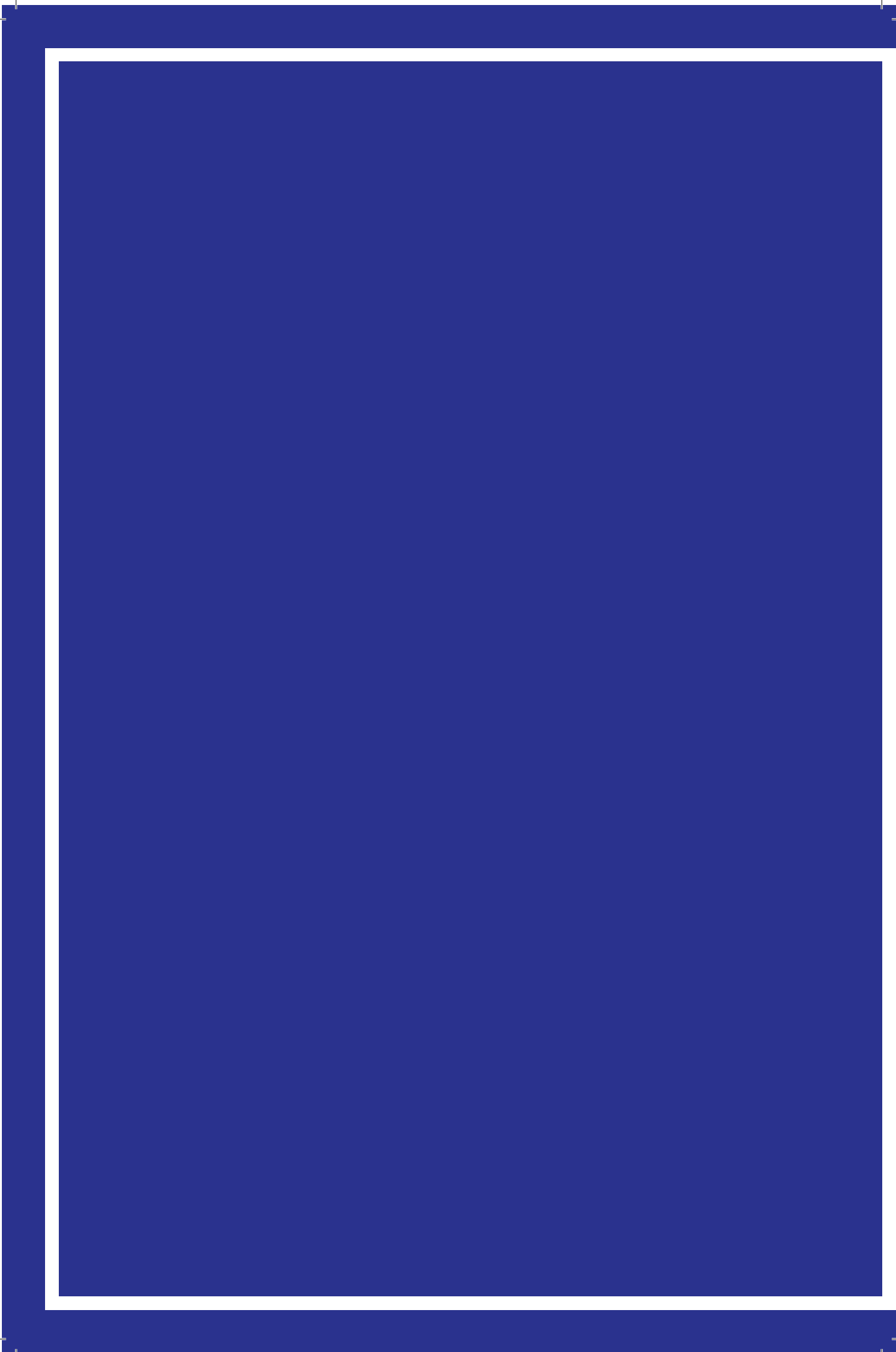




DEMOCRACY ^{AT} THE **CROSSROADS**

THE RESULTS OF 2013 MALDIVES DEMOCRACY SURVEY



Transparency Maldives, National Contact of Transparency International (TI), is a non-partisan organization that promotes collaboration, awareness and 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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TRANSPARENCY MALDIVES

Transparency Maldives (TM) is a non-partisan organization that promotes good governance and advocates to eliminate corruption from the daily lives of the Maldivian people. We are the national contact of Transparency International (TI) in the Maldives.

TM engages with stakeholders from all sectors (government, business, politics, civil society, media, religious and cultural groups, and local communities, among others) to raise awareness on the long, medium, and short-term detrimental effects of corruption, in all its forms, on development and society.

TM envisions a Maldives in which government, politics, business, civil society, and the daily lives of all people shall be free from corruption.

-

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The goal of this democracy survey is to contribute to the promotion of democratic norms and practices in the Maldives. Our hope is that the findings will promote a clearer understanding of democratic life in the country and to provide a platform for dialogue.

