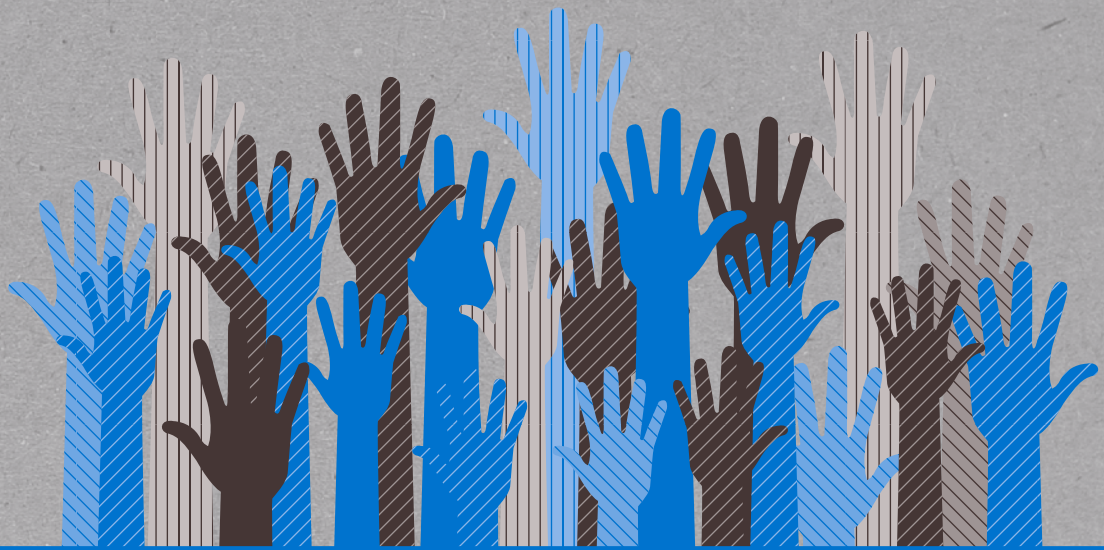# A TROUBLED FUTURE FOR DEMOCRACY

THE RESULTS OF THE 2015 MALDIVES DEMOCRACY SURVEY

TRANSPARENCY MALDIVES

A Coalition for Integrity

Transparency Maldives (TM), National Contact of Transparency International (TI), is a non-partisan organization that promotes collaboration, awareness and undertakes other initiatives to improve governance and eliminate corruption from the daily lives of people. Transparency Maldives views corruption as a systemic issue and advocates for institutional changes that will punish and prevent corruption.

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A TROUBLED FUTURE FOR DEMOCRACY THE RESULTS OF THE 2015 MALDIVES DEMOCRACY SURVEY

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP   Adhaalath Party

DRP   Dhivehi Rayyithunge Party

EC   Elections Commission

IFES   International Foundation for Electoral Systems

JP   Jumhoory Party

MDA   Maldivian Democratic Alliance

MDP   Maldivian Democratic Party

MNDF   Maldives National Defence Force

NGO   Non Governmental Organization

PPM   Progressive Party of Maldives

TM   Transparency Maldives

INTRODUCTION

Since the first multiparty elections in 2008, democratisation in the Maldives has been challenged in many ways. One of the main factors is political turmoil. By the time the second multiparty presidential elections in 2013 finally came to an end after a series of delays and cancellations by the Supreme Court, the country appeared to be at a political breaking point. The atmosphere of relative calm that prevailed after the losing parties conceded defeat soon again gave way to political uncertainty. The recent arrest and prosecution of politicians has worsened the crisis of politics.

This bitter partisan politics has not spared key democratic institutions, such as the judiciary and the parliament, further challenging democratisation.

Successful democratisation also depends on the availability of a supporting set of democratic orientations and values held by citizens. It also depends on the political empowerment and engagement of citizens.

The 2015 Democracy Survey, like the benchmark Democracy Survey in 2013, is premised in the widely held beliefs that successful democratisation everywhere depends on supporting values and orientations – that is, a democratic political culture.

The survey provides a wealth of reliable and systematic information about Maldivian political culture. Our hope is that the systematic evidence presented here will help policymakers, civic and political organisations, state and private institutions, and the international community, in addressing some of the many challenges of democratisation in the Maldives.

The 2015 Democracy Survey is also a nationwide survey of the adult population in the Maldives aged 18 years or older. It is based on a random sample stratified proportionally across the regions of the Maldives. The 2014 Maldives Population and Housing Census data was used as the listing of people above 18 years of age. This is the most up-to-date listing available in the country. Census 2014 preliminary data shows there are 341,256 people above 18 years of age. Hence, the target population for the survey is 341,256. The size of the sample for the survey is 1,064 people.

The report has five sections: section I concerns the more general citizen orientations and views on democracy and the levels of engagement that together partly constitute "political culture". Section II is about their views on more specific aspects of the political context in the Maldives. The report then presents, in section III, levels of public confidence in a range of institutions important for democracy and the country. In section IV, the analysis focuses on citizens' views on gender equality and women's political participation. Finally, section V deals with people's attitudes towards political parties that form the backbone of political society.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transparency Maldives conducted its second Democracy Survey between May 20, and June 15, 2015. A benchmark Democracy Survey was conducted in the run up to the 2013 Presidential Elections.

As in 2013 survey, the 2015 nationwide random survey of the Maldivian public mostly used repeatedly tested questions. The results are reliable within a margin of error of ±2.95%.

Democracy surveys such as this one are widely conducted throughout the world. These surveys are grounded in the belief that successful democratisation requires a corresponding set of supporting democratic values, orientations, and attitudes.

The 2015 Democracy Survey data indicates positive developments in some general democratic values and orientations held by citizens. However, the data also indicates worrying continuities and developments in some other aspects. Critical findings are as follows:

- There has been a striking positive development in how people evaluate democracy. Findings show most Maldivians prefer democracy as a form of government. 77% think a democratic form of government is good for the country. Findings also show that half of Maldivians now agree that democracies are unstable, compared to 78% in 2013. Only 38% of respondents associate democracy with poor economic systems, compared to 66% in the 2013 Survey. Thirty-four percent of respondents say democracies are bad at establishing order, compared to 61% in the 2013 Survey. For most Maldivians, democracy also means political and civil rights, with almost three-quarters (74%) of respondents saying that freedom of speech accurately defines what democracy is and 65% reporting that democracy is marked by freedom of assembly.

- One of the troubling findings is the persistent high level of cynicism (73%) among Maldivians. While overall cynicism has decreased (84% in 2013 and 73% in 2015), 94% still say politicians are ready to lie to get elected (compared to 92% in 2013), and 71% think government does not care much about ordinary Maldivians (compared to 86% in 2013).

- Another set of troubling findings concern people's negative perceptions about the current political order and status quo: 80% of respondents say that political power is concentrated in the hands of too few people. Whilst it is 4% lower than in 2013, it is still a worryingly high number. Fifty-eight percent say the country is headed in the "wrong direction". Most people report political issues as the biggest problem for the country and most think key socio-political issues have worsened: 72% believe corruption has increased; 65% believe political instability has increased; and, 49% say judicial independence has declined, while only 29% say it increased.

People continue to be divided about how satisfied they are with the way democracy works in the country, with 55% saying they are either very or somewhat satisfied and 45% saying they are either very or somewhat dissatisfied.

Strikingly, the young and the well educated are more likely to have these negative perceptions.

- Dialogue, however, remains the preferred solution to solve the problems facing the country for 97% of the people. However, about one in three believes violence is sometimes justifiable to address injustices.

- A major concern that remains is that most Maldivians continue to lack confidence in key democratic institutions. The survey shows 51% have no confidence at all in the courts, compared to 46% in 2013 Survey. Parliament and political parties saw some improvements, although, a majority of Maldivians (57%) still have no confidence at all in the parliament, and 49% have no confidence at all in parties.

- Another striking finding is the significant drop in confidence in the Elections Commission: 56% have a great deal of or some confidence in EC compared to 74% in 2013, a decrease of 18 percentage points.

- The 2015 survey saw a slight improvement in people's attitudes towards gender equality. Still, only less than half (44%) disagree with the statement that men make better leaders than women. But it is an increase of six percentage points compared to 2013 when 38% disagreed with the statement. This result reinforces findings concerning positive developments in the general orientations towards democracy as a form of government.

- Finally, majority of Maldivians do not think highly of political parties. Forty-one percent of Maldivians say that political parties seek to serve their own interests by being in power and only 22% of Maldivians say that political parties serve the interest of the Maldivian people.

METHODOLOGY

The evidence presented in the 2015 Democracy Survey comes from 1,064 interviews conducted with citizens of Maldives aged 18 and above. This survey is based on a random sample stratified proportionately across the regions of the Maldives taking into account urban and rural characteristics. The sample was designed to be nationally representative, with interviews conducted in all administrative regions in the Maldives. Within each atoll, islands were selected using random sampling methodology taking into account islands with small and large populations.

The survey used questions that have been repeatedly used and tested in surveys around the world. Interviews for the survey were carried out confidentially and face-to-face in the homes of respondents. The data presented in the survey has been weighted to ensure that it is representative of the population of the Maldives by region, gender and age. Because the data come from a random sample, the results of the 2015 Democracy Survey is generalizable to the whole Maldivian population within a +/- 2.95 percent margin of error.

The field work and data processing for the survey was undertaken by Commerce, Development and Environment (CDE) Consulting, a public opinion research organization based in Male', Maldives. All interviews were conducted in Dhivehi language by enumerators specially trained on the 2015 Democracy Survey. Data for the survey was compiled and analyzed by public opinion research experts at IFES.

SECTION I
TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL CULTURE?

The question of how states could successfully consolidate democracy is a matter of considerable debate. Yet there seems to be general agreement that democratic consolidation depends on a range of public orientations, values, and behavioural patterns. In other words, a democratic political culture is crucial for a successful democracy (Huntington 1993; Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 2000; Diamond 1999; Putnam 2000).

The exact content of democratic political culture varies. TM's 2015 Democracy Survey explores some of the important measures of democratic political culture.

GENERAL ORIENTATIONS AND BELIEFS

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

Perhaps the best way to approach survey questions probing political culture is by analysing the more general orientations and beliefs of people. Level of support for democracy is one such broad question.

Compared to the 2013 Democracy Survey, there is a striking positive change in people's assessment of "democracy" as a form of government.

The respondents were presented with a series of statements about democracy in order to capture their subjective assessment of democracy. Three of these statements focused on issues of stability ("democracies are unstable"), economic performance ("in a democracy the economic system works poorly") and order ("democracies are not good at establishing order").

In the 2015 Survey, half of Maldivians (49%) agreed that democracies are unstable compared to 78% in 2013 Survey. Only 34% agreed with the statement that democracies are not good at establishing order, compared to 61% in 2013. Finally, only 38% agreed with the statement that in a democracy economic systems work poorly, compared to 66% who agreed with that statement in 2013 survey. **(Figure 1)**

Significantly, a solid majority (62%) also believes that despite its problems democracy is still the best system for Maldives. Hence, there seems to be a broad desire for democracy in the Maldives.

Figure 1: "For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or completely disagree:"

Percent strongly and somewhat agreeing with each statement, by year   2013   2015

59% 62%	78% 49%	66% 37%	61% 33%
Democracy may have problems, but it is the best system we have	Democracies are unstable	In a democracy, the economic system works poorly	Democracies are not good to establish order
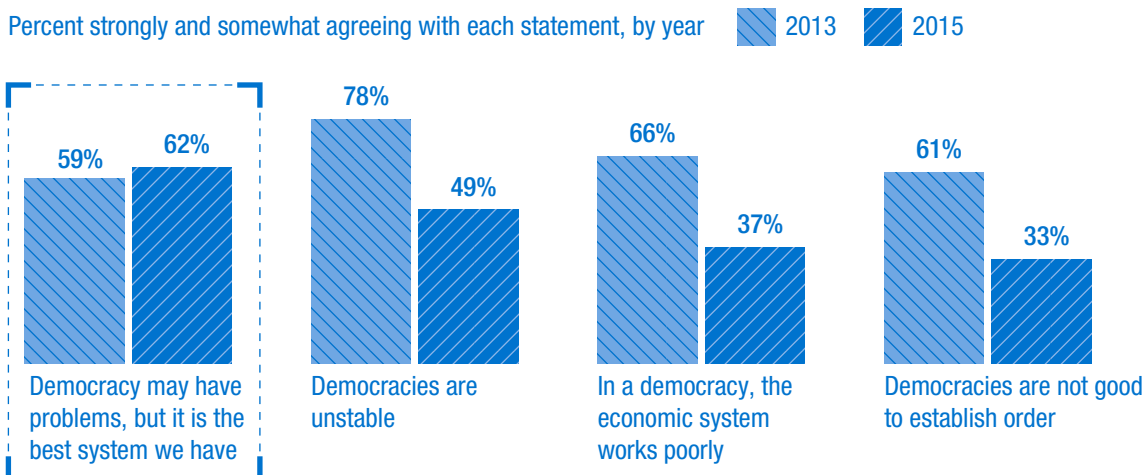
A majority of Maldivians either completely (23%) or somewhat agree (39%) with the statement that democracy may have problems, but it is the best system we have. Conversely, a third of respondents either somewhat (25%) or completely disagree with this statement (8%).

Findings from a more specific question probing views on democracy as the form of government that is appropriate for the Maldives reinforce the above general findings. Respondents to the survey were given a range of possible political systems and asked whether they would be good or bad for the country. The vast majority of Maldivians are much more supportive of a democratic system of government than other systems of government **(Figure 2)**.

Overall, 77% think a democratic political system is good for the country, while 15% think it is bad.

The only other system that receives moderate support is a system with religious groups governing the country. Four in ten Maldivians say that having a religious group govern the country would be either very good (11%) or good (30%), with a further 13% saying it would be neither good nor bad. Almost half say that a religious group governing the country would be either bad (29%) or very bad (16%).

Other types of political systems receive much lower levels of support among the population. However, among the youth and more educated the trend does not hold. Those between the ages of 18-34 show the lowest level of support for this (71%), compared to other age ranges (35-54: 84%, 55+: 80%). Among those with at least certificate or diploma, only 78% think democracy is good for the country, compared to 80% with primary schooling or less. The only trend for which it holds is those earning over MVR 20,000, where 88% say democracy is good.

Figure 2: "For each one, would you say it is a very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad or very bad way of governing this country?"

	Very good	Somewhat good	Neither good nor bad	Somewhat bad	Very bad	Don't know/No response
Having a democratic political system	36%	41%	7%	10%	5%	2%
Having a religious group to govern the country	11%	30%	13%	29%	16%	2%
Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country	4%	18%	11%	44%	18%	5%
Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with elections	3%	11%	9%	41%	32%	4%
Having the army rule	2%	7%	5%	39%	42%	5%

However, there is still a significant portion of the population that has concerns about instability (49% in 2015 compared to 78% in 2013) and lack of order in democracies. The majority of Maldivians who hold these views also tend to be dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the Maldives (see section II). These findings indicate that political instability still has the potential to negatively impact perceptions of democracy in general and the strengthening of Maldivian democracy in particular.

MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

The above questions do not capture people's subjective understanding of what democracy means. Different people ascribe different meanings to it. Democracy is an "essentially contested concept" (Gallie 1956; Held 2006). That is, there are endless disputes about the proper use of the term. However, arguably certain civil and political rights seem to capture the "core meaning" of democracy, which is "people power" (Welzel and Alexander 2008).

The 2015 Democracy Survey attempted to probe public understandings of democracy. Respondents to the survey were specifically given a series of possible meanings of democracy and asked to choose the three that they thought most signified the meaning of democracy.

The responses indicated that most Maldivians associate democracy with certain civil and political rights. Almost three-quarters (74%) say that freedom of speech accurately defines what democracy is and 65% say that democracy is marked by freedom of assembly **(Figure 3)**.

These findings therefore suggest that the meanings that most Maldivians attach to "democracy" may be not unique from the views of the people around the world, which is to do with rights (Welzel and Alexander 2008: 3). Having a "voice" seems to be what constitutes democracy for most Maldivians.

Figure 3: "Please pick any statement or statements that you think accurately define what it means for a country to be a democracy"
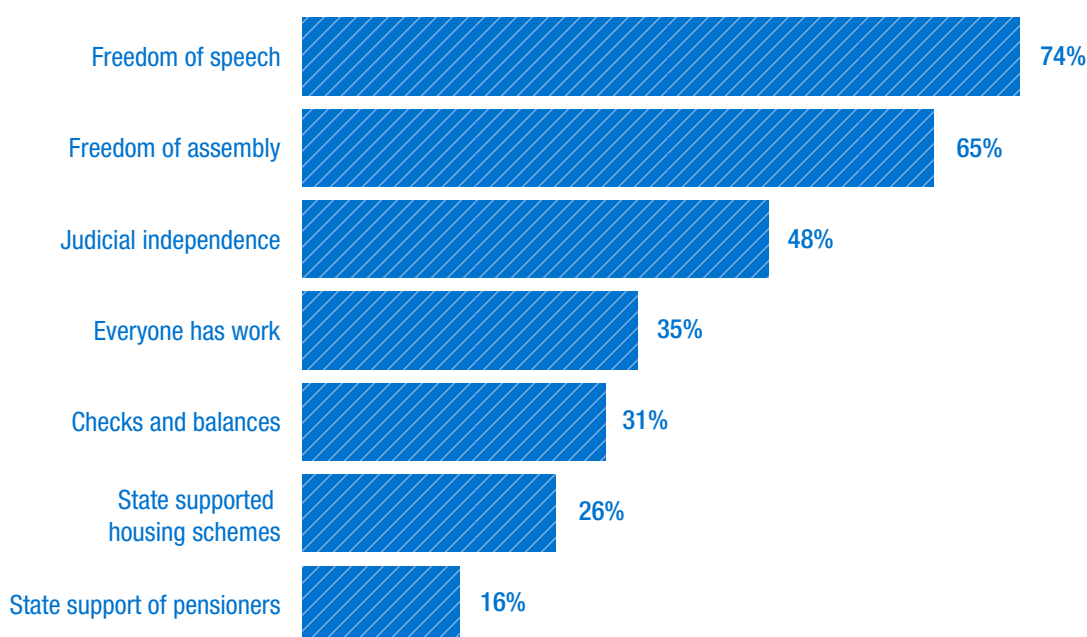
Finally, institutional legitimacy is also associated strongly with democracy, with 48% saying that democracy is marked by judicial independence and 31% selecting a system of checks and balances. Finally, economic and other material benefits are also mentioned by a significant percentage: everyone has work (35%), state supported housing schemes (26%), and state support of pensioners (16%).

