

# Civic Education Significantly Associated with Turnout in General Elections in Morogoro Urban Constituency, Tanzania

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## Abstract

Elections in Tanzania, like in any other country in the world, has three main functions: first is to create a sentiment of popular consent and participation in public affairs; second is to provide for orderly succession in government by peaceful transfer of authority to new rulers when the time comes for the old rulers to go through elections and third is to elect representatives of the people. However, there is a great proportion of registered voters who do not vote in the elections. This will have negative impact on consolidating democracy and expanding collective decision making through representation, if not taken care of. The underlying causes for this problem are not yet clear. Therefore, the research from which this paper has emanated was conducted in Morogoro urban constituency to analyse the determinants of voting in general elections in Tanzania. Using an index scale, it was found that the overall respondents' knowledge about elections was low (23 out of 50 points); hence voters' participation in 2010 general elections was low. Furthermore, the results show that more than one-fifth (22.6%) of all the respondents had spent fifteen minutes to reach the polling stations. Using a chi-square test, the research findings revealed that the relationship between individuals' levels of civic education and their participation in voting was significant ( $\chi^2 = 8.648$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), which means that those with higher education participated more than those with lower education. It is recommended that such education should be increased through various media in order to increase citizens' participation in voting.

**Key words:**Civic Education, Turnout, Election

## 1. Introduction

Elections are very important in promoting democracy, good governance and societal development. Good governance means the government elected by the citizens through voting in a free and fair competitive election (Chaligha, 2002). Elections at all levels of government are indeed critical in promoting and consolidating democracy, in which they play several key functions. First and foremost, elections can strengthen democracy if they can form a basis for government authority. In other words, elections can help in legitimizing the government (Msekwa, 2006).

Multiparty politics in Tanzania started at the time of independence in 1961, and went on for a few years after independence. The multiparty political system inherited from the colonial period lingered on (Msekwa, 2006). At the time of independence there were four registered political parties; these were Tanganyika National Union (TANU), the United Tanganyika Party (UTP), the African National Congress (ANC), and All Muslim National Union of Tanganyika (AMNUT). There are some parties which were registered soon after independence; these were the People's Convention Party (PCP), African Independence Movement (AIM), and Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). There was a multiparty system with parliamentary sovereignty and largely autonomous civil organizations such as workers' unions and peasants' cooperatives (TEMCO, 1997). In 1964, the government, under the presidency of Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, abolished the multiparty democracy and decided to converge into a single party system (Norman, 2009). One of the reasons for converging into one party system was the results of general elections of 1960/1961 which saw TANU winning all seats except one (Msekwa, 2006). Thereafter, TANU and A.S.P united to form CCM in 1977 and, therefore, CCM enjoyed supremacy since 1977 to 1992 when multiparty democracy was reinstated.

In 1994 multi-party local government elections were held in Tanzania, representing the first multi-party elections in the country following the reinstatement of multiparty democracy in Tanzania in 1992. These elections were held in accordance with the Local Government Authorities Elections Act of 1979, as amended in 1992, 1993, and 1994. These changes ushered in reforms in the country's political milieu, paving the way to liberalization of politics, including the formation of many political parties in the country. Following the adoption of multiparty politics, by 1995, Tanzania had thirteen registered political parties which had legal mandate to carry out political work all over the country (Bana, 2007). This was a remarkable development in the political history of Tanzania taking into account the fact that the country had been under a one-party rule for more than three decades.

For many people, the goal of elections is to determine the electorate's preferences and to allocate political power correspondently. To achieve this, high participation is often considered to be desirable. For example, Lijphart (1997) argues that low turnout is a serious democratic problem because it usually involves unequal turnout, causing unequal political influence. Indeed, if voters' turnout is low it is obvious that the result of an election will not reflect the electorate's preferences. Although this situation exists, little research, if any, has been done on the determinants of voting. Therefore, this paper was important to generate empirical information to contribute to the pool of knowledge on how citizens view the electoral process in Tanzania and Morogoro Constituency in particular.