Azim Zahir, Senior Project Coordinator of Transparency Maldives, led the democracy survey project and was instrumental in the successful completion of this report. We would also like to thank Afnan Latheef, Mariyam Suha, Ibrahim Thayyib and Hassan Shafeeq who lead data collection and data entry.

The project would not have been possible without the dedicated work of our network of well-trained non-partisan volunteers. Their energy and enthusiasm was critical to the collection of the data upon which the following analysis relies.

All projects of this sort require resources and expertise. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and their technical team, Professor Neil Nevitte and Claudia Morales. They provided invaluable assistance for TM's observation of the 2013 Presidential Elections and for the democracy survey. We would like to thank the United States Government for the generous funding to the survey and elections observation.

Transparency Maldives' board of directors has been instrumental in supporting the project; their wisdom and leadership is appreciated. We thank our former Executive Director, Ms. Ilham Mohamed, under whose leadership this survey was conceived. ●

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transparency Maldives conducted a nationwide random survey of the Maldivian public in August 2013. The survey used repeatedly tested survey questions and the results are reliable within a margin of error of +/- 3.0%. That project was grounded in the conviction that the successful performance of democratic institutions requires a complementary set of supporting democratic values.

The results point to significant democratic deficits within Maldivian political culture. Some of the critical findings are as follows:

A clear majority of Maldivians think that “politics” is the most important problem facing the country. Fully half of the public is dissatisfied with the way democracy operates in the Maldives. The deepest pockets of dissatisfaction are among the young and the well educated. Moreover, for many, the notion of democracy carries negative connotations.

Democracy entails widespread commitment to the principle of equality. But a substantial proportion of the public, about two-thirds, do not support the idea of gender equality. What is truly striking is that women are less supportive of gender equality than are men.

A third troubling finding concerns the low levels of confidence that citizens have in their key representative institutions; institutions that are vital links between the citizens and the state. Out of 15 sets of institutions considered, Maldivians express the least confidence in parliament and political parties. 62% say that they have no confidence at all in parliament. 58% hold that view for political parties. The courts and the office of the President rate a little better.

Fourth and equally discouraging are the findings concerning trust and cynicism. Trust lubricates interpersonal relations; it makes transactions easier. Maldivians experience relatively low levels of interpersonal trust. Most striking of all, however, are the remarkably high levels of cynicism of the public. Maldivians are far more cynical than publics in other comparable countries. 86% of Maldivians say that the government does not care about ordinary people. 92% of Maldivians believe that politicians are “ready to lie to get elected”. Collectively the data reveal a bleak picture. A chasm divides citizens from their political elites. And key representatives institutions are not regarded by large segments of the public as responsive or accountable.

Citizens are critical of the social order: 84% hold the view that power is concentrated in the hands of too few people and 1 in 3 think that violence is sometimes a necessary response to social injustice. Fortunately, there is a virtual consensus (over 90%) about the belief that dialogue is the best way to solve the countries problems.

This is the first Maldivian democracy survey. It provides important benchmark data. Subsequent surveys will shed light on the trajectories and pace of change. They will help us to understand where democracy in the Maldives is headed. ●

INTRODUCTION

Since the first competitive multiparty presidential elections of 2008, the Maldives has continued to experience political uncertainty and turmoil. Some of the challenges have been economic. The world food price crisis of 2007–2008 hit the Maldives especially hard. But there has also been a crisis of governance. During 2011 and 2012 a series of protests sparked in part by claims of mismanagement of the economy, culminating in the resignation of President Mohamed Nasheed in February 2012. Nasheed claimed he was forced out of office. Former Vice-president Mohamed Waheed, who replaced Nasheed, maintained that the power transfer was voluntary and constitutional. The bitter partisan disputes animating those divisions entangled other Maldivian institutions including the courts, the army and the police.

Maldivians approached the 2013 Presidential elections facing uncertainty. How would the contest between former President Mohammed Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and Abdulla Yameen's Progressive Party of the Maldives (PPM) play out? Would the police and the courts stay on the sidelines or would they become involved? Did the Election Commission have sufficient institutional strength to maintain its independence? Was the voter list clean? Would state resources be used during the campaign? Would there be vote buying? These questions are common concerns surrounding elections in most transitional democracies.

Transparency Maldives (TM), a relatively new civil society organization, determined that a non-partisan domestic observation could play a useful independent role on behalf of civil society under these uncertain conditions. In addition to its domestic observation activities, TM's leadership positioned their national network of trained observers to undertake an important complementary task, namely, to gather systematic data concerning the state of democratic values in the Maldives. Democratic transitions can only become consolidated when state institutions and practices are complemented by a supporting set of democratic values shared by citizens.

Remarkably, Maldivians lack much systematic evidence about the political culture of the country. This project aims to rectify this omission and to report to the Maldivian public the basic findings of the Maldives first Democracy Survey. These data are important

and timely not just because they fill a gap, but also because they provide reliable benchmark data against which the progress of the Maldivian transition to democracy might be measured in the future.

