>Please name the TV channels that you watch the most.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
32	<p>How important to you as an information source?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely essential/ Extremely important</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very important</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Moderately important</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Slightly important</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important</p>
Print Media	
33	<p>Do you usually read newspaper/journal/magazine?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (If you say 'Yes', please skip to question 3)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
34	<p>Please name the newspaper/journal/magazine you read the most?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

35	<p>How important to you as an information source?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely essential/ Extremely important</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Very important</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Moderately important</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Slightly important</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important</li> </ul>
Internet/Social Media	
36	<p>How are you answering this survey (how do you access the internet)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Laptop</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Home computer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work computer</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cyber café</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Phone</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)</li> </ul>
37	<p>What do you use the internet for?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
38	<p>What do you do BEFORE using information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Just use as it is</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Verify with friends</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Verify with relatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Verify with community leaders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Verify with religious leaders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Verify with official sources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)</li> </ul>
39	<p>Do you use social media?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ul>

40	You said you do not use social media, why not? ..... .....
41	You said you use social media, what do you use social media for? ..... .....
42	Do you trust the information on social media? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
43	What do you do when you think the information on social media are not correct and accurate? <input type="checkbox"/> Just use as it is <input type="checkbox"/> Verify with friends <input type="checkbox"/> Verify with relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Verify with community leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Verify with religious leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Verify with official sources <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)
44	Do you usually share the information on social media? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
45	You said you share, why? ..... .....
46	You said you do not share, why not? ..... .....

47	<p>How important of social media as your information source?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely essential/ Extremely important</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Very important</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Moderately important</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Slightly important</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important</li></ul>
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**Thank you for your time!**

## Annex 2.

### Information Ecosystem Assessment – First-Time Voters Key Informant Interview & FGD Questions

#### For CSOs and First Time Youth Voters

##### Information needs

(Information needs across different segments of the population, and how they change over time)

1. During this pre-election period, what kind of information is needed? What are the three main topics you would like to receive more information about in your daily life? Why such information is needed?
2. Do your information needs change over times? Why?
3. What kind of elections information is needed for upcoming elections? (voting rights, date, advance voting, political parties and candidates, rules and regulations, find polling station, voting process, etc.)
4. Do you think that you have enough information to make good decisions for you in this pre-election period?
5. What would be the best way (channel/platforms) for you to receive enough information? (such as FB pages, newsletters, text messages, Viber/Whatsapp, word of mouth/ friends/family/relatives/community leaders/religious leaders, etc.)

##### Dynamics and Access

(the environment in which information flows – the factors that influence information access (e.g. political, cultural, economics, technological)

(Channels people access information included in Information needs)

1. In your opinion, what do people rely on to get information (top THREE). Has that changed in compared to the past/ with last year? If yes, what changed? What did you rely on before?
2. How do political, socioeconomic, and geographic factors affect access to elections information?
3. How important do you think access to news and information about?

4. Do you feel that you receive accurate information about election? What challenges do you face? **(for FGD only)**

### Local & National Media

1. Specific channels or available media outlets and their capacities
  - What do you think about local and national media? Do you rely on them? Do you use the them?
  - Through which channels do you use them? What about Radio, TV and Print?
  - What are their strengths to cover elections information?
  - What are the weaknesses to cover elections information?
  - What kind of elections information would you like to receive from them? (what should be available on their platforms)

What kind of elections information that you received from 'local and national media'?

What kind of elections information would you like to receive from 'local and national media'?

### Access to Internet & Social Media

- What do you use social media for?
- Do you **trust** the information on social media?
- What do you do when you think the information on social media are not correct and accurate? (And what about other people)
- What do you **use** social media for?
- What do you think about information **sharing**? (should/ should not share) And why/why not? (to find out opinions & impacts) Especially for information sharing during pre-election period?
- How **important** of social media as your information source? (Follow up question)

### Social Trust

(Influence of trust networks on the flow and use of information)

1. What are your most trusted information sources (information network) for elections information - hints: media? FB? Relatives? Leaders? Why? **(TRUST)**
2. Follow-up to mention specific names. (If possible)
3. What are the greatest threats to trust?
4. How can trust change over time?

## **Influencers**

(The people, organizations, and institutions that influence and shape information flows)

1. Who are the most accessible influencers? (for you or in your area) What about in this elections period?
2. How much people believe in the information receive from them?
3. Why do people believe in them? (What did they do for the people?)

## **Information use and Impact of information**

(How information is processed, used and applied?)

(Relationship between information, knowledge, and behavior change)

1. What do you do BEFORE you are using information? (e.g. verify with friends/relatives/ community leaders/other sources, etc.) (And specific about elections)
2. Could information have unintended impacts? If so, how can you identify and track them?
3. How could an inaccurate/misleading communication impact the communities/ individuals?
4. Have you ever faced an impact of information that you'd shared on other people decision? (impact both negative/positive)

## **Production and Movement**

(The types of information available in a community, Information providers and information flows)

1. Who are the producers of the most timely, targeted, and accurate information?
2. What do information flows look like? (e.g. who does information flow through)?
3. How does information change as it moves? {hints... (Follow-up - What about elections information?)}

## **Challenges & Any suggestions**

1. **Is there any challenge do you face to receive accurate information? (Follow-up question)**
2. **Any suggestions**



**For media professionals****Production and Movement**

(The types of information available in a community, Information providers and information flows)

4. What types of information (Election) are available? Who provides and disseminates this information?
5. Who are the producers of the most timely, targeted, and accurate information?
6. What do information flows look like? (e.g. who does information flow through)?
7. How does information change as it moves? {hints...

**Information Landscape**

(The physical and institutional infrastructure that supports information production and flow (e.g. media outlets, government, private industry, and civil society))

8. What information channels and infrastructure do you know/ use in your area? (Is there 'local media' in your region?)  
What are the distribution networks? (e.g., Print/ Online/ TV/ Platform Radio/ TV program) Who owns these information channels and infrastructure?

**Social Media as a main channel**

9. Who had the capacity to expand infrastructure?
10. Who had the capacity to curtail infrastructure?
11. Are there areas of redundancy (multiple channels – radio/TV channels – run by govt. privately?) Why? (follow up)
12. What is 'lacking' (in this local information landscape) in your location? What are these? Is there any challenge for the media? What do you think about media freedom?

**Local & National Media**

5. Follow up questions to ask about specific channels or available media outlets and their capacities
  - What do you think about local and national media? Do you rely on them? Do you use the

them?

- Through which channels do you use them? What about Radio, TV and Print?
- What are their strengths to cover elections information?
- What are the weaknesses to cover elections information?
- What kind of elections information would you like to receive from them? (what should be available on their platforms)

What kind of elections information that you received from 'local and national media'?

What kind of elections information would you like to receive from 'local and national media'?

13. Is there any media network/journalist? (in general & in pre-, during & post-election time)  
Who and how are they providing the support??
14. Is there any organization supporting media? (for election)
15. Could information have unintended impacts?
16. Have you ever faced an impact of information that you'd shared on other people decision? (impact both negative/positive) If so, how can you identify and track them?
17. How could an inaccurate/misleading communication impact the communities/ individuals?

### **Challenges and suggestions.**





## Information Ecosystem Assessment of First Time Youth Voters

In Myanmar's 2020 Election