OPPOSITION TO RESTRICTIONS OF RIGHTS IN A DEMOCRACY

Findings of a further question reinforced the connection people make between political rights, civil rights and democracy.

A majority of Maldivians are opposed to the government taking actions to restrict different rights in order to ensure order in the country.

When asked whether restricting specific rights are justified in order to maintain order, the majority of Maldivians say that restrictions of these rights are not justified **(Figure 4)**.

Over four in five Maldivians believe that restrictions on the activities of private business (89%), the freedom of media (89%), the activities of citizen groups and unions (87%), and the authority of courts are not justified. Sixty-eight percent of respondents say restrictions on the rights of citizens to protest are not justified, while 64% say restrictions on the activities of opposition political parties are not justified.

Figure 4: "Governments sometimes take action to ensure order in the country. Please tell me for each, whether the action can be justified or not justified."

	Justified	It depends	Not justified	Don't know/No Response
Limit the activities of opposition political parties	29%	5%	64%	
Limit the rights of citizens to protest	24%	7%	68%	
Limit the authority of the courts	14%	4%	81%	
Limit freedom of the media	8%	3%	89%	
Limit the activities of private business	8%	2%	89%	
Limit the activities of citizen's groups and unions	7%	3%	87%	
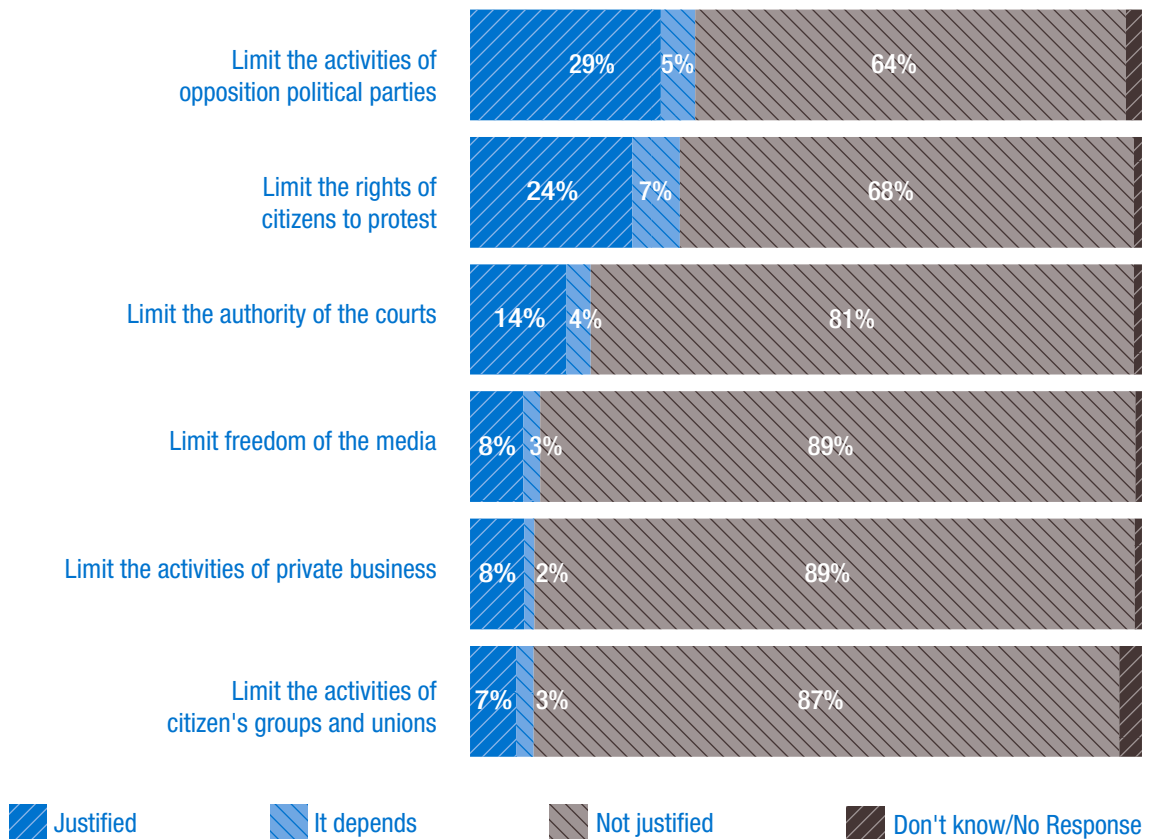
POLITICAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Quite aside from how people subjectively evaluate and understand democracy, crucial aspects of democratic political culture include citizens' civic and political engagement. Without minimal levels of citizen political and civic engagement, democracy becomes meaningless. Community associational engagement, that partly builds interpersonal trust, is also crucial for a healthy democracy (Putnam 1993; 2000).

Other dimensions of engagement, including interest in politics and gaining political knowledge, are necessary for democratic political engagement. The link of these forms of engagement to democracy seems to be straightforward. Interest in politics provides the motivation for people to get political knowledge and information (Gabriel and van Deth 1995). Without knowledge and information, robust political debates that inform public opinion would not take place in the public sphere (Habermas 1996).

The 2015 survey findings are similar to 2013 survey findings in some dimensions of engagement including interest in politics and political knowledge.

The 2015 survey indicates that engagement in associational life; especially at community level is low.

INTEREST IN POLITICS

The percentage of Maldivians interested in political life remains almost the same as in the 2013 Survey. Maldivians do not show particularly lower levels of interest in politics compared to transitional countries such as Nicaragua or El Salvador (Transparency Maldives 2013: 40).

A bare majority (51%) of Maldivians say that they are not interested in politics. Close to half (48%) are interested in politics with 20% being very interested and 28% somewhat interested **(Figure 5)**. These numbers are similar to findings from the 2013 survey where 50% said they were interested in politics.

Men tend to exhibit a higher interest in politics in the Maldives, with a majority saying that they are either very (27%) or somewhat interested (29%). Overall, only four in ten women in the Maldives say they are either very (13%) or somewhat interested (28%). Younger Maldivians tend to exhibit less interest in politics than older Maldivians. Among Maldivians between ages 18 and 34, only 41% express interest, compared to 57% of Maldivians between the ages of 35 and 54 and 54% of Maldivians over the age of 55.

Interest in politics varies across Maldives, with Maldivians in the Far South (60%) and Southern Atolls (59%) expressing greater interest than Maldivians in the Northern Atolls (51%), Malé (45%), and the Far North Atolls (43%)[1].

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1. For the purpose of this survey, the following six geographical distributions were used;
    1) The Far North Atolls: Haa Alifu, Haa Dhaalu, Shaviyani
    2) Northern Atolls: Noonu, Raa, Baa, Lhaviyani
    3) Central Atolls: Kaafu, Alifu Alifu, Alifu Dhaalu, Vaavu
    4) Southern Atolls: Meemu, Faafu, Dhaalu, Thaa, Laamu
    5) The Far South Atolls: Gaafu Alifu, Gaafu Dhaalu, Gnaviyani, Seenu Atoll
    6) Male'.

Figure 5: "How interested are you in matters of politics?"

Category	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not very interested	Not interested at all
Total 2015	20%	28%	17%	34%
Total 2013	28%	21%	23%	28%
Male	27%	29%	16%	28%
Female	13%	28%	18%	41%
18-34	13%	29%	17%	42%
35-54	26%	30%	16%	27%
55+	31%	23%	19%	26%
Male'	17%	28%	16%	40%
The Far North	19%	24%	19%	38%
Northern Atolls	26%	25%	15%	33%
Central Atolls	21%	18%	22%	40%
Southern Atolls	23%	36%	19%	23%
The Far South	23%	37%	15%	25%

Legend: Very interested · Somewhat interested · Not very interested · Not interested at all

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Findings indicate that most Maldivians are also politically knowledgeable. To find this out, 2015 survey asked questions similar to standard questions used to assess "political knowledge". The survey specifically asked to name Vice President of the Maldives, Home Minister of Maldives and President of the United States. When the responses were analysed for an "additive index", 58% are found to have "high" political knowledge.[2] The percentage for 2013 was 56% when respondents were asked to name the President of the Maldives, the President of the local council, and the President of the United States.

Almost six-in-ten Maldivians (58%) are able to correctly identify the names of the current Vice-President of the Maldives [3], the current Home Minister, and the President of the United States **(Figure 6)**. The ability to identify all three leaders correctly is higher among men (68%, compared to 48% for women), those with some university education (80%, compared to 56% for those with secondary education and below), and among those who are at least somewhat interested in politics (67%, compared to 49% among those who are not).

2. **Political knowledge index:**
    Do you happen to recall the name of:
    1. Vice President of the Maldives?
    2.Home Minister of Maldives?
    3. The President of the United States?
    The index scores individuals according to correct answers are given.
    High knowledge = 3 correct answers, medium = two correct answers, and low = one or no correct answers.
    Results report percentage with "high" levels of knowledge.

3. At the time of data collection, the Vice President of the Maldives was Dr. Mohamed Jameel Ahmed.

Figure 6: Political Knowledge

58%

22%

20%

Low

Medium

High
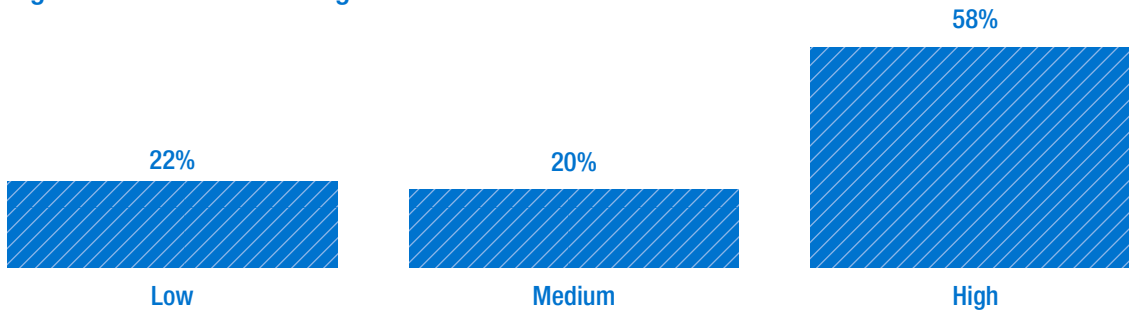
SOURCES FOR POLITICAL INFORMATION

Television is the most used source of information for Maldivians, with 57% saying that they use it to get information about politics.

Other important sources of information include social media (15%), online news websites (13%), friends and family (8%) and radio (2%) **(Figure 7)**.

Women are more likely to rely upon television (65% compared to 50% for men) than men, while men are more likely to rely upon social media and online news sites.

Younger Maldivians also rely upon social media and online news sites more than older Maldivians. Among Maldivians between the ages of 18 and 34, 22% use social media to access political information and 20% use online news sites. In comparison, only 19% of Maldivians between the ages of 35 and 54 use either of these two sources, and only 3% of Maldivians over the age of 55 use either of these sources.

Figure 7: "When it comes to politics, how do you get your information most of the time?"

	Television	Social Media	Online News Websites	Friends and Family	Radio	Other
Total	57%	15%	13%	8%	2%	2%
Male	50%	21%	16%	7%	2%	3%
Female	65%	9%	11%	8%	3%	1%

Total Male Female
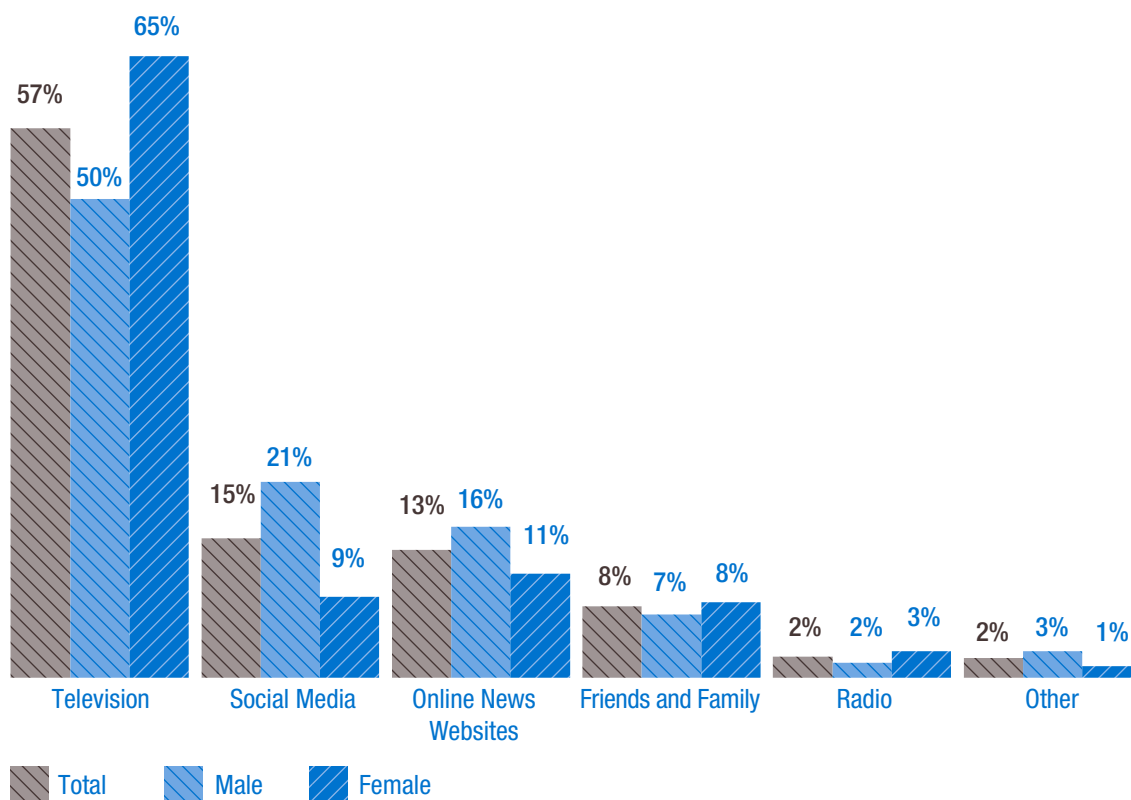
ASSOCIATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Associational engagement is a general measure of participation in the activities of the community in which people live. To assess this meaningfully, responses to the question asking people's level of participation in religious groups, sports groups, community development groups, unions and workers associations, were analysed in an additive index.[4] Findings indicate that there is a low level of associational engagement: 22% of the people have a "high" engagement **(Figure 8)**.

Figure 8: Associational Engagement in Maldives

22%	19%	59%

■ High engagement   ■ Medium engagement   ▨ Low engagement

POLITICAL ACTION

The 2015 survey asked questions to measure "political action" that people undertake in order to engage in their political and civic life. These political actions included participation in a local community meeting, requesting the government's assistance with a community problem, participation in a legally authorized demonstration, and using social media to express views on important social and political issues.

In order to compare with 2013 survey, responses were analysed in an additive index for the same political actions in both years.[5]

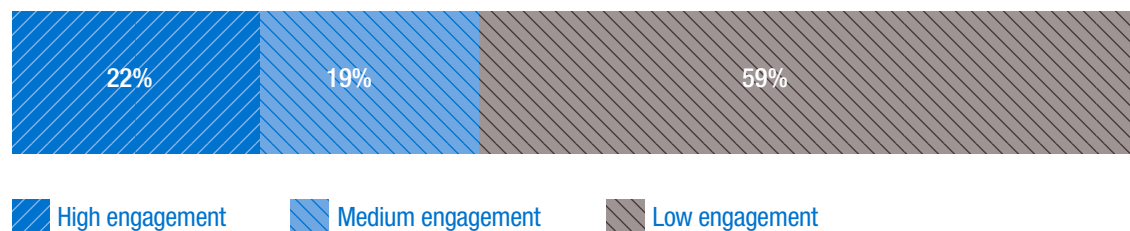Findings indicate the percentage of "active" citizens has dropped since 2013. In 2015, the additive index for political actions including "request the government's assistance with a community problem" and "participation in legally authorized demonstration" show that only 6% are "active", compared to 27% in 2013 for the same political actions **(Figure 9)**.

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4. Associational engagement index: "Please tell me if you have always, often, sometimes, or never participated in the meetings or activities organized by these groups over the past year:"
    1. Religious groups;
    2. Sports groups;
    3. Community development groups;
    4. Unions or workers associations.

    An additive index with a range of values 0-4.
    0 through 1 = low participation (0),
    2 = moderate participation levels (1),
    3 through 4 = high levels of participation (2).

5. Now, thinking about **citizen participation**, people get involved in different ways. Please tell me if you have ever participated, are willing to do so, or if you would never participate in each of the following activities.
    a) Request the government's assistance in a community problem.
    b) Participate in a legally authorised demonstration.

    This additive index takes on values that range from 0 (inactive) to 4 (active).
    The most active (4) are compared to others (0-3). Results report percentages that is "active".

The survey did not probe the reasons behind people's willingness or unwillingness to undertake these political actions. In the absence of systematic evidence, several reasons may be speculated. One possible reason behind the low level of willingness to undertake political action may be that people have the belief that "protest politics" is not an effective means of holding governments accountable in the Maldives. Another possible reason could be the low level of confidence in institutions.