The evidence presented in this report comes from face-to-face interviews of a random sample of Maldivian citizens. Because the data come from a random sample,¹ the results of the survey can be generalizable to the whole Maldivian population within known margins of error ($\pm 3.5\%$). The field work for the data collection took place between 7 August and 6 September, during the run up to the 2013 Presidential Elections. Most of the questions asked of citizens come from the World Values Surveys (WVS). The WVS is the largest and longest running cross-national survey research ever undertaken. The questions have been repeatedly tested by independent researchers in multiple national settings over many years. Consequently, there are good reasons to be confident that the data they yield are reliable and valid. Moreover, many of the questionnaire items have been used in other electoral environments recently in countries experiencing democratic transitions. Indeed, some of the findings from those settings might be usefully compared with the data from this project.²

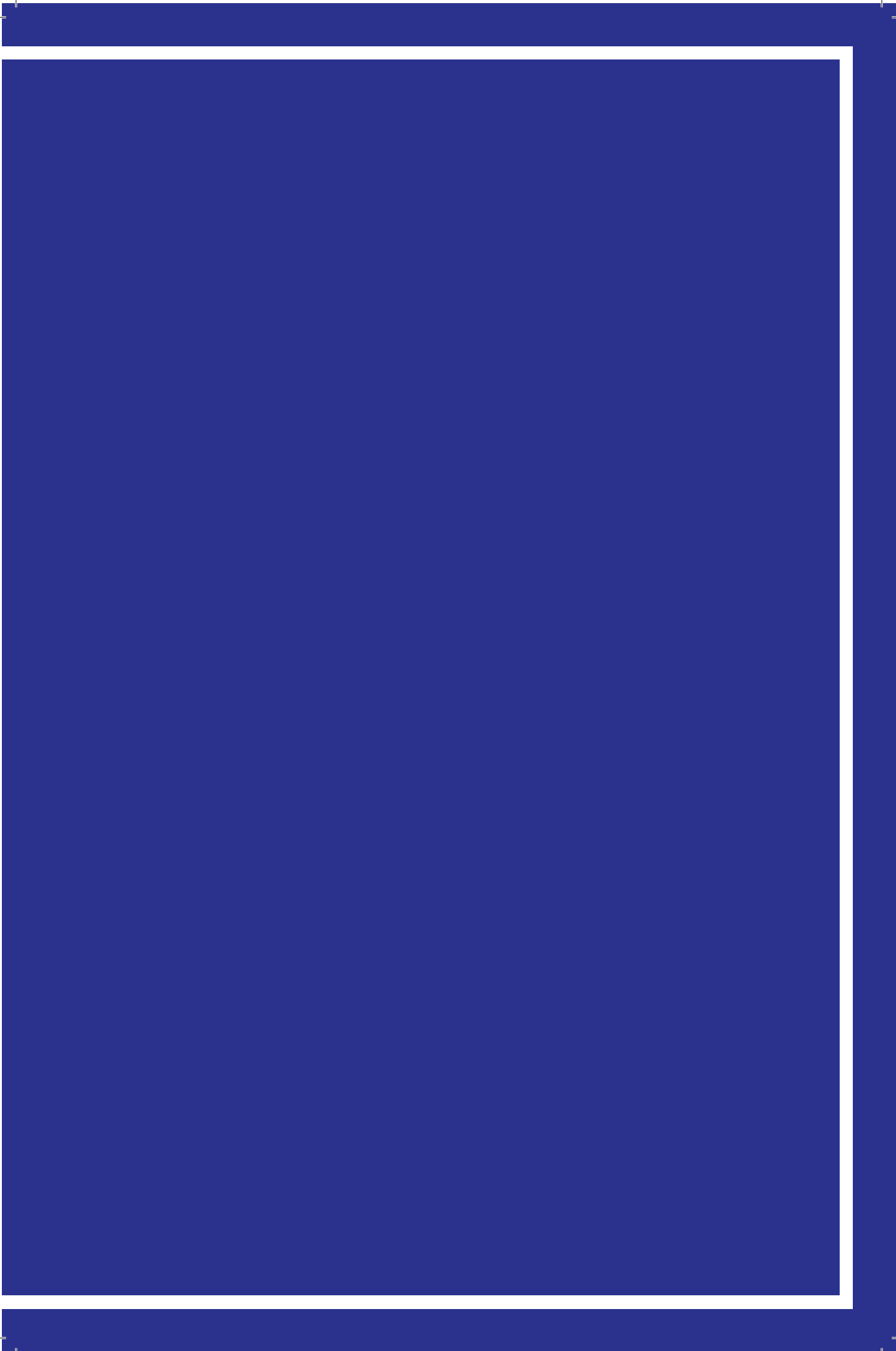
The report is divided into four main parts. It begins with an overview of citizen's views of their political world and about democratic norms. The second section considers a core component of political culture, public confidence in institutions. The analysis then narrows to consider more particularly the electoral environment. This includes views about the electoral commission, vote buying and electoral participation. The last substantive part of the report is concerned with partisan matters, the orientations that citizens have to their political parties and leaders. ●

¹ TM observers were assigned to randomly selected polling stations for election day observation. Those same observers were then given "random walk" instructions to lead them to the households of respondents. Within those households the specific respondent was identified by alternating rules: oldest/youngest, male/female.