The problem for this paper was that; although the government and other stakeholders have always made efforts to create awareness and conducive environment to citizens on the importance of participating in the elections by setting rules, regulations, and by-laws as well as providing civic education so as to make sure that there is a big turnout; turnout of voters in Tanzania's general elections has been declining. It has been noted that there are a number of voters who do not participate in voting; some of them register but do not vote. In the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections, for instance, the number of registered voters in Morogoro Town Constituency was 140,299 but the number of people who voted was 93,064, that is to say about 34% of voters registered did not vote in the parliamentary and presidential elections (NEC, 2006). In the 2010 general elections the number of registered voters in Morogoro Town Constituency was 185,235 but the number of people who voted was 67,361 that is to say 65.4% of all registered voters did not vote. This shows that there is a big proportion of registered voters who do not vote in the elections. Therefore, the aim of this paper was to assess factors which determine electorates to participate in elections.

Several studies have been conducted by political scientists on how the public apprehends potential candidates in elections. However, little is known on the factors that determine voting in elections. Therefore, the research on which this paper is based was done with the specific objectives to: assess the knowledge and attitude of voters towards the elections in Morogoro Constituency, estimate the minutes spent by voters going to and queuing in the polling stations and determine how political party adherence is related to voting. Furthermore, a hypothesis was tested to find if there is significant relationship between individuals' levels of civic education and participation in voting. The aim was to generate empirical information which could help understand better the underlying causes of low turnout in elections and hence suggest initiatives to increase turnout.

## **2. General and Empirical Literature**

### *2.1 Importance of Civic Education*

Simon (1998) defines civic education as an important component of education that prepares citizens to participate in the public life of a democracy, to use their rights and to discharge their responsibilities with the necessary knowledge and skills. American schools, for instance, have advanced a distinctively civic mission since the earliest days of the Republic. It was immediately recognized that a free society must ultimately depend on its citizens, and that the way to infuse the people with the necessary qualities is through education. As one step of this education process, higher education has been assuming the mission to foster citizens with the spirit to lead. Civic education, therefore, is very important for the welfare of the Tanzanian democracy. According to American Bureau of Democracy, universal citizenship is a distinct product of the modern state system i.e. a state system that recognizes the political equality of citizens in the process of decision-making. People are, however, neither born democratic nor are they all educated about their citizenship rights and duties; it is civic or political education that fosters youths' democratic attitudes, skills and knowledge to engage and work on important public issues and make democracy a way of life.

Civic education aims to equip boys and girls for life in the public realm and engages them in the analysis of major rules and regulations of society, public and private institutions, actors and vital social issues enabling them to find ways to resolve social problems. The commitment of citizens to civic education means that each problem thus selected is of social significance. In this sense, civic education is training for democratic citizenship. Preparation for democratic citizenship requires that youths develop a habit of service, civic skills, and the competence needed for adequate civic action. According to USAID (2002), over the past decades, civic education has become a major component of its agenda; by the end of the 1990s, the agency spending on civic education programmes reached thirty million US dollars a year. For a democracy to survive and flourish, a critical mass of its citizens must possess the skills, embody the values, and manifest the behaviours that accord with democracy. They must know enough about the basic features of a democratic political system to be able to access it when their interests are at stake, and they must believe in the importance of certain key democratic values, such as tolerance for divergent viewpoints and support for the rule of law. They must also be willing and

able to participate in local and national politics, and they must believe that their participation is important to the continued viability of the democratic political system.

### *2.2 Roles of Political Parties in Democratic Change*

Political parties and their roles in democratic development changed significantly between the 1980s and the 1990s, both in industrialized western democracies and in newly developing democratic nations (Schattschneider, 1999). While the changes resulted in a weakening of the connections between citizens and the state, there remains widespread consensus that political parties are essential elements in democratic societies. As a matter of fact, the condition of parties is the best evidence of the nature of any regime. The most important distinction between democracy and dictatorship can be made in terms of party politics. The parties are not therefore merely appendages of modern government; they are in the centre of it and can play a determinative and creative role in it. Therefore, adherence to political parties is expected to have positive impact on the participation in all political matters.