Figure 9: Political Action
Percent saying they are very active

2015   6%

2013   27%

▨ Very active
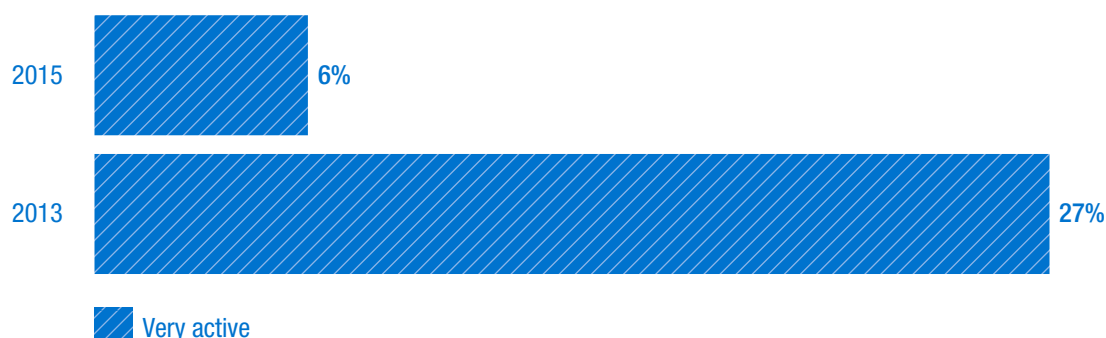
Analyzed individually, 42% report that they have previously undertaken at least one of the following political actions: requesting the government's assistance with a problem in their community, participating in a legally authorized demonstration, participating in a local community meeting, or using social media to voice views on important social and political issues. Among those who have been active, the majority has undertaken only one (20%) or two of these activities (12%).

Among the four areas of political actions, participation in a local community meeting is the most likely activity for Maldivians to partake in, with 30% reporting that they have previously done so. Fewer Maldivians say that they have previously requested for government's assistance with a community problem (18%), used social media to voice their views on important social and political issues (17%), or participate in a legally authorized demonstration (13%) **(Figure 10)**.

Even if they have not previously taken part in these activities, a significant percentage of Maldivians say that they are interested and willing to become more involved in these areas. Overall, 65% say they are willing to request the government's assistance with a community problem, 54% say they are willing to participate in a local community meeting, and 46% say they are willing to participate in a legally authorized demonstration. On the other hand, 40% say that they are not willing to participate in a demonstration and nearly half (49%) say that they will not use social media to voice their opinions.

Men are more likely to undertake these actions, with just over half (51%) saying they have previously undertaken one of these actions. Women participate at a lower rate, with only 34% saying that they have done at least one of the four activities. Participation varies throughout the country, with those in the Northern Atolls (68%), the Southern Atolls (57%), the Far South (56%), and the Central Atolls (55%) being more likely to have participated in at least one of these activities.

Figure 10: "Please tell me if you have ever participated, are willing to do so, or if you would never participate in each of the following activities:"

Activity	Have done	Willing to do	Would not participate	Don't know/No Response
Participate in a local community meeting	30%	54%	14%	
Request the government's assistance with a community problem	18%	65%	16%	
Participate in a legally authorized demonstration	13%	46%	40%	
Use social media to voice my views on important social and political issues	17%	30%	49%	

Legend: Have done · Willing to do · Would not participate · Don't know/No Response
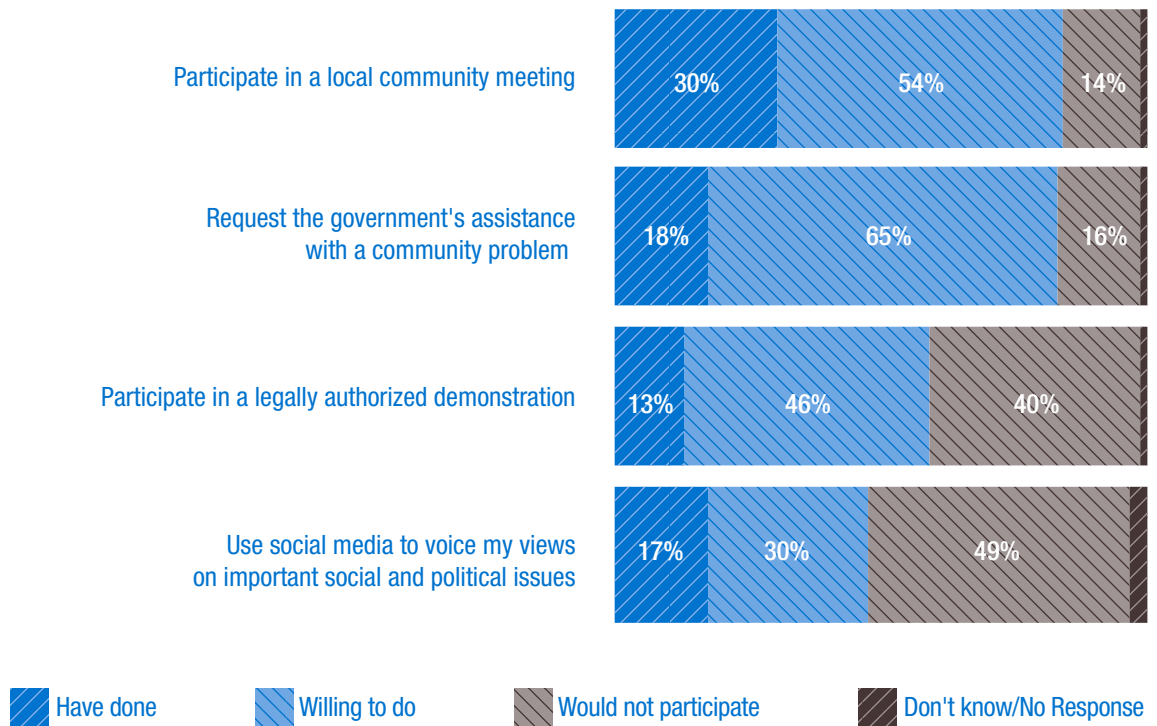
Meanwhile, those in the Far North and Male' are least likely to have participated, with only 29% in Far North and 26% in Male' having undertaken at least one of the listed activities **(Figure 11)**. Some variations also exist regarding age. Maldivians between the ages of 35 and 54 tend to be the most engaged, with 46% participating in at least one of the listed activities. However, Maldivians under the age of 35, are more likely to be engaged in three or more activities (13%) than other age ranges.

Figure 11: Patterns of civic participation

	Participated in 0 activities	Participated in 1 activity	Participated in 2 activities	Participated in 3 activities	Participated in 4 activities
Total	58%	20%	12%	7%	3%
Male	50%	22%	14%	9%	6%
Female	66%	18%	10%	5%	1%
Malé	73%	15%	7%	2%	2%
Far North	72%	17%	6%	6%	
Northern Atolls	31%	32%	21%	10%	5%
Central Atolls	45%	27%	14%	12%	2%
Southern Atolls	43%	19%	16%	14%	8%
The Far South	44%	24%	16%	10%	6%

Legend: Participated in 0 activities · Participated in 1 activity · Participated in 2 activities · Participated in 3 activities · Participated in 4 activities

POLITICAL CYNICISM AND SOCIAL ORDER

One of the continuing concerns is the persistent high level of "political cynicism" among Maldivians. Ninety-four percent of Maldivians believe that politicians are ready to lie to get elected, while only 6% disagree with this statement. Similarly, 71% of Maldivians agree that the government does not care much about ordinary people in Maldives, while only 28% disagree.

However, compared to 2013, overall political cynicism has decreased by 14%: in 2013, 82% were very cynical, compared to 69% in 2015.[6]

Similarly, large majority of respondents are critical of the political order: 80% agree that political power is concentrated in the hands of too few people, only a 4% decrease from 2013 levels.

Thus, the opinions expressed in **Figure 12** paint a picture of political leadership that is seen as not serving the Maldivian people but interested in power that political leadership provides.

Figure 12: "For each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with these opinions:"

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Don't know/No response
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

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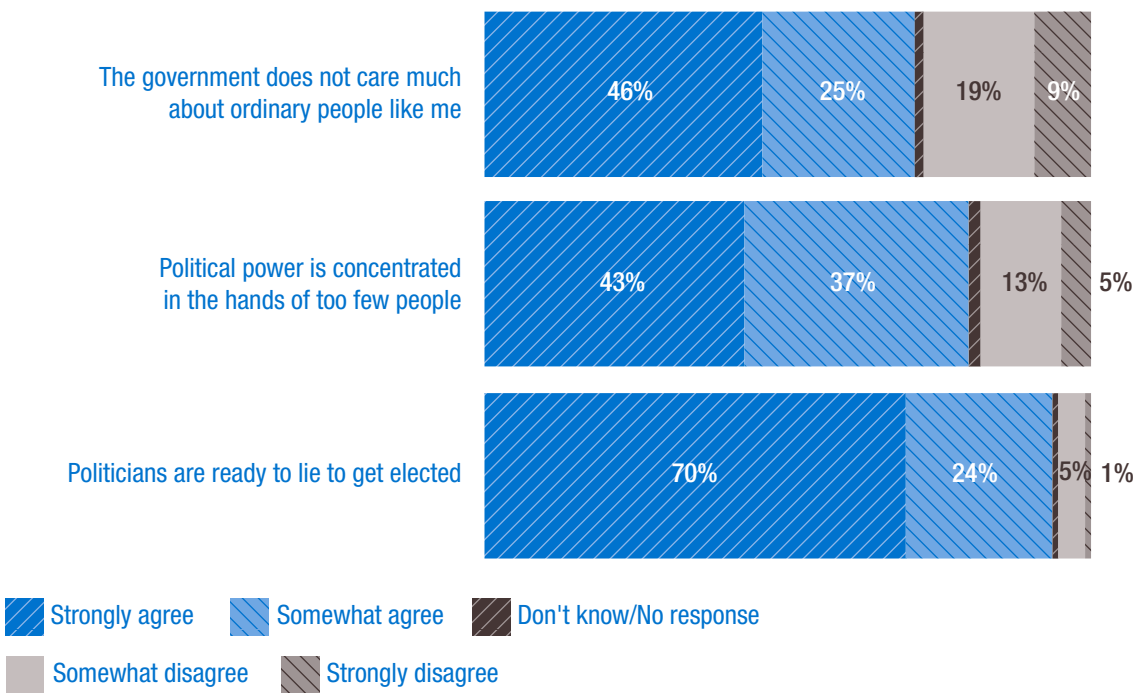
6. Overall cynicism is based on an additive index of the two questions.

    For each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with these opinions.

    a) The government does not care about ordinary people like me.
    b) Politicians are ready to lie to get elected

    This additive index takes on values that range from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).
    The most cynical (4) are compared to others (0-3). Results report percentages that are "cynical".

Echoing these findings on another question in the survey, a large majority of Maldivians say that the country is run by a few people for their own personal interests (68%), instead of being run for the benefit of the people (30%). With the exception of those over the age of 55, a majority of all demographic groups in the Maldives report that the country is run by a few people for their own personal interests. Among those over 55, however, only 49% say it is run by a few people for their personal interests, while an equal number say that the country is run for all the people (**Figure 13)**.

Figure 13: "Would you say that this country is run according to the personal interests of a few people, or that it is run for the benefit of all of the people?"
By age

Age	Run for all people	Don't Know/No response	Run by a few for personal interest
Total	30%		68%
18-34	20%		78%
35-54	36%		61%
55+	49%		49%

Legend: Run for all people — Don't Know/No response — Run by a few for personal interest
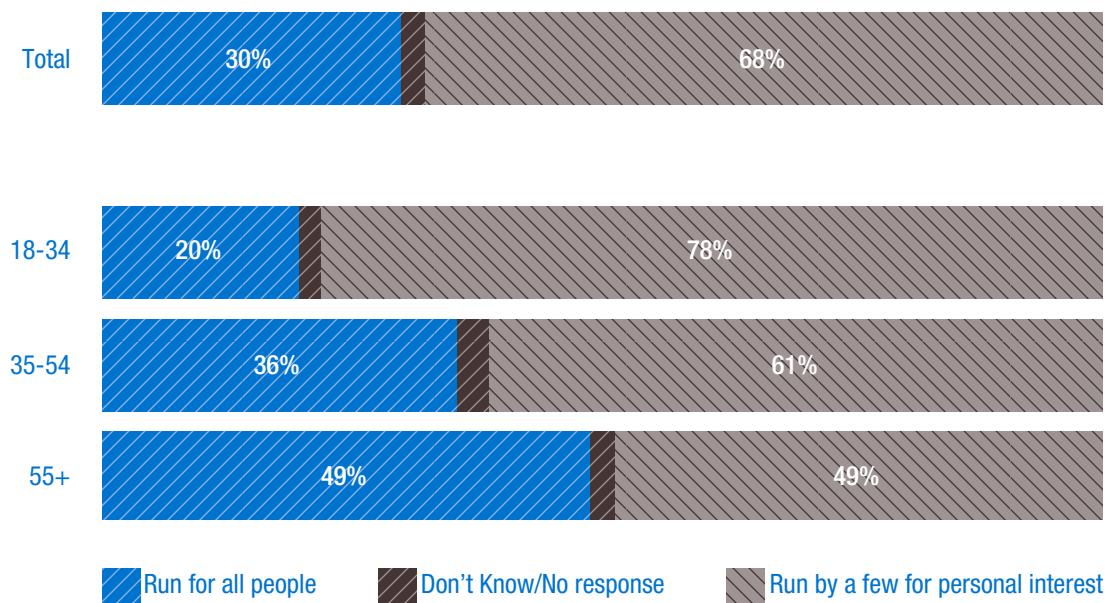
CYNICISM, INTEREST AND KNOWLEDGE IN POLITICS

Interest in politics

Political knowledge

Cynicism

49%	48%	56%	58%	82%	69%

■ 2013   ■ 2015
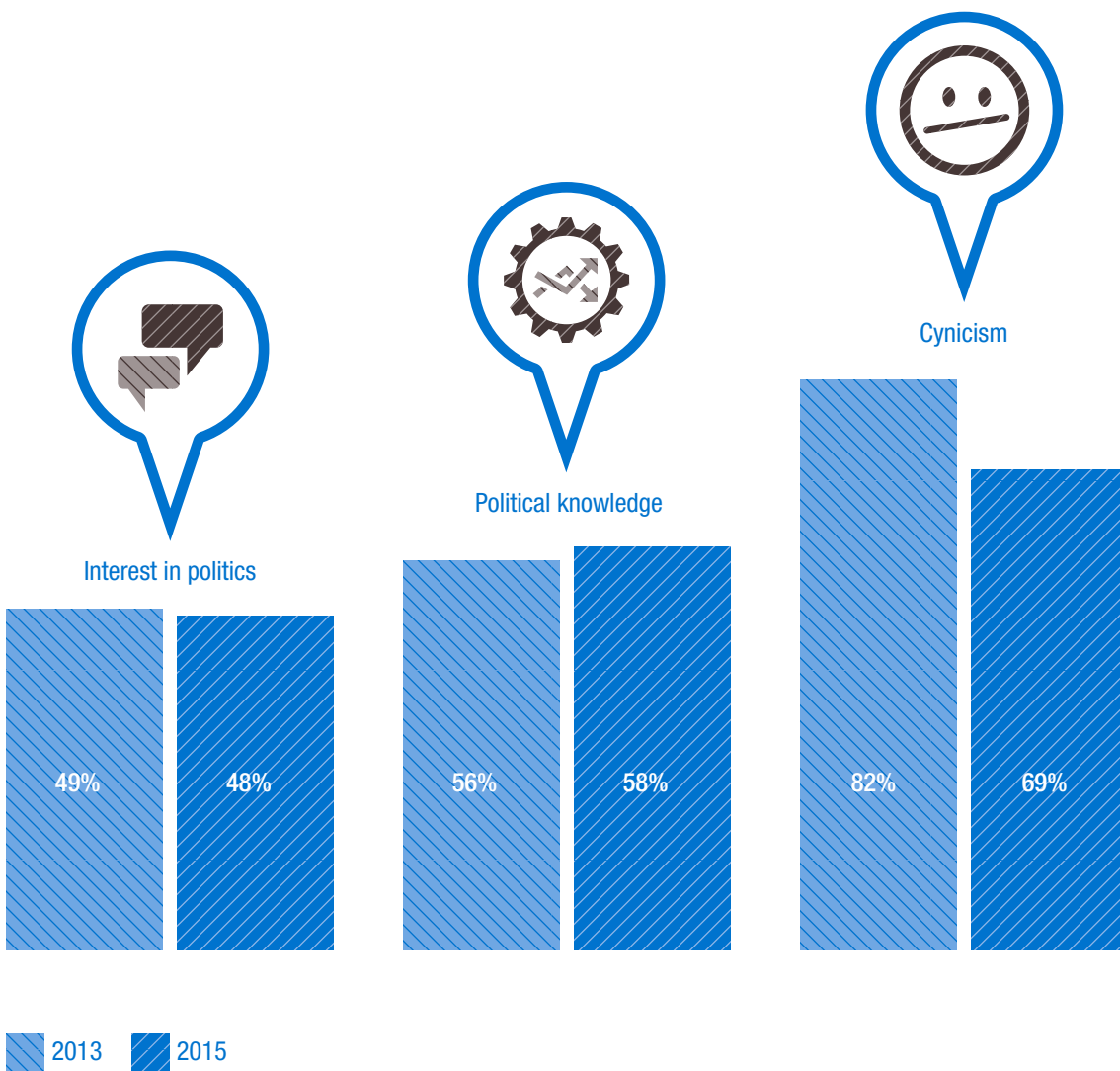
Questions:

1. Interest in politics

How interested would you say you are in politics? Result reporting percentage stating 'very interested' and 'somewhat interested'.

2. Knowledge index

2013 Question: Do you happen to recall the name of:
1. The mayor of your municipality?
2. The President of Maldives?
3. The President of the United States?

2015 Question: Do you happen to recall the name of:
1. The mayor of your municipality?
2. The Vice President of Maldives?
3. The President of the United States?