² For example, see Cordova et al (2009) *Los salvadoreños frente a las elecciones 2009*; Nevitte, N. (2009) *Encuesta del Estado de la Democracia en el Salvador* Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute.

PART I

A Democratic Political Culture?



GENERAL ORIENTATIONS PROBLEMS & DEMOCRACY

The question of how to best achieve successful democratic consolidations with effective institutions is a matter of some debate. Most analysts of democracy agree that a combination of citizen orientations matter. Some focus on the importance of such attributes as interpersonal trust (Putnam, 1993) and rich associational life (Coleman 1990). Others point to the centrality of shared values about tolerance and equality. Yet others contend that economic conditions are vital. And then there are those who fix on the importance of institutions, Constitutions, the rule of law and the competitive nature of party systems. There is mutual interdependence of these factors and countries do not achieve democratic consolidation without citizens sharing some commitment to democratic values no matter how perfect a constitution might be.

The place to begin is with broad orientations about the political culture of the Maldives. The analysis of the findings then moves to consider more particular orientations.

All respondents were asked an open ended question:

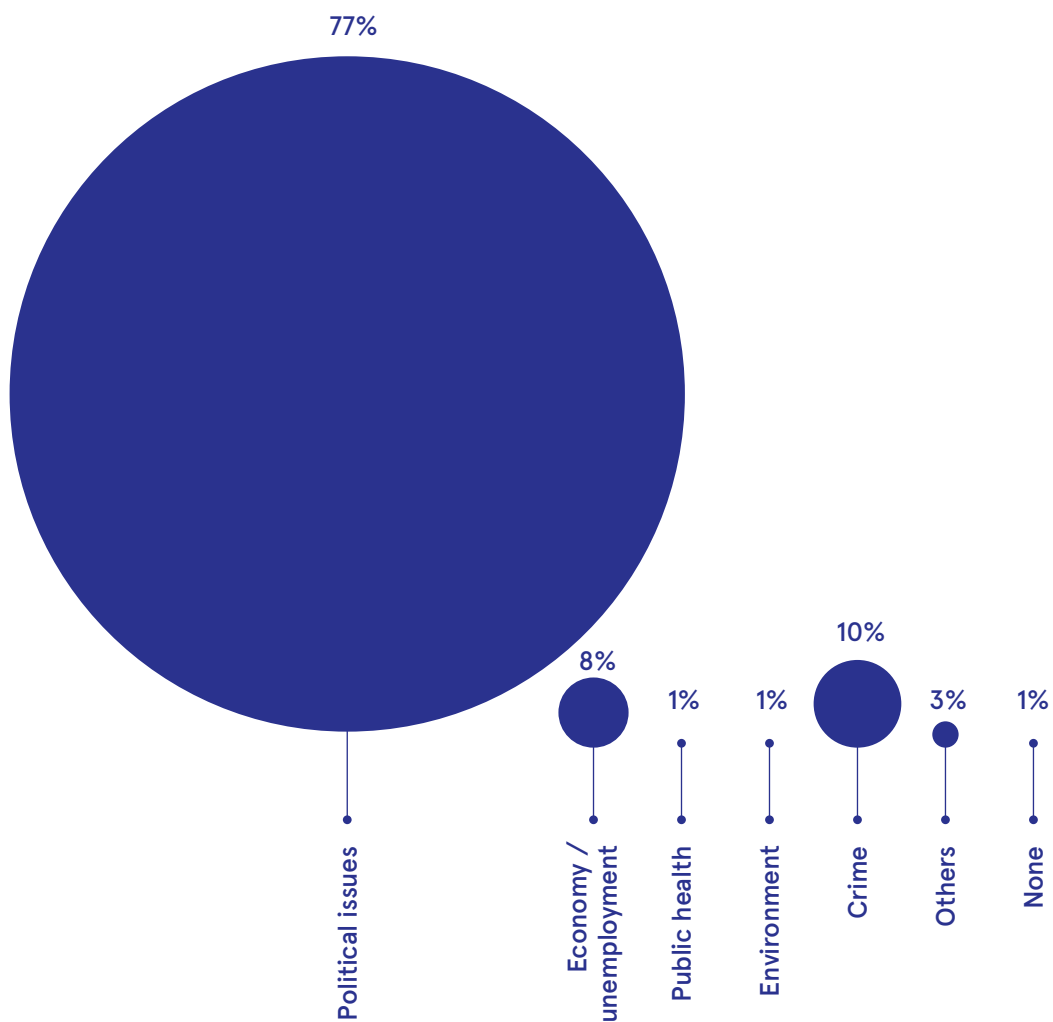
“What do you think is the most important problem facing the Maldives today?”

Responses to open ended questions are sometimes awkward to interpret. But that is not a challenge in this case. As the data in Figure 1.1A and 1.1B show, a clear majority of Maldivians agree that the most important problems have to do with the political climate. Relatively few citizens spontaneously mentioned “the economy/unemployment” or “crime”, issues that often plague publics in transitional states.