### *2.3 Distances from Home to Polling Stations*

A polling station, polling place, or simply a poll is a location where voters cast ballots in elections (Barbara, 2010). The integrity of an election depends on providing accessible, safe and efficient polling places for all registered voters in an electoral constituency. Selecting poll locations and providing staff and equipment are basic requirements for governments holding elections. Polls are located in electoral districts such as wards. The number of polls in a ward depends on the population of voters and physical size of the ward. In Tanzania elections are usually held once in five years; so governments (central and local) often use public buildings such as schools, open grounds, city and town halls and community centres as polling stations. According to MPSA Annual National Conference (2008), there is an impact of distance to polling station upon electoral turnout. The United Kingdom is notable among western liberal democracies for its relatively large turnout gap, the percentage point difference between turnout at elections for the Westminster parliament compared to that for other institutions, including local councils and the supra-national European parliament. It suggests that there is indeed a relationship between distance and voter turnout which is stronger for the lower salience European and local elections than it is for the higher salience national elections. Hence, it is deduced from this information that the local geography of the polling station can have a significant impact on voter turnout and that there should be a more strategic approach to the location of polling stations.

Mills (2002) suggests that assessment of the role of physical accessibility in governing rates of turnout would be based on individual voter information, specifically distance (or an equivalent measure) to the polling station and whether a vote was cast. This is based on the aggregate turnout and accessibility information. Although this may introduce potential ecological errors where aggregate information is used to infer individual behaviour, it allows demographic information to be incorporated. Accessibility is measured here as the straight-line distance separating the voter from the place of voting. It is assumed that the journey to vote begins at home. Therefore, accessibility is defined in terms of the average distance travelled by all voters.

### *2.4 Incentives*

An incentive is something that encourages or motivates somebody to do something. In order for a candidate to be elected, politicians have to offer visible proof of their accomplishments before the next elections. Thus, they may lack incentive to tackle reforms which will only produce benefits after their period of office (Gersbach, 2007). According to Vergene (2006), democratic political institutions would provide those political incentive structures which are able to induce better policy choices. Elections prompt accountability in two ways. They provide political competition, and help governance to be more efficient by alleviating the moral hazard issue or mitigating the adverse selection phenomenon. By weeding out incompetent politicians and giving those in power an incentive to put in effort, elections are believed to provide suitable incentives for efficient governance. Therefore, electoral pressure may lead politicians to manipulate public policy in order to increase their chances of winning elections.

However, political budget cycles theory seems highly inconsistent with the fiscal preferences of voters. This examines how fiscal policy affects the re-election probabilities of incumbents and concludes that a government, which damages the financial position of the country harms its chances of re-election. Thus, voters are fiscal conservatives, punishing high spending or deficits through polls. The strongest evidence suggesting that deficits do not help re-election prospects comes from Brender and Drazen (2005) in a sample of 74 countries over the period 1960 to 2003 as cited by Vergene (2006). Indeed, they found no evidence that election year deficits help re-election in any group of countries, including developed and less developed ones, and countries with different

government or electoral systems. However, in some African countries incentives are taken as bribes; politicians tend to blackmail voters with some material things so that they vote for them. For example in Tanzania, there are some cases where some politicians were caught by Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) officials bribing voters in Dodoma town during the ruling party general elections.

### *2.5 Elections*

Elections are processes in which citizens in a polity are given the opportunity to be selected by vote individuals or groups for public positions or offices (URT, 2003). An election is a formal act of collective political decision making. It is thus an important event in every political system based on political competition. Tanzania was a democratic one party state because of its impeccable electoral record throughout that period of single party system. The first general elections in Tanzania under one-party state constitution were held regularly every five years in 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1990. Msekwa (2006) argues that an election is a procedure by which members of communities or organizations choose their representatives who will hold office during a specific period.

### *2.6 Access to Information*

According to International Human Rights Standards, the extents of fairness, balance and impartiality to which the media, both public and private, would report the elections should be balanced. The obligation of publicly funded media to inform the public impartially about election issues is stipulated in Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (TEMCO, 2000). Converse (1962, as cited by Mukandala and Killian, 2000) observed many years ago that exposure to political communication is positively associated with general level of political awareness, and the effect of the media on public opinion varies with how the individual approaches political messages. The media control in the time of monopoly politics was the responsibility of the state, although it has changed in this current democratic culture whereby there is an increase of private media which provide an image of impartiality despite the fact that there are some reports published by NEC and TEMCO after the 1995 multiparty elections that there was favouritism for certain parties and candidates by the news.