3. Cynicism index

Here are some things people sometimes say about politicians, the government, and others. For each one, please tell me if you very much agree, disagree or completely disagree with these opinions:
1. The government does not care much about ordinary people like me;
2. Politicians are ready to lie to get elected.
('very much agree' or 'agree' = 1: 'disagree' or 'completely disagree' = 0) The index 0 (Not cynical) – 2 (cynical). Those cynical (2) are compared to those who are not (0-1). Results reporting the percentage that is 'cynical'.
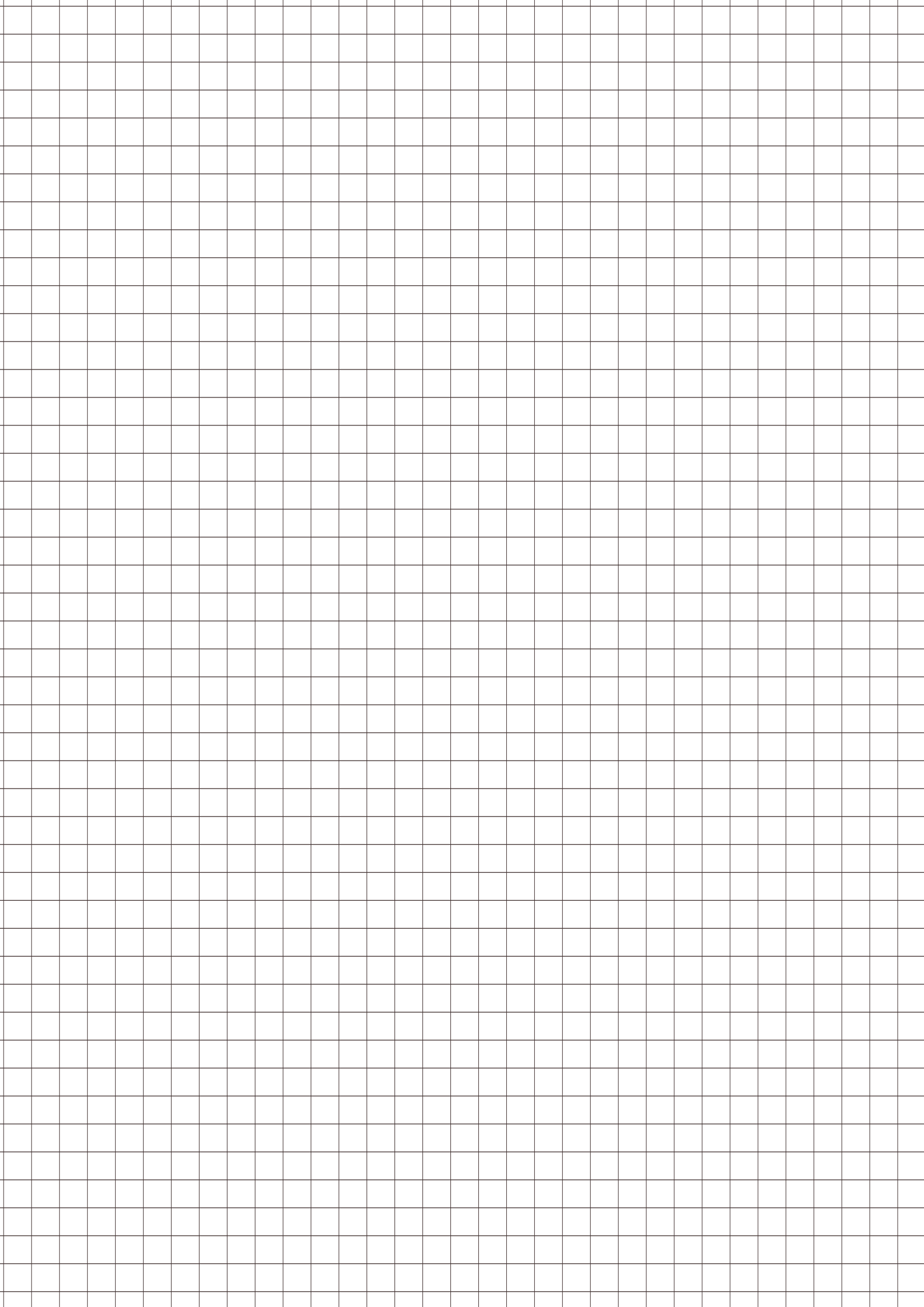
SECTION II
ATTITUDES TOWARDS CURRENT STATUS OF THE COUNTRY

There has been a positive development with respect to some general attitudes towards democracy as a form of government. However, it is worrying that the data also indicated low level of political engagement combined with persistent high levels of political cynicism.

Most Maldivians believe that the country is headed in the wrong direction. They are unhappy with key aspects of the socio-political situation. A significant percentage does not believe that the Maldives is a democracy, while a much greater percentage of people are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the country. However, for now, an overwhelming majority continues to prefer dialogue as a means to resolve issues facing the country.

What is also striking is that, as in the 2013 Democracy Survey, the young and the well educated are more likely to hold such attitudes.

IS THE COUNTRY HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

A majority of Maldivians believe that the country is headed in the wrong direction, and generally perceive declines in many aspects of the socio-political situation in the country. When asked whether the country is headed in the right or wrong direction, over half (58%) think that the country is headed in the wrong direction, compared to only 32% who think that the country is going in the right direction **(Figure 14)**. On this, there is almost no variation in judgment between men and women.

There are other systematic patterns to the responses: the young and the well educated are significantly less likely to say the country is headed in the right direction.

Overall, 66% of Maldivians between the ages of 18 and 34 say that the country is going in the wrong direction, 55% of Maldivians between the ages of 35 and 54 say the country is going in the wrong direction, while only 40% of Maldivians over the age of 55 say the country is going in the wrong direction. Conversely, among those over 55, 54% say that the country is going in the right direction.

Those who have primary level education or below are more likely to say that the country is going in the wrong direction. Overall, among this group (primary level education or below), 43% say the country is going in the right direction, compared to 50% who say the country is headed in the wrong direction. Among those with secondary level education, only 25% say the country is going in the right direction, compared to 64% who say that the country is going in the wrong direction. Among those with university education, 15% say the country is going in the right direction, and 53% say wrong direction.

Figure 14: "All in all, do you think things in this country is headed in the right direction or in the wrong direction?"

Category	Right direction	Wrong direction	Don't know/No response
Total	32%	58%	10%
Male	32%	57%	11%
Female	32%	59%	10%
18-34	23%	66%	11%
35-54	34%	55%	11%
55+	54%	40%	6%
Primary School	43%	50%	7%
Secondary School	25%	64%	11%
Some University	15%	53%	33%

Legend: Right direction | Wrong direction | Don't know/No response
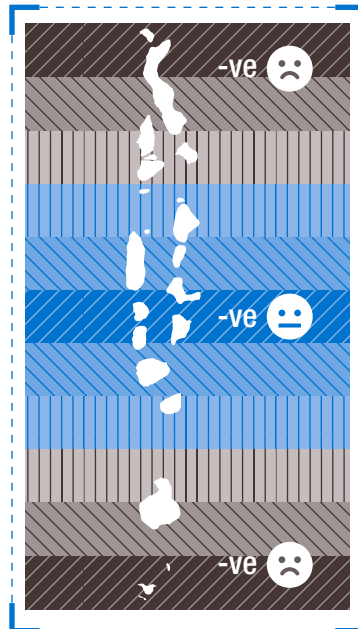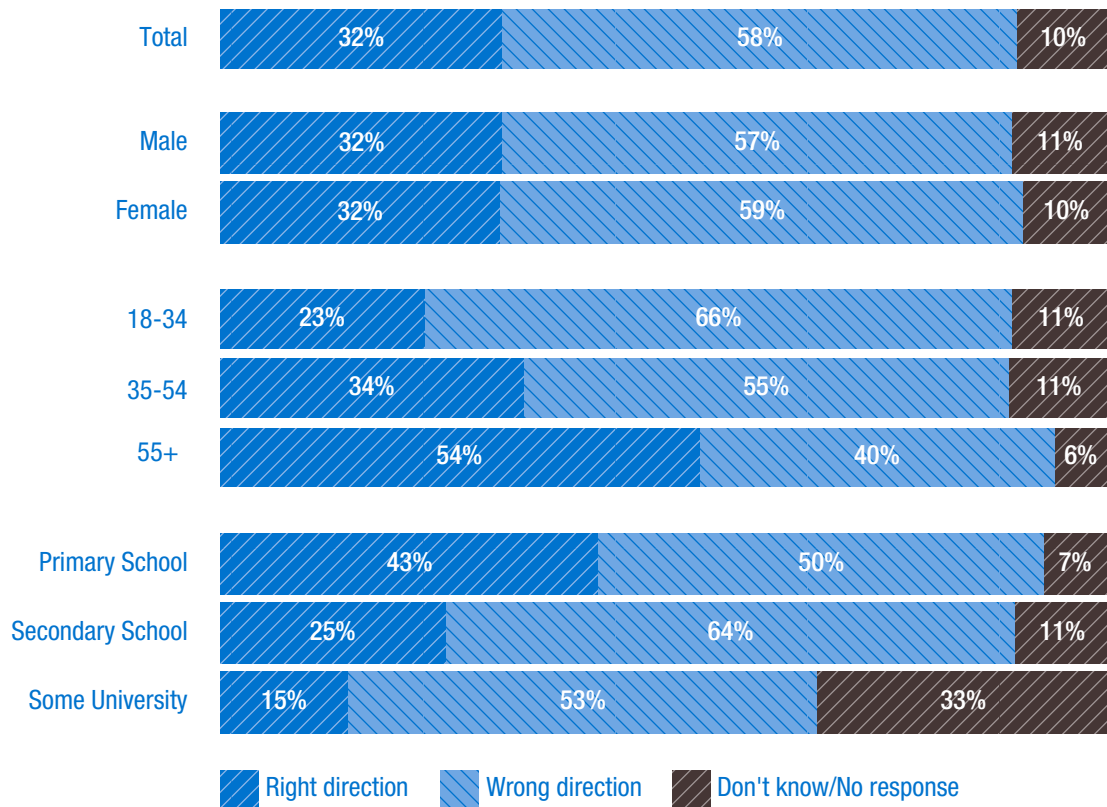
In all regions, more Maldivians are likely to say that the country is going in the wrong direction than say it is going in the right direction. Indeed, in all regions except for the Central Atolls, over half of respondents say the country is going in the wrong direction. Negative perceptions of the country's direction are more prevalent in the Southern Atolls (66%), the Far South (62%), and Northern Atolls (61%). Only in the Central Atolls, less than half of the population (48%) say that the country is heading in the wrong direction.

BIGGEST PROBLEMS AND DECLINES

Data from another question on the survey shows that the political situation in the country and the impact this has on perceptions of democracy is a leading source of angst for most Maldivians. Respondents to the survey were asked to name the biggest problems facing the country. Political issues dominate the list of responses with 33% citing problems with democracy in the country, 19% citing civil unrest and conflict, 17% citing politics and political leaders, 7% citing the economic situation and unemployment, 7% crime, and 4% corruption.

What is the biggest problem facing Maldives today?

| 4%
Corruption | 7%
Crime | 7%
Economy
Unemployment | 17%
Politics, Political Leaders | 19%
Civil Unrest, Conflict | 33%
Democracy |

69%
Political Issues
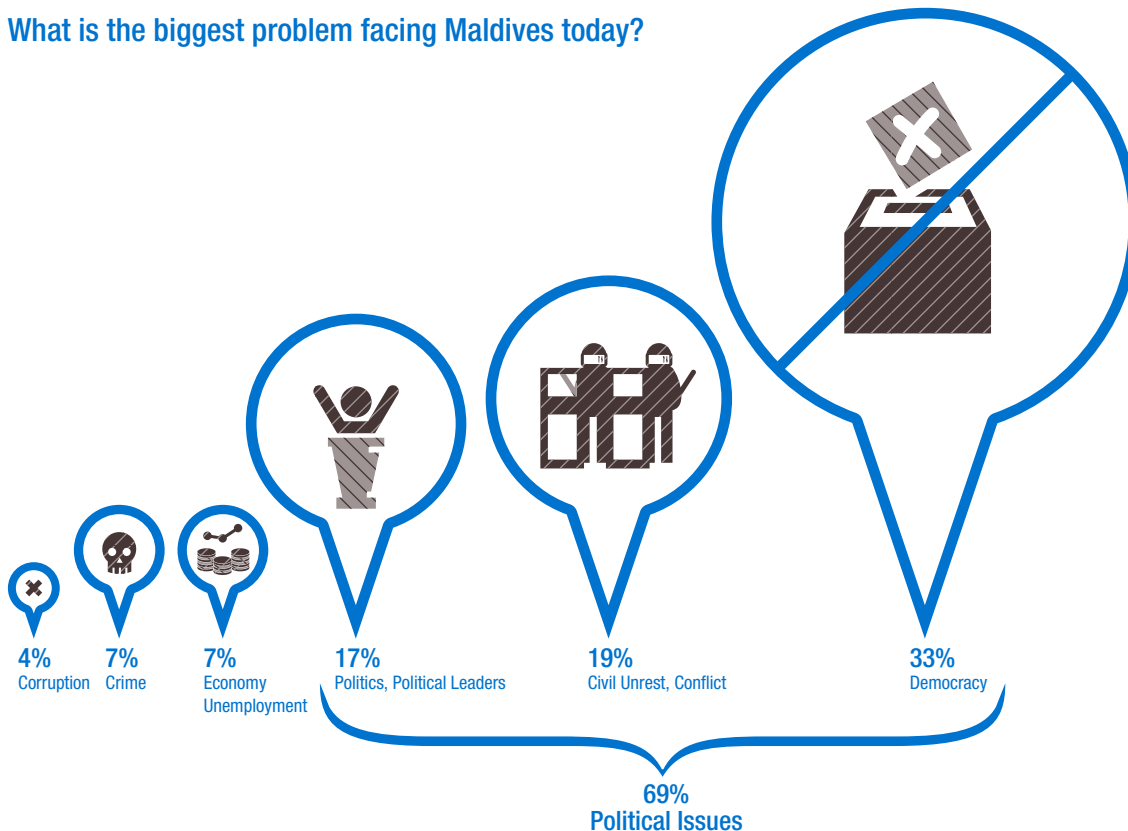
The survey also probed people's views on specific political issues in the Maldives, specifically whether they had seen improvements or declines in those issues.

Given "politics" is the biggest problem for most people, it is not surprising that most Maldivians believed that major declines had occurred in a range of issues related to politics **(Figure 15)**.

A large majority (72%) reported that there was an increase in the level of corruption in the country.

Sixty-five percent believe there has been a decline in political stability.

A majority cites declines in respect for citizens' rights (56%) and respect for press freedoms (54%).

Nearly half (49%) say judicial independence has declined with only 29% believing judicial independence has increased.

Figure 15:"Please tell me whether you believe there has been an improvement, decline, or no change in each of these issues over the past year:"

Level of corruption: Major increase 61%, Slight increase 11%, No change 5%, Slight decline 8%, Major decline 5%, Don't know/No response 11%

Respect for the freedom of press: 11%, 19%, 9%, 17%, 37%, 7%

Respect for citizens' rights by the authorities: 9%, 19%, 10%, 15%, 41%, 6%

Judicial independence: 14%, 15%, 8%, 13%, 36%, 15%

Political stability in the country: 13%, 14%, 5%, 17%, 48%, 3%

Legend: Major increase | Slight increase | No change | Slight decline | Major decline | Don't know/No response

A DEMOCRACY OR NOT?

Overall, 59% of Maldivians say that the Maldives is a democracy, while 35% say that it is not **(Figure 16)**. However, there is again a systematic background pattern to the responses: a majority of the most educated say that the Maldives is not a democracy.

Among those with university level education, 43% say that the country is a democracy, compared to 52% that say that the Maldives is not a democracy. Among those with below university level education, 59% say that the Maldives is a democracy.

Perceptions of democracy vary with geographical distribution. Maldivians in the Central (70%) and the Far South (67%) atolls are more likely to agree that the Maldives is a democracy in comparison to residents of the Far North Atolls (57%) and Malé (50%).

Figure 16: "Would you say that Maldives is a democracy?"

Category	Yes	Don't know/No response	No
Total	59%	6%	35%
Primary School	63%	7%	29%
Secondary School	57%	6%	38%
Some University	43%	6%	52%
Malé	50%	8%	42%
Far North	57%	8%	35%
Northern Atolls	61%	4%	34%
Central Atolls	70%	7%	23%
Southern Atolls	66%	5%	29%
Far South	67%	2%	31%

Legend: ▨ Yes ▨ Don't know/No response ▨ No
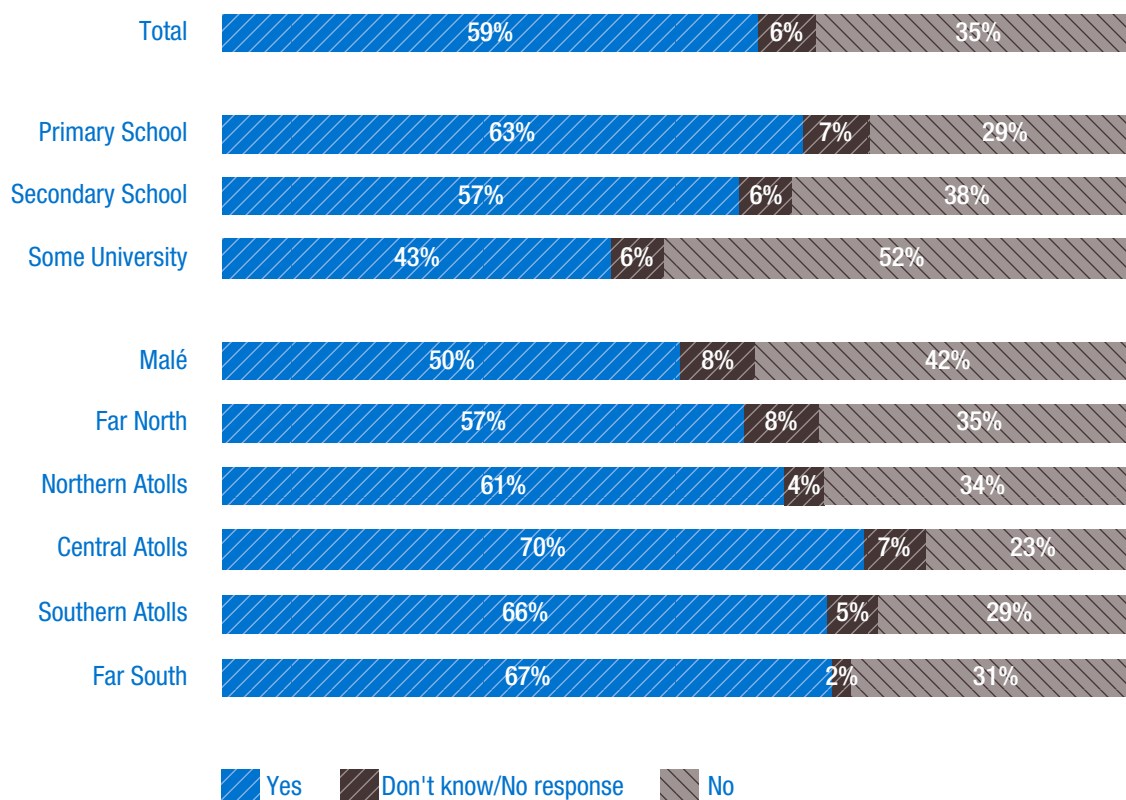
SATISFACTION WITH HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS IN THE MALDIVES

Overall, the public continues to be divided about how satisfied they are with the way democracy works in the Maldives. Among those who say Maldives is a democracy, the majority (55%) is satisfied with the way democracy works in the Maldives. This is an increase of 5% from the 2013 Democracy Survey, where 50% of those saying that Maldives is a democracy reported that they are satisfied with the way democracy worked in Maldives **(Figure 17)**.