FIGURE 1.1

THE MOST URGENT ISSUES FACING THE COUNTRY

A. ISSUES FACING THE COUNTRY



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013 (N = 587).

Notes: respondents were asked an open-ended question: "What do you think is the most urgent problem facing Maldives today?" Responses are coded into seven categories: political issues, economy/unemployment, public health, environment, crime, other and none.

Part I : A Democratic Political Culture?

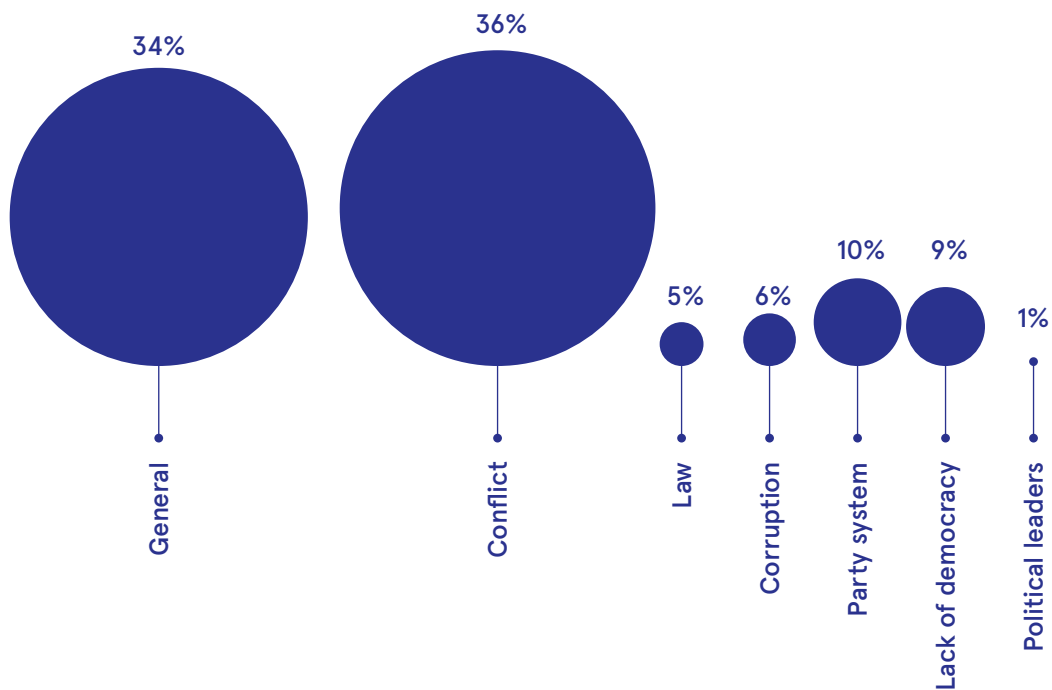
Figure 1.1 B disaggregates the responses of those who identified politics as “the most important problem” in greater detail. Within that group, more than one third (36%) specifically mentioned “conflict” as the political problem that concerned them. Another 10% identified the “party system” as problematical while yet others cited the “absence of democracy” (9%) and “corruption” (6%) as important problems facing the country.

In short, there is widespread agreement that “politics” is indeed the most serious issue. And, a more detailed analysis of the data shows that these views are not concentrated in any particular segment of the public. These outlooks are widely shared by the young and the old, men and women, and the rich and the poor.

FIGURE 1.1

THE MOST URGENT ISSUES FACING THE COUNTRY

B. DISTRIBUTION OF URGENT POLITICAL ISSUES



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013 (N = 587).

Notes: Those who answered "political issues" are then categorized into seven categories based on the issue they identify. These categories include: general, conflict, law, corruption, party system, lack of democracy and political leader.

Part I : A Democratic Political Culture?

Respondents were also asked a standard question that is widely used to gauge people's satisfaction with their political world:

“If we talk about the way democracy works in our country, would you say you are ‘very satisfied’, ‘somewhat satisfied’, ‘dissatisfied’, or ‘very dissatisfied’?”

Given citizen assessments of the most important problem facing the country, there is no reason to expect Maldivians to be particularly satisfied with the state of democracy in the country. Those kinds of data are difficult to interpret in isolation and so Maldivians' responses are compared to how citizens responded to exactly the same question in another transitional society—Guatemala.³ As Figure 1.2 shows, the data from both countries conform to a strikingly similar pattern. About half of each public reports that they are satisfied; the other half indicates that they are not. A sizeable proportion of Maldivian respondents, about one in five, reported that they were “not at all satisfied.”