### *2.7 Empirical Information*

A study conducted by the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) (2014) under observation of 2014 Chalinze by-election (Tanzania) shows that only 24,422 out of 92,939 registered voters voted in the by-election, that is to say only 26.3% voted. A big proportion (73.7%) of registered voters did not turnout. It is suggested that there has been poor citizen participation in voting just because leaders are not committed to solving their life challenges as well as to improving the permanent Voters' register. For example, during the above-mentioned Chalinze by-election, a good number of citizens went to their farms instead of going to vote, and when the electoral commission went around announcing the election, one of the citizens was heard saying, "Instead of broadcasting about water, you tell us about election". A report produced by NEC (2014) about Kalenga by-election (Tanzania) has it that only 29,541 out of 71,965 of registered voters voted in the by-election that year.

Unlike in Tanzania where the proportion of voters has been decreasing, in India's 2014 general elections, Sadan (2014) pointed out that the number of voters increased compared to 2009 Indian general elections. A total of 814.5 million voters cast their ballots in 2014 compared to 713 million people in 2009 general elections. There were some reasons for the increase, including registering new voters aged 18 to 19 years as well as allowing Indians living abroad to vote; 11,844 overseas electors were enrolled.

## **3. Source of Data for this Paper**

### *3.1 Geographical Location of the Study Area*

The research on which this paper is based was conducted in Morogoro Municipality, which is one of six Districts of Morogoro Region (URT, 2006). The Municipality consists of 29 wards and 274 streets, but the research was confined to four wards (Sabasaba, Kihonda Magorofani, Kihonda Mbuyuni and Mwembesongo). It is located 200 km West of Dar es Salaam along the Tanzania to Zambia highway. Morogoro urban has a total population of 315,866 people (NBS and OCGS, 2013). The main economic activity in the district is agriculture. Morogoro Urban was selected for the study because it had 34% of registered voters who did not vote in the 2005 general elections compared to 30% of all registered voters who did not vote all over the country (NEC, 2006). In 2010 general elections 65.4% of all registered voters did not vote compared to 57.2% of all registered voters who did not vote all over the country. Therefore, Morogoro Urban had a higher percentage of non-voters as compared to most other places in Tanzania.

### *3.2 Research Design, Sample and Sampling*

The study employed a cross-sectional design in which data were collected at one point in time. Two hundred (200) respondents were selected; 50 respondents from each ward of research. The Sample size was determined based on sample size determination formula. Four wards were randomly selected; in each ward 50 respondents were randomly selected from sampling frames, which were obtained in Morogoro Municipal Council. Focus group discussants were selected on the basis of their sex categories and age. Eight to ten discussants were selected from one street in each ward. A total of four people were used as key informants, including three people from political parties and one person from the Municipal Director's Office.

### *3.3 Instruments of Data Collection*

Copies of a questionnaire, a key informant interview guide and a focus group discussion (FGD) guide were used for data collection. The questionnaire was prepared based on the essentials of a good questionnaire, i.e. short and simple, and organized in a logical sequence moving from relatively easy to more difficulty questions. Technical terms, vague expression and those affecting sentiments of the respondents were avoided. Also, direct observations were done on electorates' participation in election campaigns, and party affiliation.

### *3.4 Data Analysis*

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In descriptive statistical analysis, frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values of individual variables were computed. Inferential analysis was done using chi-square analysis to determine whether there were significant relationships between voting and some independent variables, including voter civic education. For qualitative data analysis, content analysis was used by comparing and contrasting responses given by various interviewees.

## **4. Empirical Findings from the Research**

### *4.1 Knowledge of Voters about Elections*

Knowledge of voters about elections was determined by using a 50-point index scale which comprised ten statements. The scores over 50 were categorised into two levels i.e. lower knowledge and higher knowledge which was set for the purpose of analysis in this study. Lower knowledge of voters towards elections ranged from 0 to 24.9 points while higher knowledge ranged from 25 to 50 points. The cut-off point (<25) was based on the average points scored on the overall knowledge which was 25.0 points. However, results showed that the majority of the respondents had higher knowledge of elections in Morogoro Urban Constituency. The above results can be justified on the fact that the study was conducted in an urban area where there was adequate access to information through public and private media.