Still, more than four in ten (45%) of those that believe the Maldives is a democracy are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the Maldives. The percent of the respondents who reported that they were very dissatisfied increased by 8% in the 2015 Democracy Survey compared to the 2013 Democracy Survey in which 20% of the respondents reported they were very dissatisfied.

Younger Maldivians tend to be less satisfied with the way democracy works in the country, compared to other age groups. Overall, only 50% of Maldivians between the ages of 18 and 34 are satisfied with the way democracy works, compared to 58% of those between the ages of 35 and 54, and 63% of those over the age of 55.

Figure 17: "How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in the Maldives?"
Out of the 59% who say that Maldives is a democracy

2015 Total	15%	40%	17%	28%
2013 Total	14%	36%	30%	20%

18-34	8%	42%	21%	28%
35-54	16%	42%	16%	27%
55+	34%	28%	9%	28%

■ Very satisfied   ■ Somewhat satisfied   ■ Don't know/No response
■ Somewhat dissatisfied   ■ Very dissatisfied
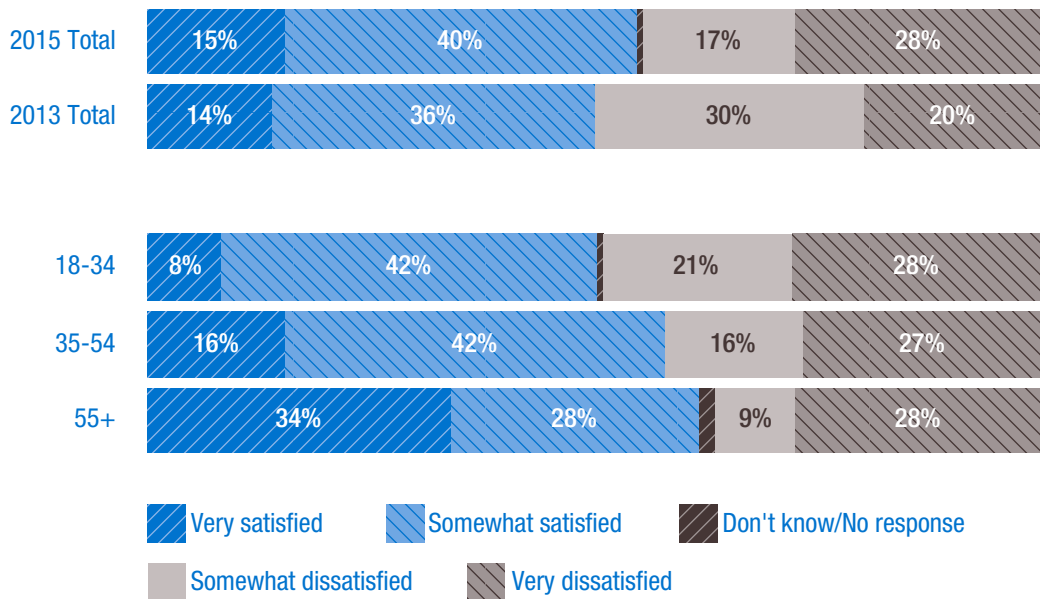
POLITICAL EFFICACY

Given that most Maldivians are critical of the political order, are cynical and dissatisfied with politics, it is useful to see how they feel about political efficacy and if people may opt for non-democratic ways of resolving issues.

Nearly half (46%) say that they have no influence at all over national decisions. A slight majority of Maldivians believe that they either have great influence (16%) or some influence (37%) over national decisions **(Figure 18)**.

Women are significantly more likely to say that they have no influence. Fifty-five percent of women say that they have no influence at all over decisions made in the country, while 38% of men say they have no influence at all.

Figure 18: "Do you feel you have any influence over national decisions?"

Total	16%	37%	46%
Male	24%	38%	38%
Female	7%	36%	55%

■ Great deal   ■ Some   ■ None   ■ Don't know/No response
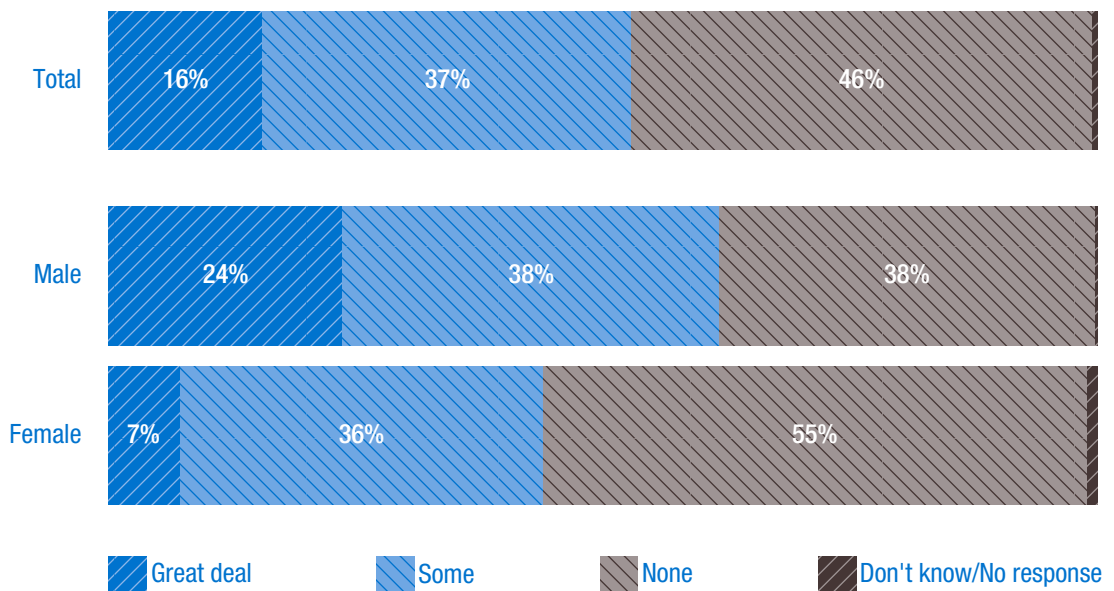
A significant majority of Maldivians (97%) believe that dialogue is the best way to solve the problems facing the country. This is a 6% increase compared to 2013 Survey findings, where 91% believed in dialogue. As in 2013 Survey findings, most Maldivians continue to reject violence as a solution to injustice. Yet one in three still think otherwise **(Figure 19)**.

Thirty-seven percent of people agree that "exiting" from the country is a positive strategy for their future, compared to 33% in 2013 survey.

Figure 19: "For each statement, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree:"

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No response
Somewhat Disagree	Strongly disagree	
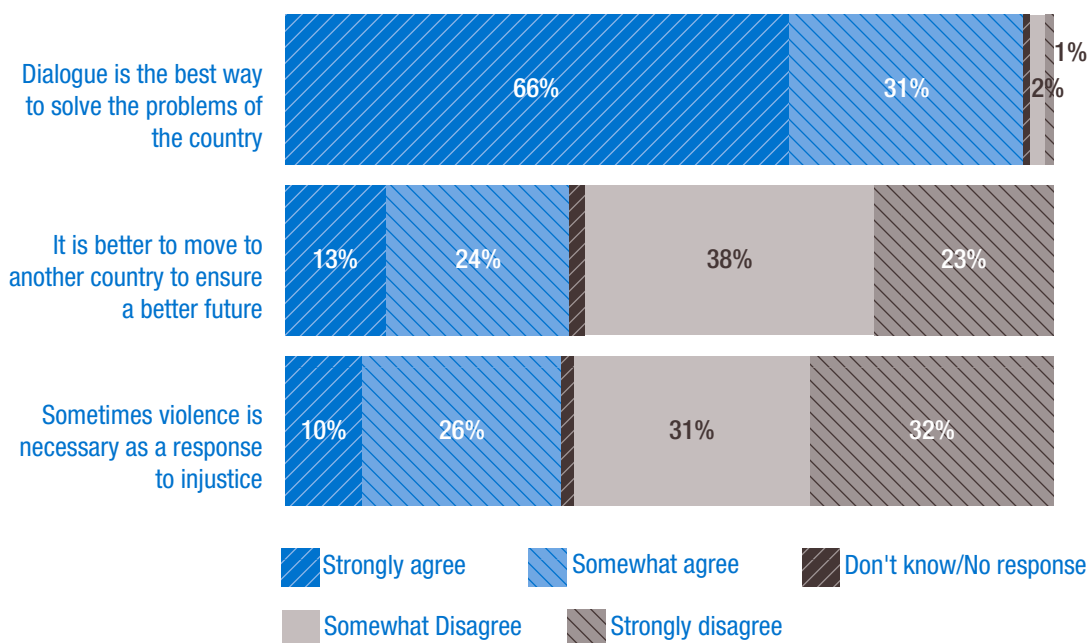
The preference for orderly mechanisms for needed change is also reflected in responses to another question where respondents were asked whether society should be radically changed through revolutionary action or through gradual reforms. Overall, 77% prefer gradual reforms as the approach for improving society compared to only 15% who prefer revolutionary change.

77%

Gradual Reforms

15%

Revolutionary Change
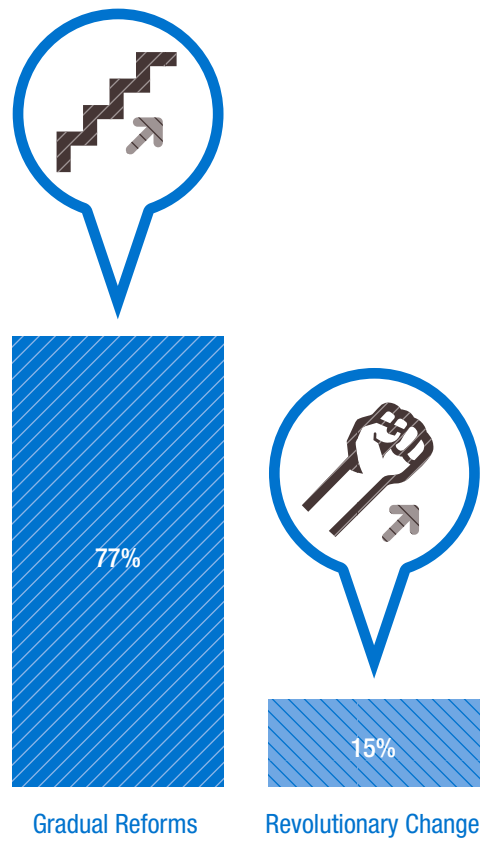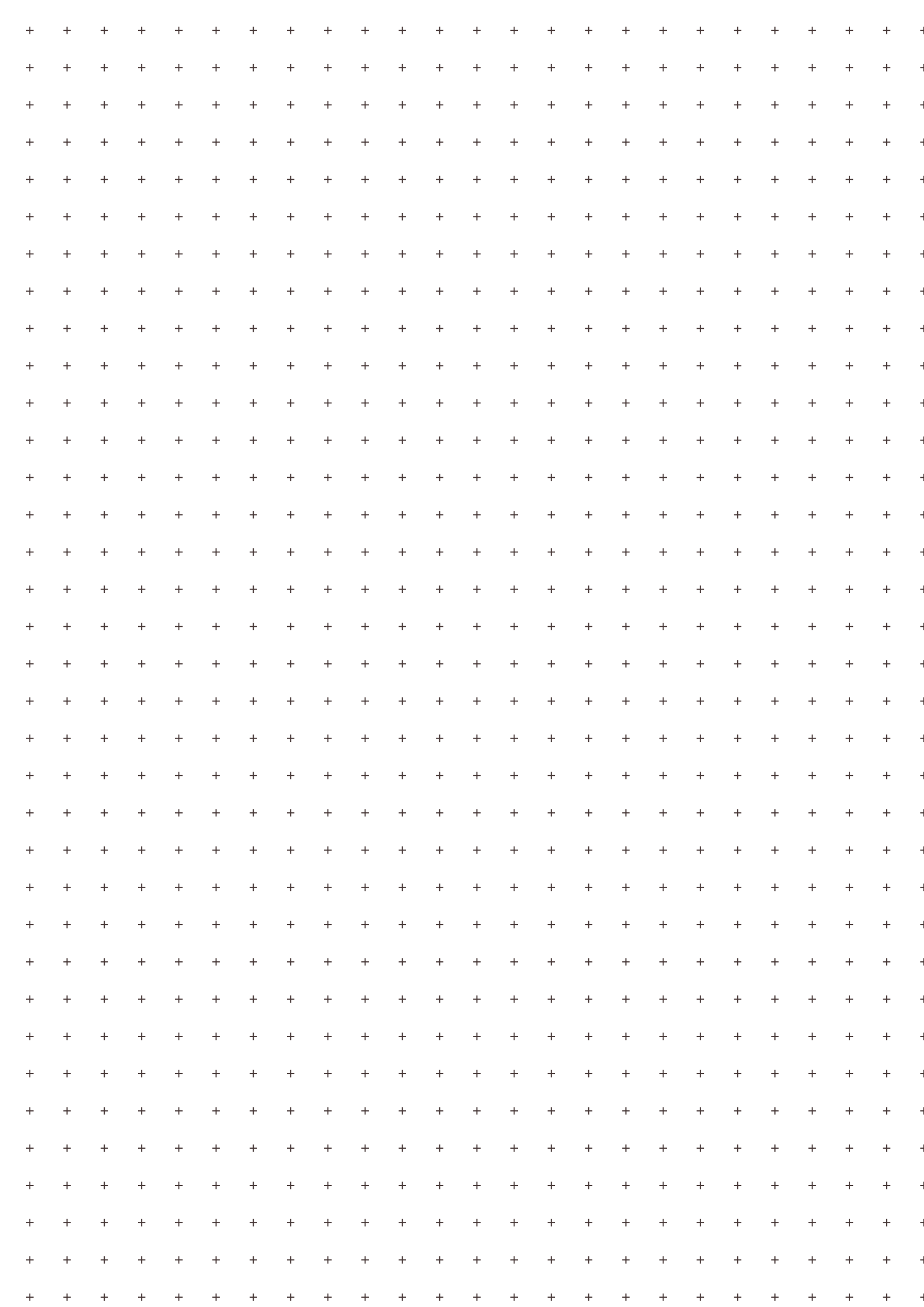
SECTION III
CONFIDENCE
IN INSTITUTIONS

Some scholars have argued that public confidence in democratic institutions is "the central indicator of the underlying feeling of the general public about its polity" (Newton and Norris 1999: 53). It is not unusual for many citizens in established democracies to lack confidence in their democratic institutions (Newtown and Norris 2000). But, if people have little faith in democratic institutions, they may not stand to defend those institutions when authoritarian forces hijack them (Norris 1999: 268). As institutions link people to the state, institutions must also enjoy some public support to function as effective bridges between them (Klingemann and Fuchs 1999).

Overall, as in the 2013 Democracy Survey findings, most Maldivians have lower levels of confidence in key political institutions, compared to some other institutions. What is particularly troubling is peoples' lack of confidence in key democratic institutions, including the parliament, courts, and political parties.

Some institutions have seen increased levels of confidence over the past two years, including the media (increase of 17%), the Island Councils (increase of 9%), big businesses (increase of 7%) and political parties (increase of 7%).

Other institutions that have seen decreases in confidence include the police, religious associations, the courts, the MNDF, and the civil service.

These low levels of confidence in political institutions are strongly related to negative perceptions of political parties (see section V).

CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS

One way to gauge confidence in institutions is to compare the percentage of Maldivians who express a great deal of confidence in an institution to the percentage who express no confidence at all. Comparing these two percentages provides a net differential in confidence, with higher differentials being more positive for the institution or official. These net differentials are reported in **Figure 20**.

The analysis of net differentials indicates that while many Maldivians may have lukewarm confidence in democratic institutions (the percentage indicating some confidence), those intensely dissatisfied with these institutions far outnumber those intensely satisfied with them. The net differential is significantly negative for key institutions: for parliament it is -48%, for political parties it is -38%, for courts it is -36%.

The parliament continues to have the least confidence of the people: 57% have no confidence at all in the parliament, while only 9% have a great deal of confidence, and 33% have some confidence.