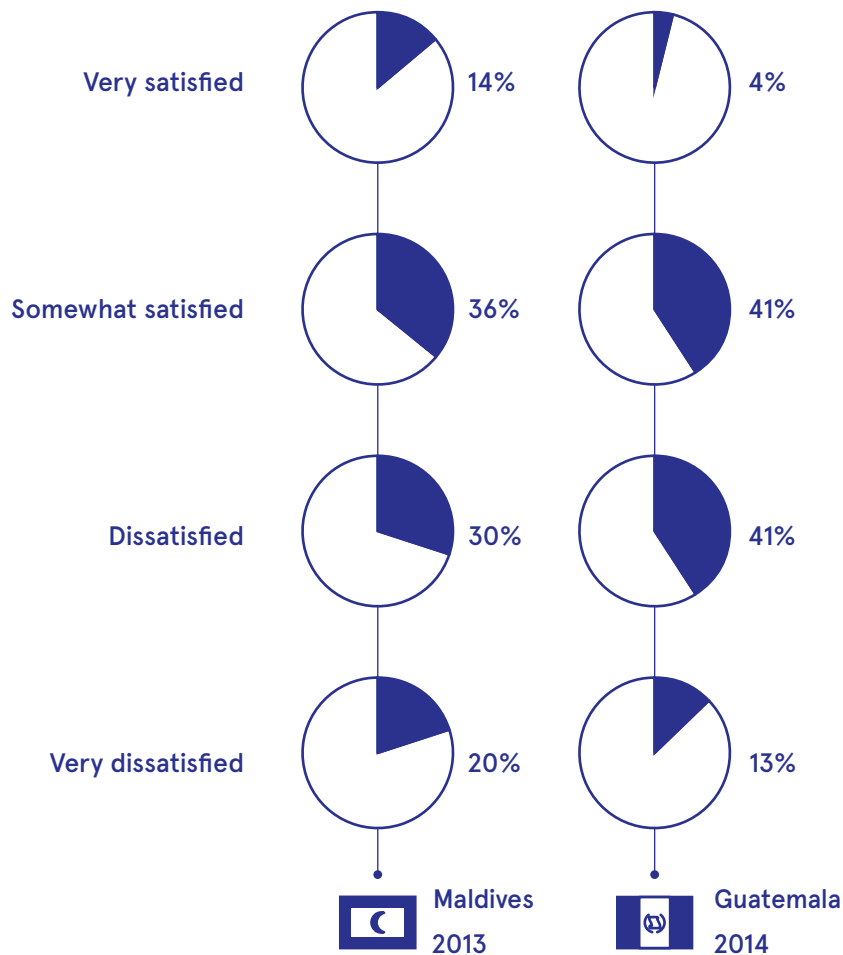
Just as important as the cross-national comparisons is the question of how these evaluations are distributed within the Maldivian public. Are some citizens systematically more dissatisfied than others? Or, as in the previous case, are those orientations distributed evenly across all social groups?

³ Survey results are notoriously sensitive to methodological variations. Consequently, we limit our comparisons to data from those other “small” democracies that have

1) recently undertaken surveys using
2) the same sampling methodology,
3) the same data gathering techniques and
4) exactly the same question wording.

FIGURE 1.2

SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: Respondents were asked "If we talk about the way democracy works in our country, how satisfied do you feel about it": are you "very satisfied", "somewhat satisfied", "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied".

TABLE 1.1

LEVELS OF DEMOCRATIC SATISFACTION

Gender	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Male	9	36	35	20
Female	21	36	24	19
Education				
Low	21	34	27	18
High	11	37	30	21
Age				
18 – 25	11	34	37	18
26 – 35	11	40	23	27
36 – 45	16	40	28	17
46 – 55	17	36	33	14
55+	13	28	22	20
Income				
Low	16	37	28	19
Medium	15	35	32	19
High	7	37	33	23

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: 1. Respondents were asked "If we talk about the way democracy works in our country, how satisfied do you feel about it": "very satisfied", "somewhat satisfied", "dissatisfied" and "very dissatisfied".

2. "Low education" = Secondary school or less, "high" = college and university educated.

General Orientations : Problems & Democracy

As the summary data reported in Table 1.1 show, there is a systematic pattern to the responses: women tend to be more satisfied than men. But people with higher levels of education and income are significantly less satisfied than those with lower levels of education and income. Moreover, younger people are systematically less likely to be satisfied than are their older counterparts: 55% of those in the 18–25 age group are either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied.”⁴ Other factors are also related to these evaluations: people who say that they are more interested in politics are more satisfied. But people who know more about politics, who score higher on political knowledge, are less satisfied. ●

⁴ Age and gender are both statistically significant predictors of satisfaction with democracy after other variables are taken into account, according to regression results.

PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a contested concept; people pour different meanings into the idea of “democracy” and there is no consensus about the precise boundaries of the concept (Thomassen 1995; Miller et al. 1997). The 2013 Democracy Survey presented citizens with three statements about democracy and they were asked if they agreed or disagreed with each of those views of democracy.

One statement was about the economy:

“In a democracy, the economic system works poorly”

The second statement presented the view:

“Democracies are unstable and there is too much discussion”

And the third statement was:

“Democracies aren’t good at maintaining order”

There is no definitive link between “democracy” and the performance of an economy. Economies can be stable or unstable in democratic and non-democratic environments although long standing democracies do tend to be wealthier (Lipset 1966). The same applies to “democracy” and “order.” Citizens’ reactions to these statements capture subjective assessments.