### *4.2 Attitude of Voters towards Elections in Morogoro Urban Constituency*

Attitude of voters was measured by using a 60-point Likert-scale which comprised twelve statements implying liking and disliking elections. Half of the statements had negative connotation while the other half had positive connotation. For every statement the respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly disagreed (1), disagreed (2), were neutral (3), agreed (4), or strongly agreed (5) with the statement. For easy comparison, the scores for strongly agree and agree were grouped into agree; the scores for neutral were left intact; and the scores for strongly disagree and disagree were grouped into disagree. Overall, 18 (9%) had neutral attitude (i.e., they scored 36 out of 60 points); 122 (61%) had unfavourable attitude (i.e., they scored less than 36 out of 60 points); and (30%) had favourable attitude (i.e. they scored 37 points and above). The average score was 34.9 over 60.0. This implies that, overall; the respondents' attitude towards elections was unfavourable. The results are comparable to those of the parliamentary and presidential elections reported by the National Electoral Commission (NEC, 2014) in Morogoro Constituency and at the National level whereby only 36.4% of registered voters voted in Morogoro Municipality and only 42.8% of registered voters voted in the 2010 general election all over the country (NEC, 2010).

### *4.3 Relationships between Having Knowledge on Civic Education and Attitude towards Elections*

A greater proportion (61.1%) of respondents who had higher knowledge on civic education had neutral attitude towards elections, and 51.7% of the respondents who had higher knowledge on civic education had favourable attitude towards elections. These results show that most of the respondents who had higher knowledge on civic education scored above 50% of neutral and unfavourable attitudes. These results also show that higher

knowledge on civic education had positive association with attitude of respondents towards elections. However, the relationship was not significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.776$ ,  $p = 0.678$ ).

#### 4.4 Association between Voting and Attitude towards Elections

About two-thirds (65.1%) of the respondents who did not vote had unfavourable attitude towards elections. Only 32.5% of respondents who voted had favourable attitude towards elections. These results show that attitude towards elections had positive relationship with voting whereby unfavourable attitude goes with the act of not voting, albeit the relationship was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 1.076$ ,  $p = 0.584$ ). These results might have been caused by the fact that a greater proportion (57.9%) of the respondents who voted also had unfavourable attitude towards elections.

#### 4.5 Relationship between Party Influence and Voting

To assess whether the respondents had voted for particular political parties for certain reasons, the respondents were asked whether they had been convinced by the manifestos of the political parties, whether they trusted political parties, whether they preferred the candidates, or whether they were motivated by the incentives provided by the parties. About two-thirds (64.5%) of all the respondents claimed that the manifesto of the particular parties had convinced them to participate in the elections; 31.5% of all the respondents argued that they were not impressed by the manifestos of political parties and they considered other factors such as adherence to political parties. Sixty-five percent (65%) of all the respondents claimed that they had trust in political parties during the elections. Only 43% of all respondents claimed that they had trust in candidates during the election period while 57% of all the respondents had trust in political parties, and only 45% of respondents claimed that they were convinced to vote for particular parties for their previous achievements. Therefore, 55% of the respondents were not impressed by the achievements of any political party that was in place.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings that 51.7% of all the respondents had higher knowledge of civic education, it is concluded that knowledge on civic education is very important for participation in elections; the majority of the respondents with higher knowledge voted in the 2010 general elections. Based on the results of testing the research hypothesis, which showed that a respondent with higher knowledge on civic education and another one with lower knowledge on civic education voted differently in the 2010 general elections, it is concluded that civic education is significantly related to voting.