Strikingly, the courts have replaced both political parties and island councils as the next institution with "no confidence at all". Fifty-one percent have no confidence at all in the courts, compared to 46% in the 2013 Survey.
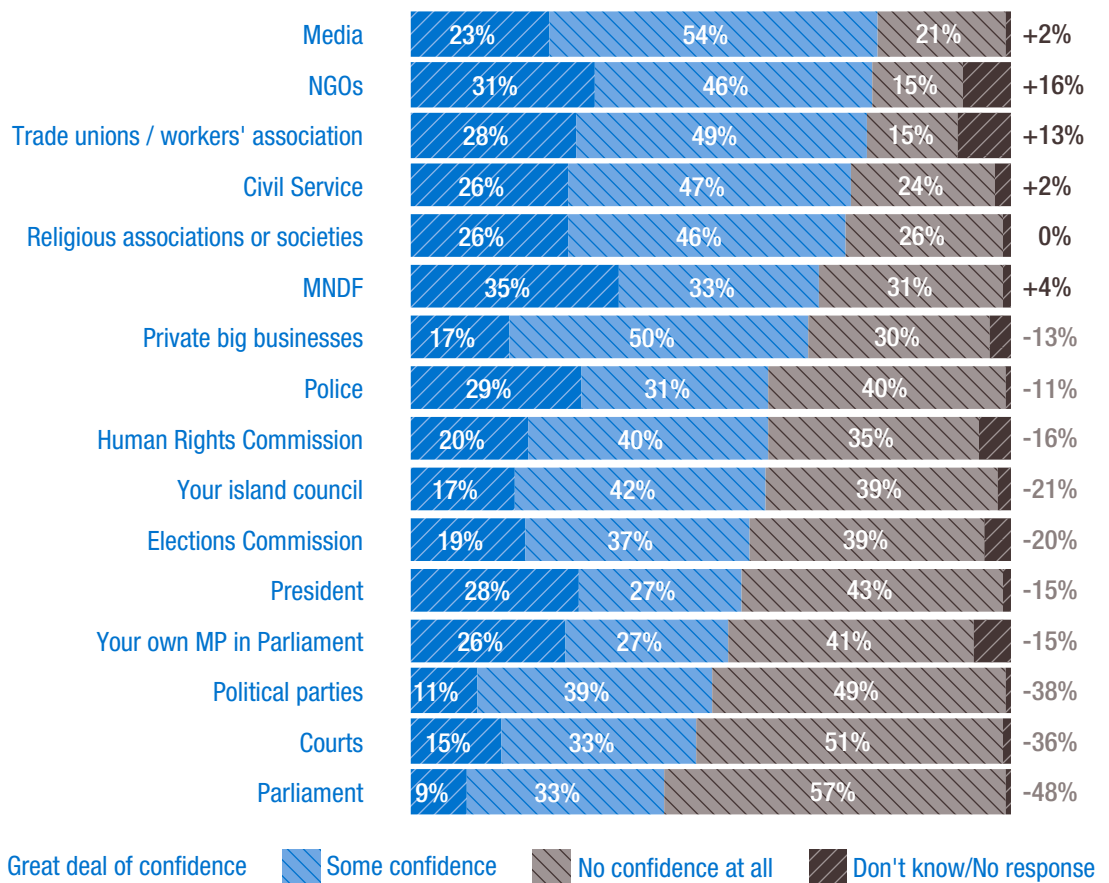
Now only 15% have a great deal of confidence in the courts, compared to 20% in 2013 Survey findings. 33% continue to have some confidence in the courts.

The President fares a little better with 43% of Maldivians having no confidence at all in the President, while 27% have some confidence and 28% have a great deal of confidence.

Overall 59% express confidence in their island council.

Only 50% say that they have confidence in the country's political parties. This is a significant increase compared to 2013, where 42% reported having confidence in political parties.

Figure 20: "Please tell me how much confidence you have in each of the following:"
(Net Differential: Great Deal None at All)

Institution	Great deal of confidence	Some confidence	No confidence at all	Don't know/No response	Net
Media	23%	54%	21%		+2%
NGOs	31%	46%	15%		+16%
Trade unions / workers' association	28%	49%	15%		+13%
Civil Service	26%	47%	24%		+2%
Religious associations or societies	26%	46%	26%		0%
MNDF	35%	33%	31%		+4%
Private big businesses	17%	50%	30%		-13%
Police	29%	31%	40%		-11%
Human Rights Commission	20%	40%	35%		-16%
Your island council	17%	42%	39%		-21%
Elections Commission	19%	37%	39%		-20%
President	28%	27%	43%		-15%
Your own MP in Parliament	26%	27%	41%		-15%
Political parties	11%	39%	49%		-38%
Courts	15%	33%	51%		-36%
Parliament	9%	33%	57%		-48%

Legend: Great deal of confidence · Some confidence · No confidence at all · Don't know/No response

Another striking finding is the significant drop in confidence in the Elections Commission. The Elections Commission saw a significant drop in confidence level from 74% in 2013 to 56% in 2015, a decrease of 18%. While 26% reported they had no confidence at all in the Commission in 2013, now 39% of respondents reported having no confidence at all in the Commission.

Maldivians continue to be divided in their opinion of the security institutions. Forty percent of respondents reported they had "no confidence at all" in the police, compared to 32% in 2013 survey. Twenty-nine percent have a "great deal of confidence" in the police. Thirty-one percent have some confidence in the police. Similarly, people are sharply divided in their assessment of Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF): 35% have a great deal of confidence in MNDF, while 33% have some confidence and 31% have no confidence at all in MNDF.

Confidence towards public, not-for-profit and private institutions in Maldives is generally positive, with confidence in most institutions standing at over 50% **(Figure 15)**. The institutions with the highest confidence ratings tend to be those that provide services to the community or work for the common good of the country. Institutions with the highest confidence ratings are the media (78%), NGOs (77%), trade unions and workers' associations (76%), the civil service (73%), religious associations and societies (72%), and the Maldivian National Defense Force (MNDF) (68%).

Level of Confidence in Institutions

2013   2015

	Great Deal of Confidence	Some Confidence	None at All	Deficit	
Media	15%	46%	40%	-25	
	23%	54%	21%	+2	↑
NGOs	36%	46%	18%	+18	
	31%	46%	15%	+16	↓
Civil Service	28%	46%	25%	+3	
	26%	47%	24%	+2	↓
Religious Associations	33%	46%	21%	+12	
	26%	46%	26%	0	↓
MNDF	34%	37%	29%	+5	
	35%	33%	31%	+4	↓
Big Businesses	20%	40%	40%	-20	
	17%	50%	30%	-13	↑
Police	32%	37%	32%	0	
	28%	31%	40%	-12	↓
Island Council	16%	34%	50%	-34	
	17%	42%	39%	-22	↑
Elections Commission	31%	43%	26%	+5	
	19%	37%	39%	-20	↓
President	20%	37%	43%	-23	
	28%	27%	43%	-15	↑
Political Parties	8%	34%	58%	-50	
	11%	39%	49%	-38	↑
Parliament	11%	28%	62%	-51	
	9%	33%	57%	-48	↑
Courts	20%	33%	46%	-26	
	15%	33%	51%	-36	↓

Respondents were given a list of institutions and asked to rate the level of confidence they have in those institutions. Those answering 'total' and 'a lot' of confidence are coded as 'a great deal of confidence' for 2013 data. For 2015, those answering as having 'a great deal' of confidence is coded as the same.
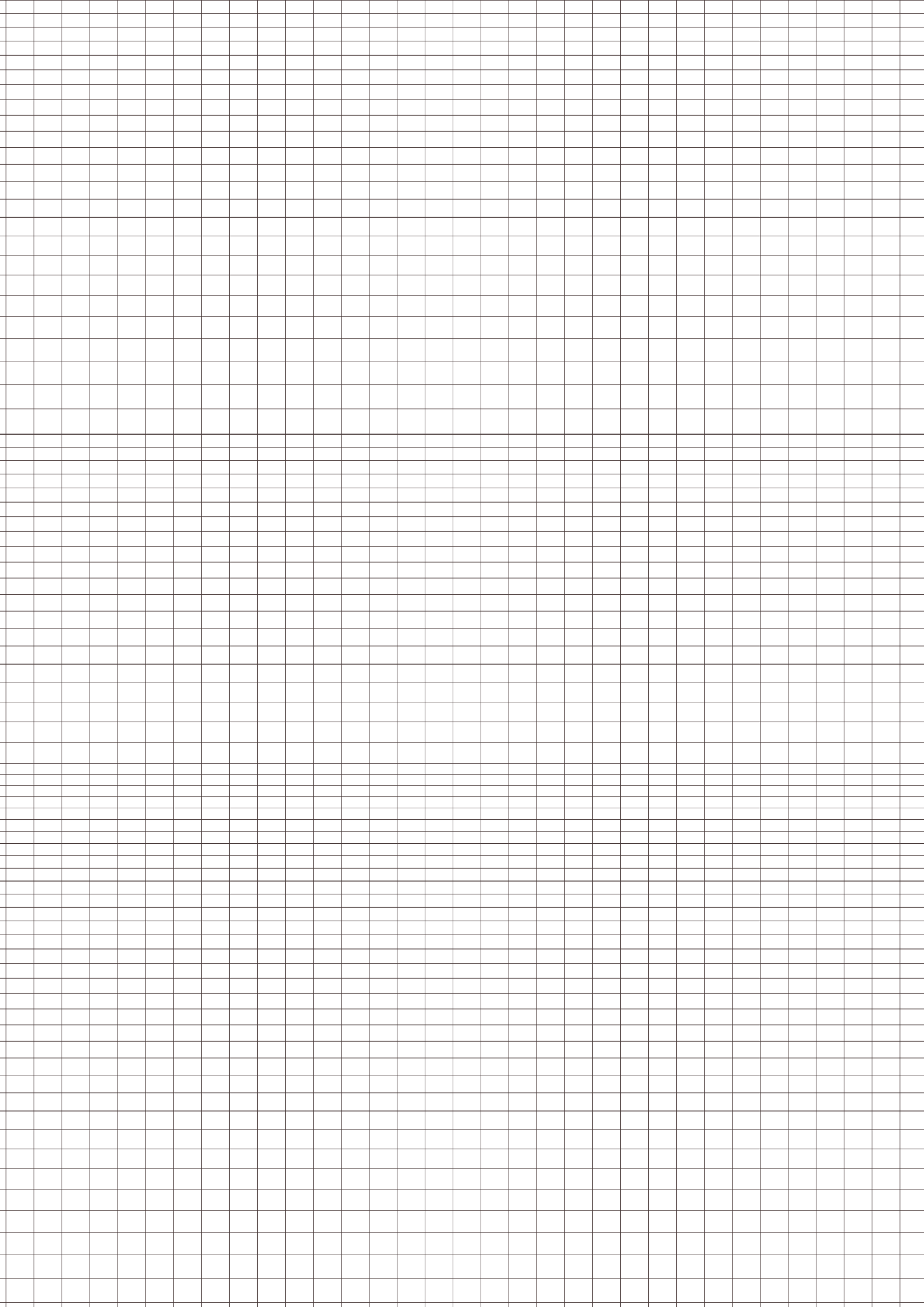
SECTION IV
WOMEN AND POLITICS

ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER

Democracy is government between 'equals' (Dahl 1998: 62-68; Held 2006: 1). This includes political equality between men and women. In practice, there is a positive correlation between gender equality in political participation and democracy (Inglehart, Norris and Welzel 2002).

The survey findings indicate that "gender equality" remains a major issue of concern. However, other specific questions on various aspects of gender equality complicate the picture in the Maldives.

There is widespread support for women to assume more leadership roles in the Maldives, with a majority of citizens supporting women serving in many elected and unelected roles, with the exception of the Presidency. Support for women's participation in these roles is largely equal between the two sexes.

Although very few Maldivian women have been elected, Maldivians largely say that if presented with an election between two candidates of opposite genders, but equal credentials, that they would see no difference between the two or would be willing to vote for the woman. Despite this, some attitudinal barriers present challenges for women to take on more decision-making roles in Maldivian society.

GENDER EQUALITY

As in 2013, a standard question in order to probe people's commitment to "equality" – a core democratic value – was asked.

A majority of Maldivians (54%) believe that "men make better leaders than women", while 45% disagree with the statement. This is an improvement of 7% in "gender equality" compared to the 2013 Survey, where 38% disagreed with the statement **(Figure 21)**.

The 2015 Survey indicates that men are more likely to agree with the statement "men make better leaders than women": 58% men agree with the statement, and 51% of women do.

However, findings from more specific questions complicate this picture of how people evaluate gender equality

Figure 21: "Men make better leaders than women"
By gender

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know/No response	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2015	19%	35%		29%	16%
Male	22%	36%		26%	14%
Female	17%	34%		31%	17%
2013	21%	40%		25%	13%
Male	17%	37%		28%	17%
Female	20%	44%		22%	13%

Legend: Strongly agree, Agree, Don't know/No response, Disagree, Strongly disagree
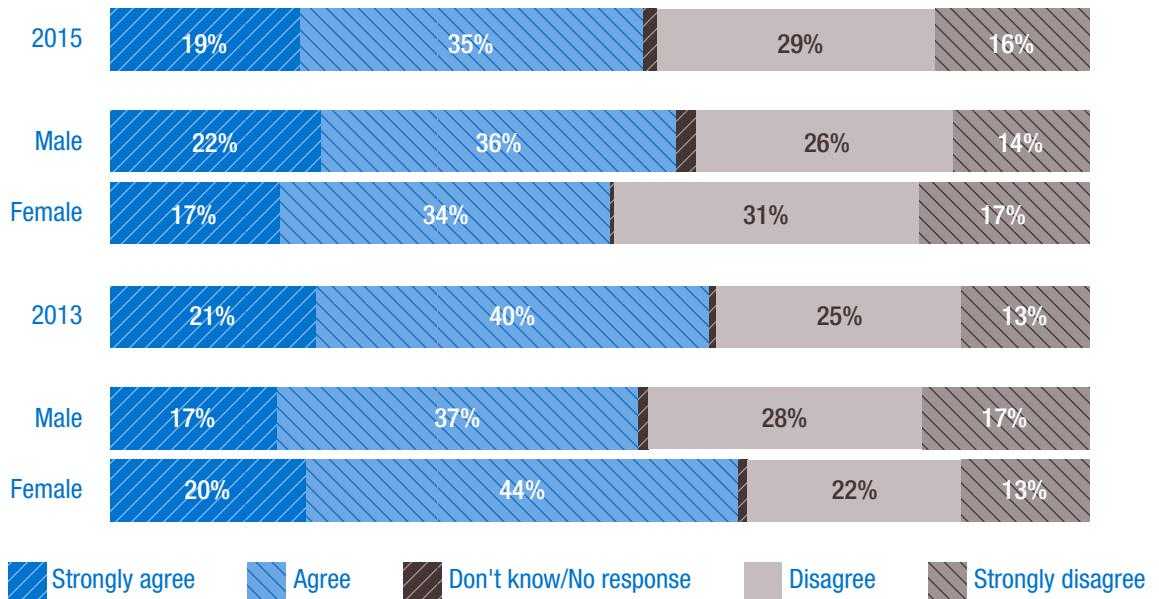
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

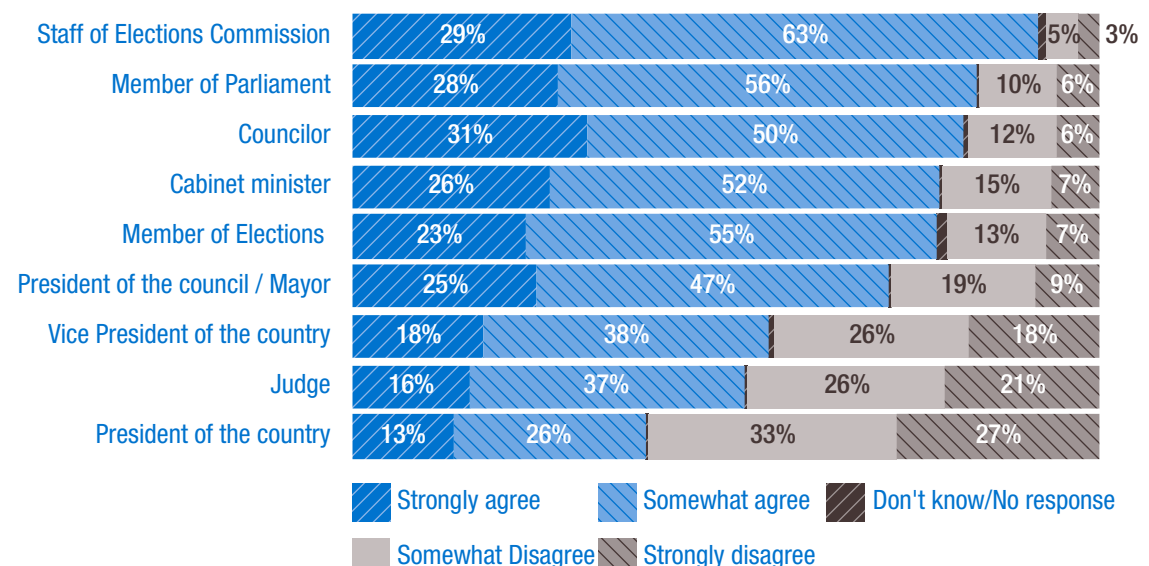Maldivians largely support women filling a number of leadership positions, with a majority supporting women filling each position, with the exception of serving as the President **(Figure 22)**. Overall, almost all Maldivians (92%) support women serving on the staff of the Elections Commission, while slightly fewer support them serving as a Member of Parliament (84%) or as a Councilor (82%). Even fewer Maldivians support women serving as cabinet ministers (79%), members of the Elections Commission (78%), or as President of the Council or Mayor (72%).

Just over half of Maldivians support women serving as either the Vice President of the country (54%) or as a judge (52%).

Worryingly, only 39% agree that a woman could serve as the President. Overall, men and women largely give equal support to women serving in these leadership positions.

Figure 22: "For each of the following leadership positions, please tell me whether you agree or disagree to a woman filling those positions:"

Position	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Don't know/No response	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly disagree
Staff of Elections Commission	29%	63%		5%	3%
Member of Parliament	28%	56%		10%	6%
Councilor	31%	50%		12%	6%
Cabinet minister	26%	52%		15%	7%
Member of Elections	23%	55%		13%	7%
President of the council / Mayor	25%	47%		19%	9%
Vice President of the country	18%	38%		26%	18%
Judge	16%	37%		26%	21%
President of the country	13%	26%		33%	27%

Legend: Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Don't know/No response, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly disagree
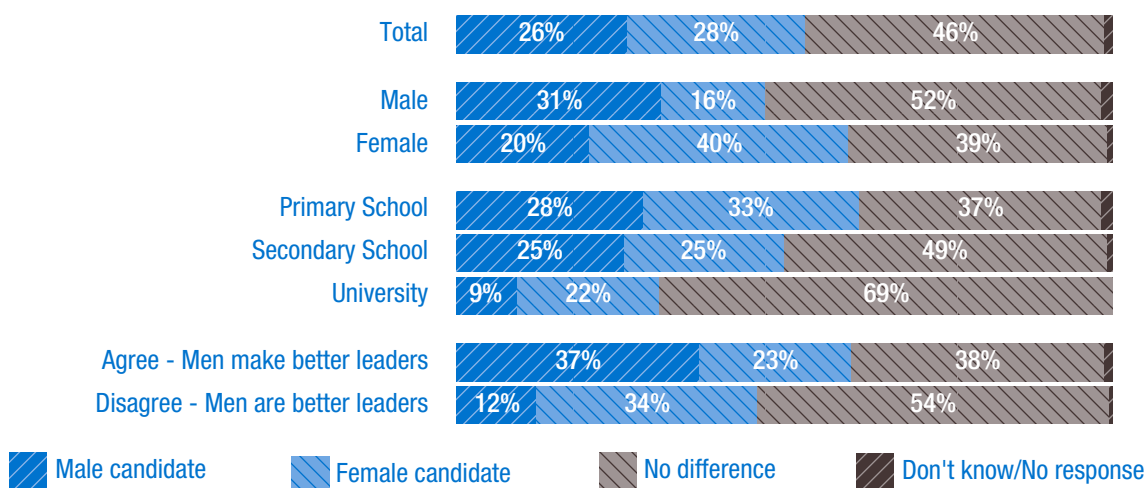
Similarly, given a choice between two equal candidates for parliament, one male and one female, almost half of Maldivians (45%) say that their gender does not matter and there is no difference between the candidates **(Figure 23)**. The remaining Maldivians are largely split, with 28% saying they would support the female candidate and 26% supporting the male candidate.