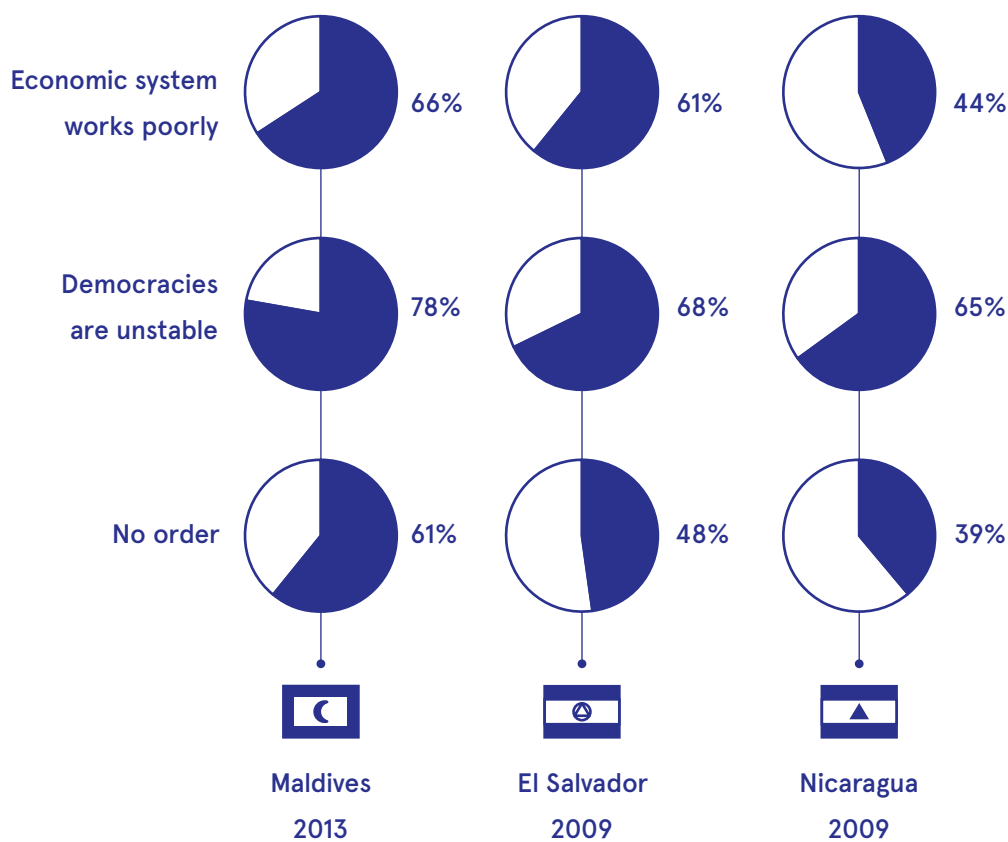
Once again, the Maldivian data can be placed in cross-national context; the same questions have been asked of random samples of populations in other transitional democracies.

The data in Figure 1.3 compare the findings from three transitional democracies—the Maldives, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

FIGURE 1.3

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT “HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS”

PERCENT AGREEING



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013;

2009 EL SALVADOR BENCHMARK DEMOCRACY SURVEY; 2009 NICARAGUA BENCHMARK DEMOCRACY SURVEY.

Question: Here are some of the things people say about democracy.

For each statement, please tell me if you very much agree, agree, disagree, or completely disagree.

1. *In a democracy the economic system works poorly*
2. *Democracies are unstable and there is too much arguing.*
3. *Democracies are not good to establishing order.*

Part I : A Democratic Political Culture?

The Maldivian public is more likely to have negative associations with the idea of “democracy” than do the publics in those two other transitional states. They are more inclined to think that in a democracy the economic system “works poorly”. They are more prepared to believe that democracies are “unstable”. And, a larger portion of Maldivian citizens are also more likely to link “democracy” with the lack of order in society.

Some background factors are systematically related to these outlooks. For example, younger respondents, the better educated and those in higher income groups are more likely to disagree with the idea that economies “work poorly” in democracies. And the young, those who are more interested in politics, and those who are more active are less likely to think that democracies are “unstable” and there is “too much arguing”. Those same people are also less likely to agree with the idea that democracies are less orderly. The young are those with higher levels of education, in other words, have more positive views about “democracy.”

Even though there is no universal agreement about what are the precise boundaries of the concept of democracy, there is a consensus that the contemporary notion of democracy does include certain core values. One such core value is the belief that individuals should take responsibility for themselves. And another core democratic value is the belief that people are equal and that they should be treated as such.

Perceptions of Democracy

These two values, of course, are not in and of themselves necessary and sufficient conditions for guaranteeing successful transitions to democracy. Such values need to be accompanied by such other beliefs as free speech, freedom of association, transparency and such constitutional requirements as equality before the law. The point is that the institutional expressions of these principles are less likely to succeed when publics do not embrace key core democratic values.

