



BIP Survey | 2

The quality of information in the 2025 local elections candidates' campaigns



Pressão Média

Survey question: How would you assess the quality of information provided to the public by the candidates in the campaign for the October 2025 local elections?

Public availability: 31 October 2025 to 08 January 2026

Respondents: 120

Sample: non-probability accidental sample (does not allow statistical generalisation)

Survey insights:

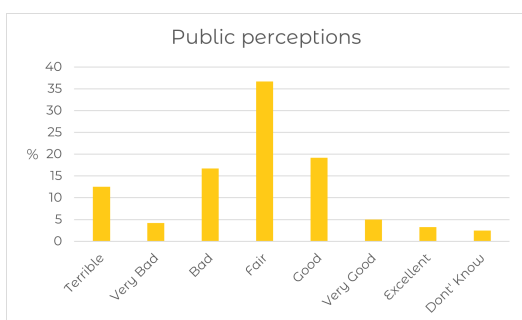


Figure 1 – Public perceptions of the quality of information provided by the 2025 local elections candidates

Figure 1, showing the distribution of responses from the 120 participants, indicates that 36.7% of the sample rated the information provided to the public by the candidates in the 2025 Portuguese local elections as “Fair”. That was the most selected category (mode).

The percentage of participants who selected the negative end of the scale is also significant: 33.4% indicated that the information was “Terrible”, “Very Bad”, or “Bad”. Although lower, the percentage of responses in the positive range is also notable: 27.5% of participants rated the

information provided by local election candidates as “Good”, “Very Good” or “Excellent”. It can therefore be said that more respondents have a negative perception of the quality of candidates’ information, even though the highest-weighted category is “Fair”. Regarding participants’ educational level (Figure 2), higher education degrees are the most represented (77.4%), with particular emphasis on Master’s degrees (43.3%). This overrepresentation—which calls the sample’s representativeness into question—can be explained by the Barometer for Information Quality’s academic framework, as its reach outside this community remains limited. There are also 16.7% of participants with Secondary Education and 5.8% with Basic Education.

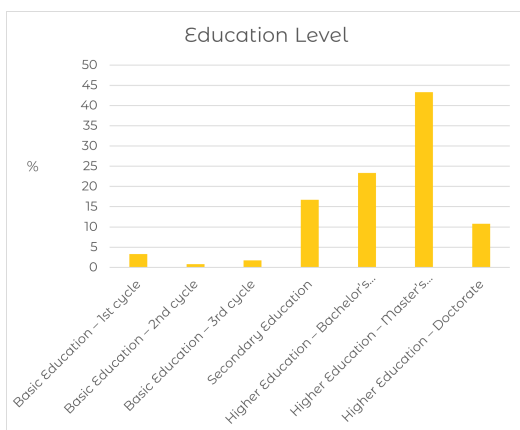


Figure 2 – Distribution of participants by level of education

Concerning participants' age (Figure 3), the age ranges 30–39 years (47 participants, 39.2%), 40–49 years (26 participants, 21.7%), and 20–29 years (19 participants, 15.9%) are the most represented.

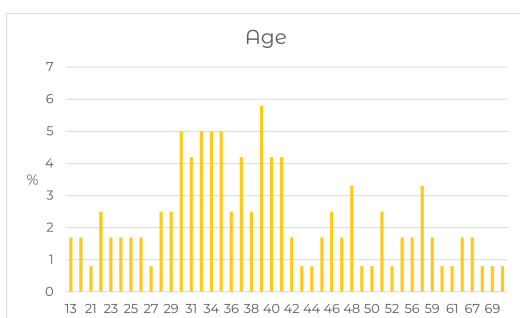


Figure 3 – Distribution of participants by age

Research insights:

The literature on political communication during election campaigns notes that the “quality of understanding [of the political message] is high when political actors (a) state not only their positions on a particular problem but also the reasons behind them, (b) propose specific solutions for debatable issues, (c) deal with other participants (e.g., their opponents) in a more or less respectful way, and (d) express relevant doubts concerning

positions and other participants” (Burkart & Russmann, 2016, p. 4144).

Moreover, Renwick et al. (2020), who studied political information in referendum campaigns, argue that these are “fully democratic” only when voters act in a “context of rich information and discussion” (p. 522). The authors consider accuracy, balance, accessibility, and relevance as the key dimensions of high-quality information (Renwick et al., 2020).

Thus, participants' perceptions in this BIP survey may be explained by the quality of the information conveyed by the 2025 local election candidates: it appears to have met the quality standards outlined in the literature only partially. This is a hypothesis that would need further investigation.

Susila et al. (2020) note that key aspects of political communication—which increase young people's trust in political participation, according to their study in the Indonesian context—include “how the message is conveyed through speech, including: the candidate's accent, tempo of message delivery, their vocabulary used, their presentational style, and storytelling” (p. 160).

It is therefore important to consider how politicians convey information. Here, the contributions of Silva et al. (2024) are relevant, highlighting that “incumbents are generally more positive than the opposition, while extreme and populist parties are more negative” (p. 340). Furthermore, “politicians belonging to parties that are polling badly are more negative” (p. 340) than others.

Regarding emotional appeal in political messaging, the study by Casero-Ripollés

et al. (2016) is pertinent, as it analyses the Podemos party's communication at its launch (shortly before the 2014 European elections). The authors note that the party relied on "using emotions as mobilization mechanisms", particularly because Podemos targeted "people feeling dissatisfied with traditional political parties in a complex political context. The party also used an emotional discourse on digital media" (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016, p. 386). Although initially the party promoted citizen engagement in debates and actions, this decreased over time and with the centralisation of political activities, leading to feelings of abandonment and disillusionment among participants, who realised that citizens' contributions "barely matter to the party leadership in defining political strategies" (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016, p. 389).

The analysis by Larrondo-Ureta and Meso-Ayerdi (2022) is also relevant, showing that traditional parties have "discourses that are not spontaneous" (p. 44) and less flexible structures, which make them appear more distant, particularly to younger audiences. This distance—or the perception of it—between party structures and the public may contribute to the perception of low-quality information found in this BIP survey (the percentage rating the information negatively or as "Fair" is around 70%).

A focus on emotional appeal in political communication may also lead to less attention to quality criteria, such as those outlined by Burkart and Russmann (2016) and Renwick et al. (2020).

References

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