Women are more likely to say that they would vote for the female candidate than any other option, with 40% saying they would support the female candidate. Furthermore, among women, 39% say there is no difference, and only 20% would support the male candidate. Among men, however, 52% say that there is no difference between the male and female candidate, 31% would support the male candidate, and 16% would support the female candidate. Furthermore, as education level increases, Maldivians are more likely to say that there is no difference between the male and female candidate. Sixty-nine percent of Maldivians with university level education say that there is no difference, compared to 49% with secondary level education and 37% with primary level education.

Even among those who agree that men make better leaders than women, 38% say there is no difference between male and female candidates and 23% say they would vote for the female candidate. Among those who disagree that men make better leaders, 54% say that there is no difference between the two candidates.

Figure 23: "If you have a choice between a female candidate and a male candidate with equal credentials running for parliament, who would you likely support?"

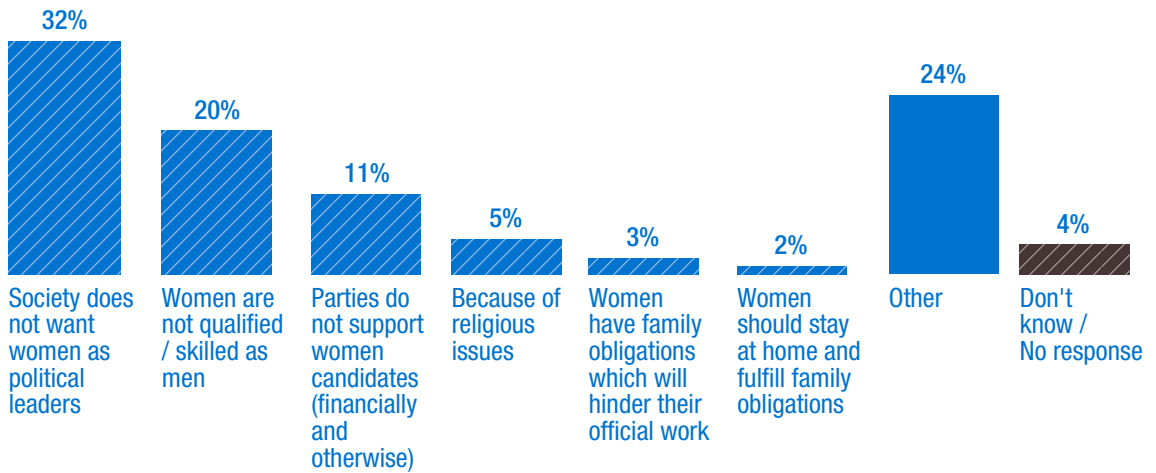|	Male candidate	Female candidate	No difference	Don't know/No response
Total	26%	28%	46%	
Male	31%	16%	52%	
Female	20%	40%	39%	
Primary School	28%	33%	37%	
Secondary School	25%	25%	49%	
University	9%	22%	69%	
Agree - Men make better leaders	37%	23%	38%	
Disagree - Men are better leaders	12%	34%	54%	

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

During the 2014 parliamentary election, only 23 female candidates contested seats in the election, with only five winning seats in Parliament. When asked for reasons why this may have been the case, responses included: "society does not want women as political leaders" (32%); "women are not as qualified or skilled as men" (20%); "parties do not support women candidates (financially and otherwise)" (11%); and "because of religious issues" (5%) – **Figure 24**. For the 24% Maldivians who gave "other reasons" substantial groupings are hard to define, however, some of the reasons given include lack of access to campaign financing for women and preexisting beliefs and norms towards women held by society.

Although there exists widespread support for women to take leadership roles within the country, women still face daily barriers **(Figure 25)**. Overall, more than nine out of ten (94%) agree with the statement: "a good wife will always obey her husband, even if she disagrees with him". Furthermore, only a quarter of Maldivians (28%) agree with the statement: "a
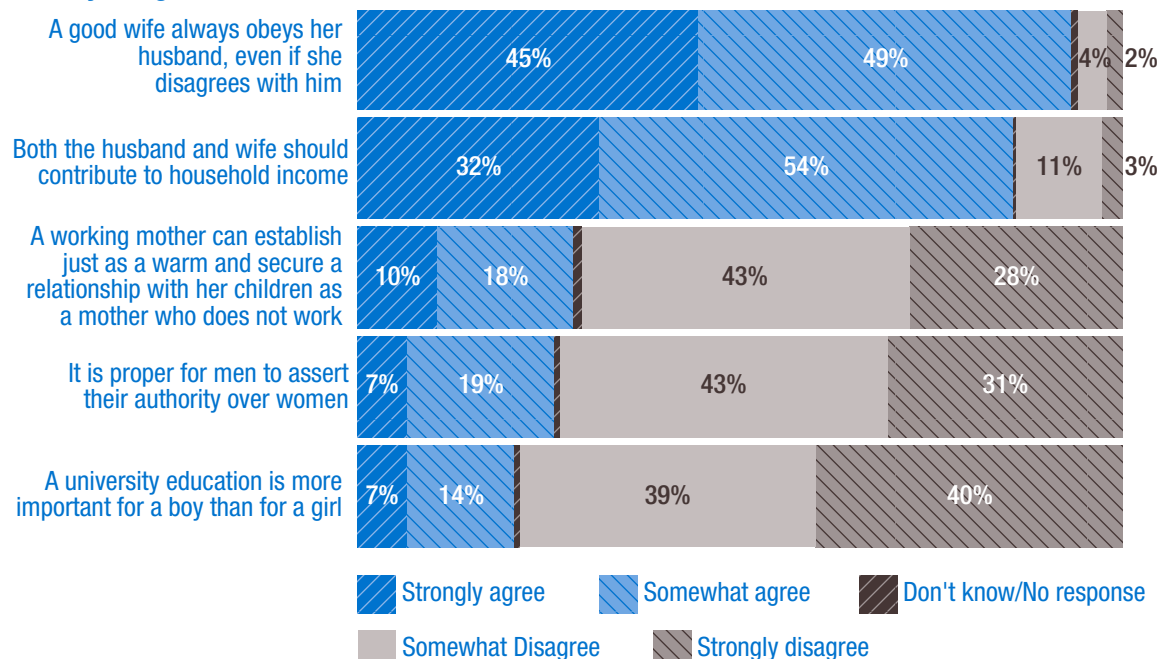
Figure 24: "In your opinion, what are the main reasons why women get fewer votes in the Maldives?"

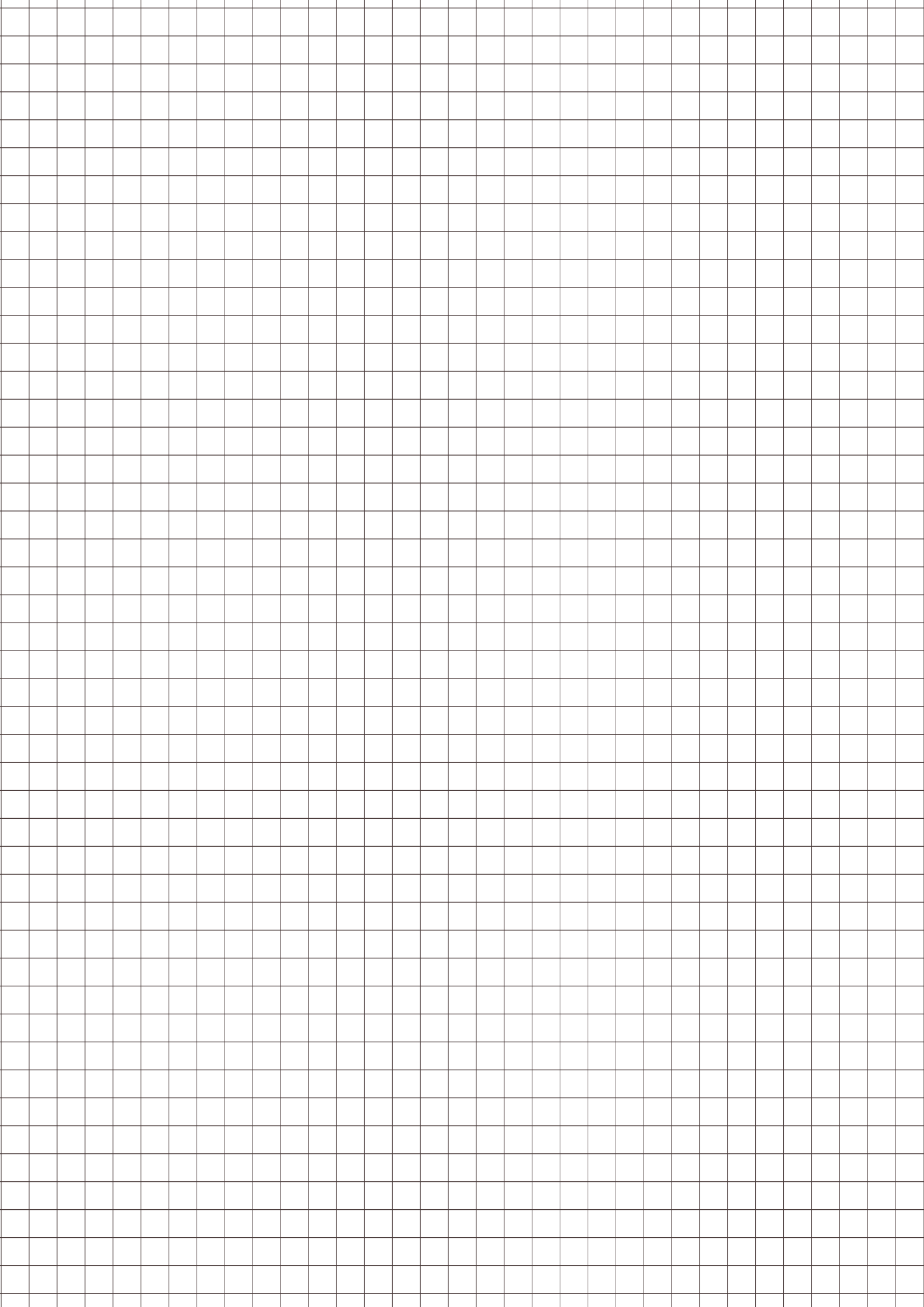| 32%	20%	11%	5%	3%	2%	24%	4%
Society does not want women as political leaders	Women are not qualified / skilled as men	Parties do not support women candidates (financially and otherwise)	Because of religious issues	Women have family obligations which will hinder their official work	Women should stay at home and fulfill family obligations	Other	Don't know / No response

working mother can establish just as a warm and secure relationship with her children as a mother who does not work". In all these statements, there is no significant difference in opinion between men and women. These attitudes may be a possible reason why women are discouraged from taking part in vocational or political activities.

On the other hand, just over a quarter of Maldivians (26%) agree with the statement: "It is proper for men to assert their authority over women", while 74% disagree with the statement. Despite the low level of agreement that working women can establish as warm and secure a relationship as those who do not work, 86% of Maldivians agree that both a husband and wife should contribute to household income. Additionally, only about two in ten Maldivians (21%) agree with the statement: "a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl", while 79% of Maldivians disagree with this statement. For those advocating for a larger role in the workforce and politics for Maldivian women, these attitudes can provide strong arguments for women taking on roles beyond the household, particularly decision-making roles. Indeed, the number of women supporting for equal rights and opportunities between the sexes is growing within the country. In the 2013 survey, men were more likely to be supportive of gender equality, but there is some evidence that the gap is closing, with attitudes between the genders lining up. For instance, in the 2015 survey fewer women agreed (51%) with the statement that men make better leaders than women compared to the data of 2013 (35%) – see **Figure 21**.

Figure 25: "For each fo the following statements that I read out, can you tell me how much you agree with each?"


Statement	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No response
A good wife always obeys her husband, even if she disagrees with him	45%	49%			4% 2%
Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income	32%	54%	11%	3%	
A working mother can establish just as a warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work	10%	18%	43%	28%	
It is proper for men to assert their authority over women	7%	19%	43%	31%	
A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl	7%	14%	39%	40%	

Legend: Strongly agree · Somewhat agree · Don't know/No response · Somewhat Disagree · Strongly disagree

SECTION V
POLITICAL PARTIES

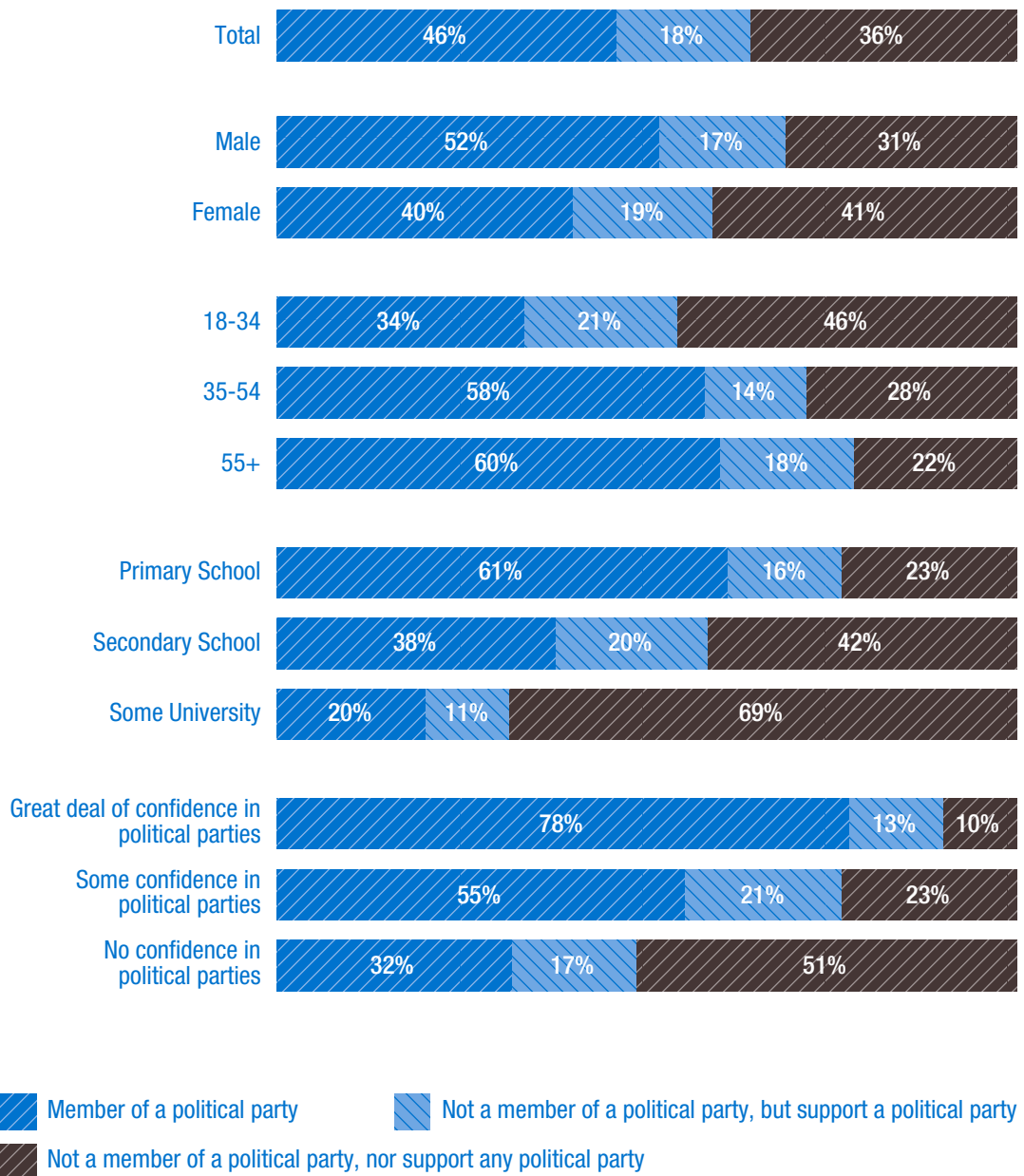## SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

Most Maldivians do not think that political parties in the country represent ordinary people. When asked whose interest parties serve, 41% of Maldivians say that political parties seek to serve their own interests by being in power and 27% say that political parties seek to serve only the interests of those in power **(Figure 26)**. Only 22% of Maldivians say that political parties serve the interest of the Maldivian people.