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are made to help different development stakeholders at various levels, including voters themselves, on how civic education may contribute significantly to voting. Based on the conclusion that the overall attitude towards elections was unfavourable, and in most cases it was characterised by low turnout, it is recommended that the government, through the National Electoral Commission (NEC), should strengthen efforts in expanding and increasing adequate information about the importance of elections. More specifically, the government is urged to establish civic education programmes/projects in order to raise knowledge on the importance of participating in voting. More knowledge on civic education may influence rapid increase of participation in voting. Seminars and workshops should be conducted by the National Electoral Commission (NEC) for local leaders to sensitize them on various election issues, such as the implication of low participation in elections on consolidation of true democracy. The leaders would then spread the messages to the electorates.

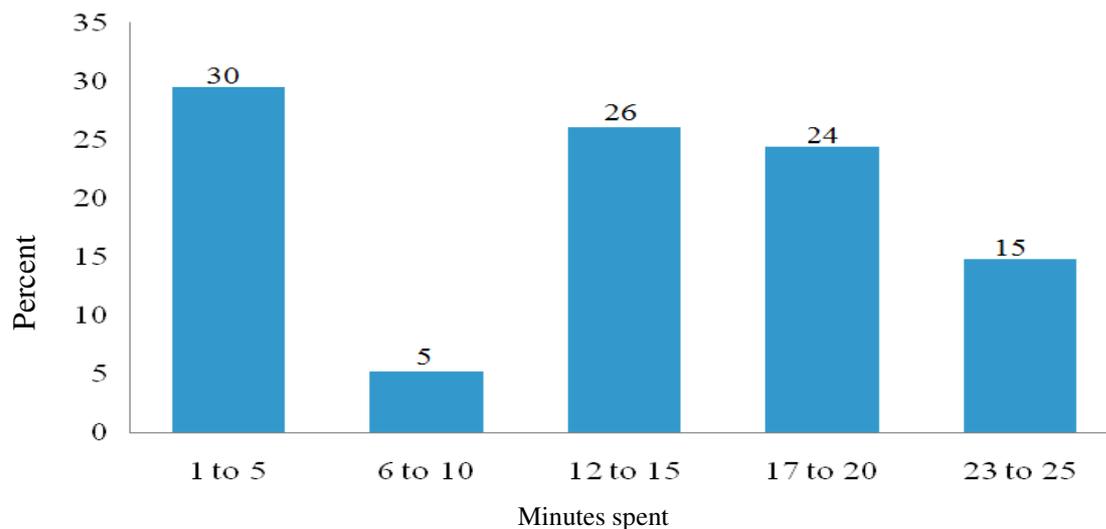
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**Figure 1: Time spent by voters walking to the polling stations**

Table 1. Cross tabulation results indicating the relationship between voting and knowledge on civic education

Voting	Civic education	
	Those with lower civic education (%)	Those with higher civic education (%)
Those who voted	39.5	60.5
Those who did not vote	60.5	39.5

**Pearson Chi-Square = 8.648 (p = 0.003); Likelihood Ratio = 0.706 (p = 0.003)**

Table 2. Cross tabulation results indicating relationship between political influence and voting

Political party influence	Voting	
	Voted (%)	Did not vote (%)
Yes	55.6	44.4
No	59.0	41.0

**Pearson chi-square = 0.240 (p= 0.624), Leamer association = 0.239 (p= 0.625)**

Table 1. Respondents' scores on the items of the Likert-scale used (n = 200)

<b>Attitudinal statement</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b>Undecided (%)</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>
1. To register in the permanent voters registration book is not important	90.5	2.5	7.0
2. The electoral processes for voting are very favourable to voters	41.5	9.0	49.5
3. Voting in elections is not necessary	82.0	2.0	16.0
4. Polling stations are located very close to residence	19.0	10.0	71.0
5. It is not necessary for elderly people to participate in the elections	85.0	2.5	12.5
6. Political parties influence people to vote	26.5	16.5	57.0
7. It is very important for a person above 18 years of age to be registered in the permanent voters registration book	4.5	25.5	70
8. The electoral processes for voting discourages people to vote	42.0	13.5	44.5
9. Voting in the elections is a basic right for every adult person	7.0	3.5	89.5
10. The location of polling stations hinders people to vote	58.0	18.5	23.5
11. The only purpose of voting is to get new leaders	72.5	5.5	22.0
12. Political parties are playing a key role to influence people in the elections	29.0	20.5	50.5

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