Figure 26: "In your opinion, whose interests do political parties serve?"
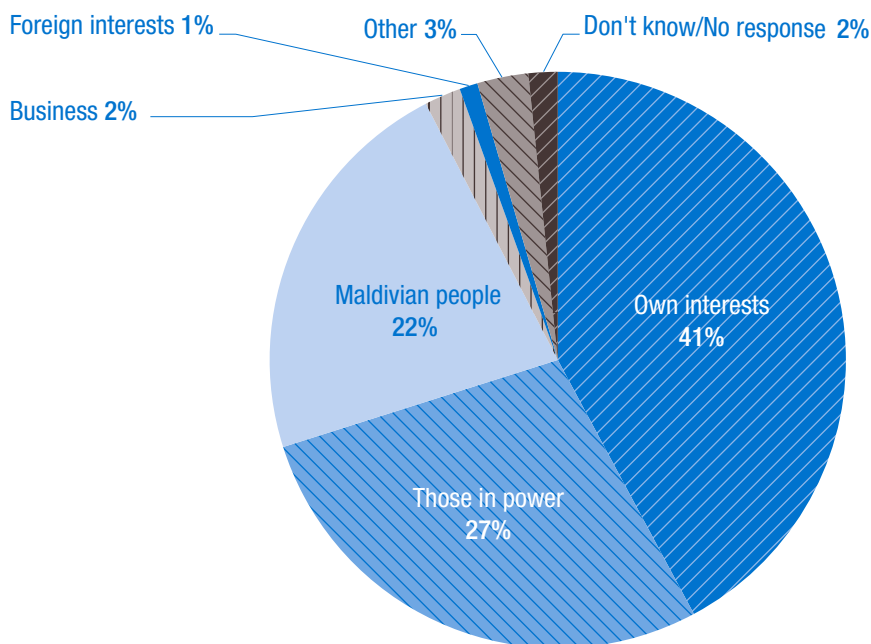
Although most do not think highly of political parties, 46% of the respondents reported that they are a member of a political party. An additional 18% say that although they are not a member of a political party they do support a certain political party **(Figure 27)**. Thirty-six percent of Maldivians say that they are not a member of a political party and do not support any political party.

Figure 27: "Are you a member of any political party or support any political party"

	Member of a political party	Not a member, but support	Not a member, nor support
Total	46%	18%	36%
Male	52%	17%	31%
Female	40%	19%	41%
18-34	34%	21%	46%
35-54	58%	14%	28%
55+	60%	18%	22%
Primary School	61%	16%	23%
Secondary School	38%	20%	42%
Some University	20%	11%	69%
Great deal of confidence in political parties	78%	13%	10%
Some confidence in political parties	55%	21%	23%
No confidence in political parties	32%	17%	51%

Legend:
- Member of a political party
- Not a member of a political party, but support a political party
- Not a member of a political party, nor support any political party

Membership in political parties is high among those who have confidence (50%) in political parties **(see Figure 20)**. Of those people who said that they have a great deal of confidence in political parties, 78% say that they are members of a political party and of those people who said that they have some confidence in political parties, 55% say that they are members of a political party **(Figure 28)**. Of those who said they have no confidence at all in political parties, over half (51%) say they do not belong to nor support any political party in the country.

Men are more likely to be members of political parties in Maldives, with 52% men being members of a political party, compared to only 40% of women.

Older Maldivians also tend to be more likely to be members of political parties than younger Maldivians. Overall 60% of Maldivians over the age of 55 say they are members of political parties and 58% of those between the ages of 35 and 54 are members of political parties.

Of Maldivians under the age of 35, only 34% are members of political parties, while almost half (46%) say that they are not a member of any political party, nor do they support any political party. Party membership also varies greatly based on education level, with those with lower education levels being more likely to be political party members. Sixty-one percent of those with primary level education or less are members of political parties, while the same is true for only 20% of those with university level education. Among those with university level education, 69% are neither a member of a political party, nor do they support any political party.
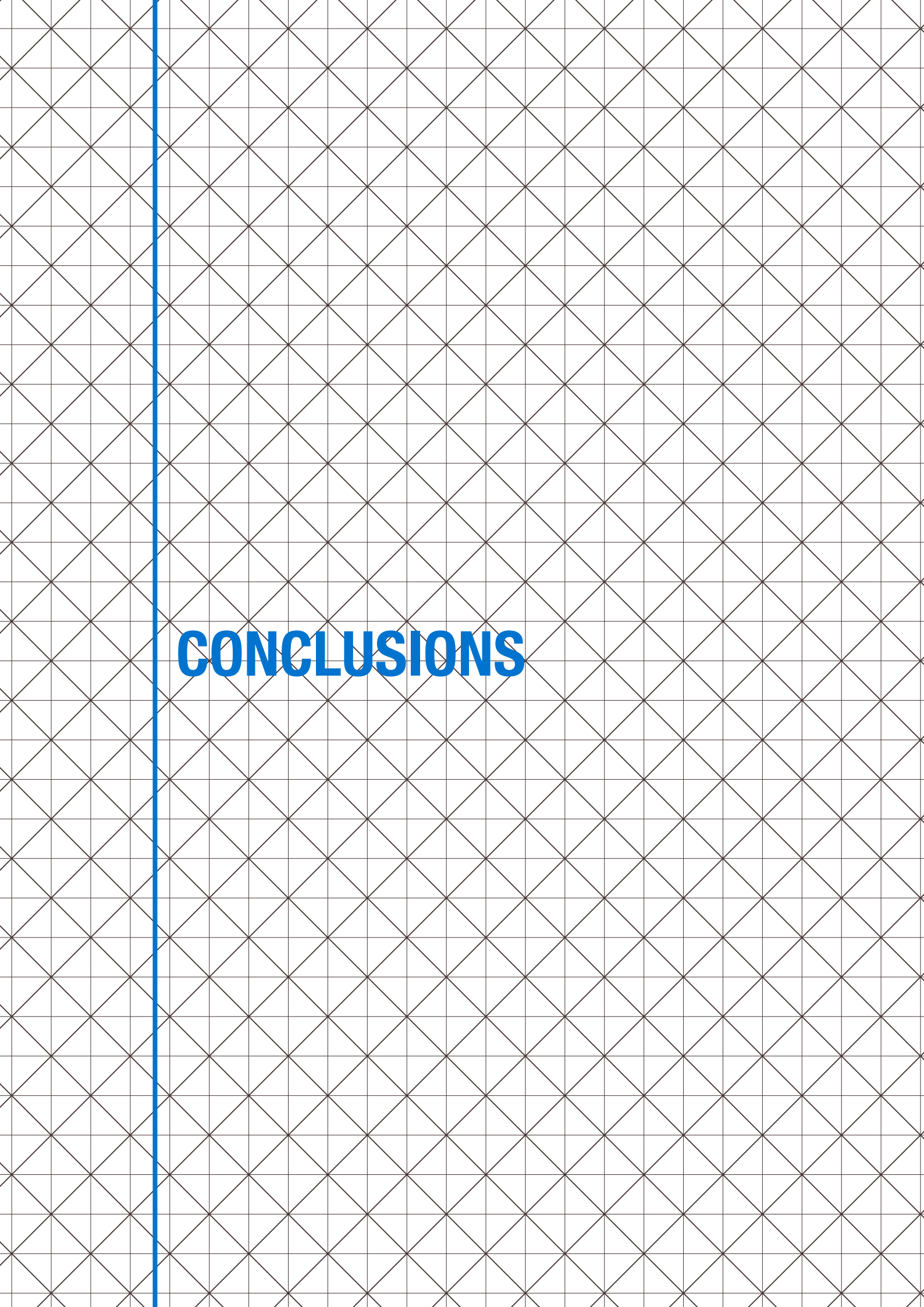
INDIVIDUAL PARTY SUPPORT AND PROFILES

Among those who are members of political parties or those who support a political party, the majority supports either the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) (46%) or the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) (38%) **(Figure 28)**. Very few Maldivians say that they are either members or support the Jumhooree Party (JP) (4%), Maldives Development Alliance (MDA) (4%), Adhaalath Party (AP) (4%), or Dhivehi Rayyithunge Party (DRP) (2%).

Demographic profiles of those who support a political party show that MDP has the largest youth and women support base. Of those who support a political party, 55% of the age group between 18 to 34 years support MDP. In the same age group, 29% support PPM. PPM has the largest share of people over 55 years, with 53% supporting PPM. Similarly, MDP has the largest share of women, with over 48% of women who support a political party supporting MDP, while 40% support PPM.

Figure 28: Membership profile of political parties

	Support/ Membership	Age 18-34	Age 35-54	Age 55+	Male	Female
MDP	46%	55%	43%	35%	45%	48%
PPM	38%	29%	40%	53%	36%	40%
JP	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%
MDA	4%	5%	4%	1%	5%	3%
AP	4%	4%	3%	3%	5%	3%
DRP	2%	0%	2%	4%	2%	1%
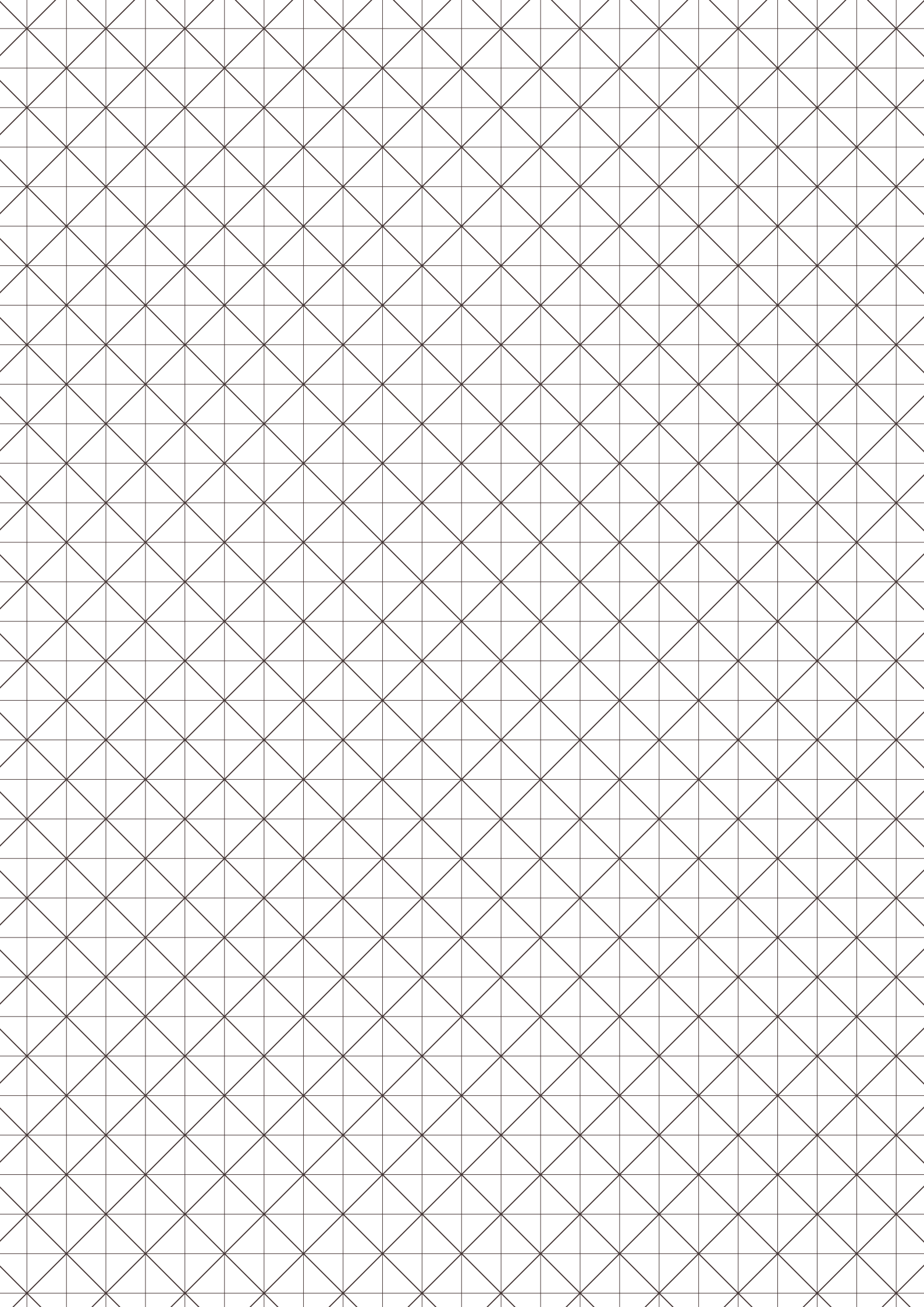
CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

One of the most significant findings from the 2015 Democracy Survey is the positive development in the general orientations and attitudes towards democracy as a form of government, compared to the 2013 survey. It is clear that most Maldivians value democracy as a form of government. Several findings point to this conclusion. There has also been some positive development in attitudes towards gender equality, a key democratic value. Forty-four percent now disagree with the statement men make better leaders than women, compared to 38% in 2013.

However, another important conclusion from the findings is that most Maldivians continue to be troubled by the status quo. They are critical of the political order: most believe power is concentrated in the hands of too few people. Most believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. For most Maldivians, the biggest problem faced by the country concerns "politics". Most Maldivians think politicians are ready to lie to get elected and the government does not care about ordinary people. Most think issues like corruption and political instability have worsened. Nearly half think judicial independence has decreased. Nearly half of the people are dissatisfied with the way democracy works.

Low confidence in key democratic institutions points to the same conclusion that most Maldivians are dissatisfied with status quo. Most people have no confidence at all in the parliament and the courts. It is striking that the number of people that have no confidence in the courts have increased from 46% in 2013 to 51% in 2015. While political parties saw a significant improvement in public confidence, 49% still have no confidence at all in them.

Perhaps the most striking negative development in this respect is the significant drop in confidence in the Elections Commission. The many challenges that the Elections Commission faced since the 2013 Democracy Survey may explain this negative change.

This broad picture points to major challenges and also opportunities for the Maldives.

It is not unusual for citizens in mature or transitional democracies to be dissatisfied with the political status quo and yet value democracy in principle. But the danger for transitional democracies is that this combination may not be an effective deterrent against authoritarian reversals. If citizens do not have confidence in key democratic institutions, will they be ready to defend them against anti-democratic

forces? Gaining public confidence in key democratic institutions, including the parliament, the courts, and the parties remains as one of the biggest challenges for the Maldives.

It is clear that the overwhelming majority of Maldivians prefer dialogue and non-revolutionary ways of resolving issues. For now, most have no appetite for violence as a solution for injustice, although a significant percentage does not totally discount violence. Such "peaceful" attitudes continue to present opportunities for state institutions to regain people's faith in the political order.
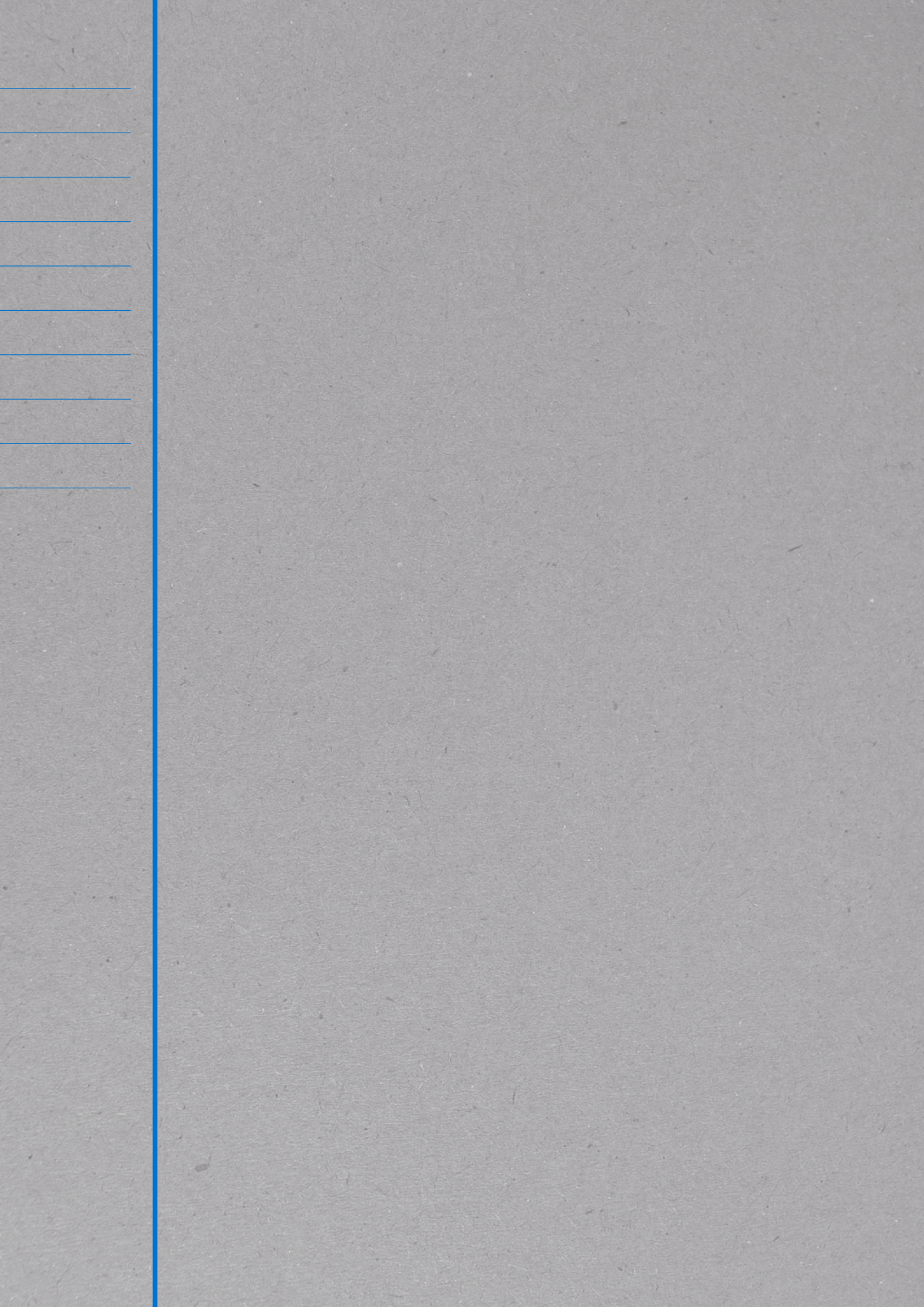
Successful democratisation also depends on a well functioning "political society" (Stepan and Linz 1996: 14-33). Political parties and political leaders form the backbone of political society as they organize politics for citizens. A clear conclusion from the survey is that most Maldivians have no high regard for political parties. A major challenge for political parties is to find ways to reconnect with their supporters and empower them for positive political engagement.

If these challenges are not successfully addressed, the overall picture from the Democracy Survey points to a troubled future for democracy in the Maldives.

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