As in other countries where the Democracy Survey has been conducted Maldivians were asked about these values. And once again, their responses can be placed in broad cross-national context.

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statements:

“People who don’t get ahead should blame themselves, not society”

(individual responsibility).

And

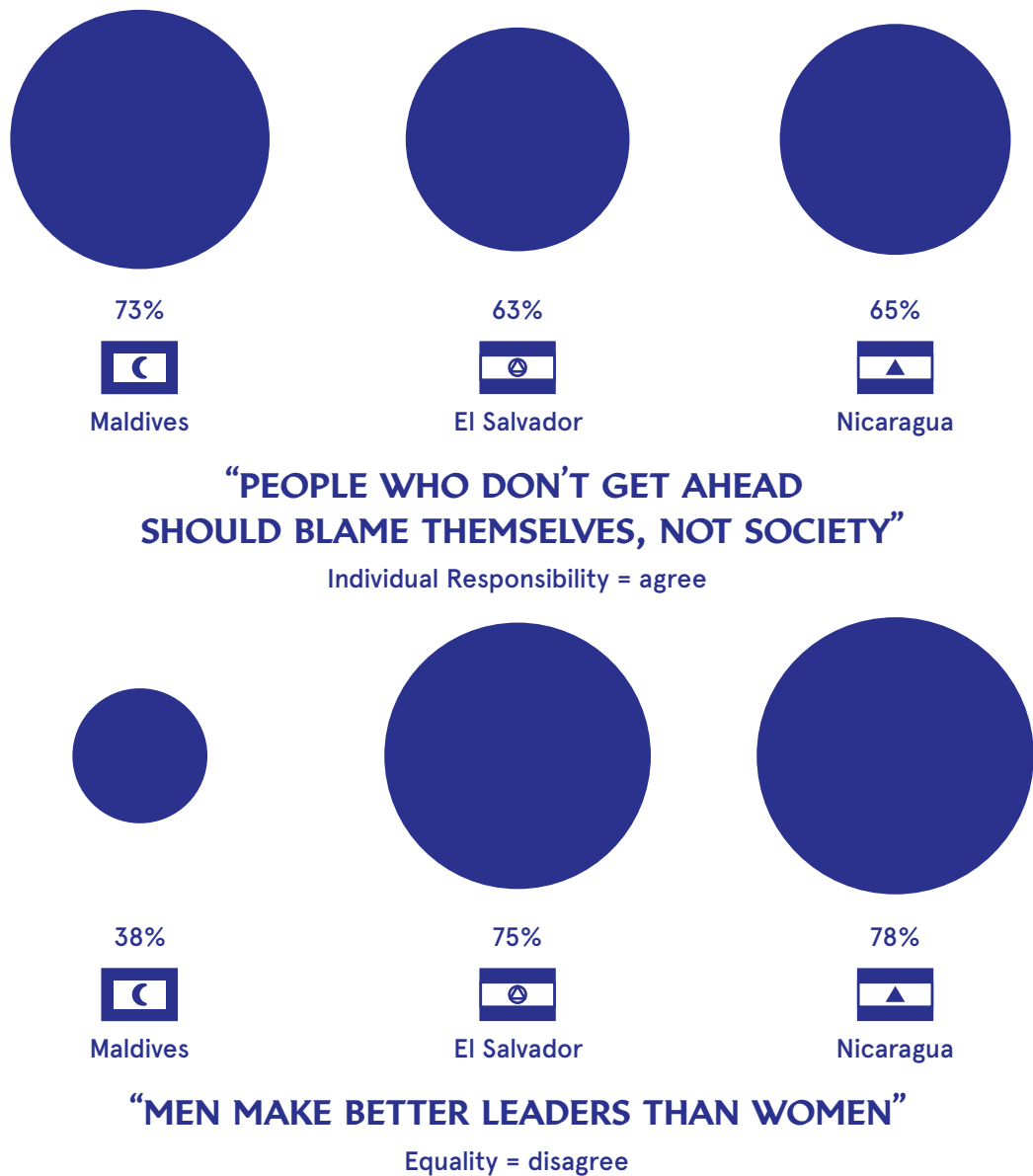
“Men make better leaders than women”

(equality).

The aggregate results for the three countries are summarized in Figure 1.4.

FIGURE 1.4

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC VALUES



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013;

2009 EL SALVADOR BENCHMARK DEMOCRACY SURVEY; 2009 NICARAGUA BENCHMARK DEMOCRACY SURVEY.

Question: here are some things people sometimes say about politicians, the government, and others. For each one, please tell me if you very much agree, agree, disagree or completely disagree with these questions.

1. "People who don't get ahead should blame themselves, not society." (individual responsibility = agree)

2. "Men make better leaders than women." (equality = disagree)

Perceptions of Democracy

Notice that Maldivians score significantly higher than the other publics in their support for the value of individual responsibility. But notice also, support for equality, in this case gender equality, is much lower in the Maldives than it is among citizens in the other two transitional societies.⁵ It is worth noting, however, that support for gender equality in the Maldives is significantly higher among the young and better educated than it is among older generations (those over 35 years of age).

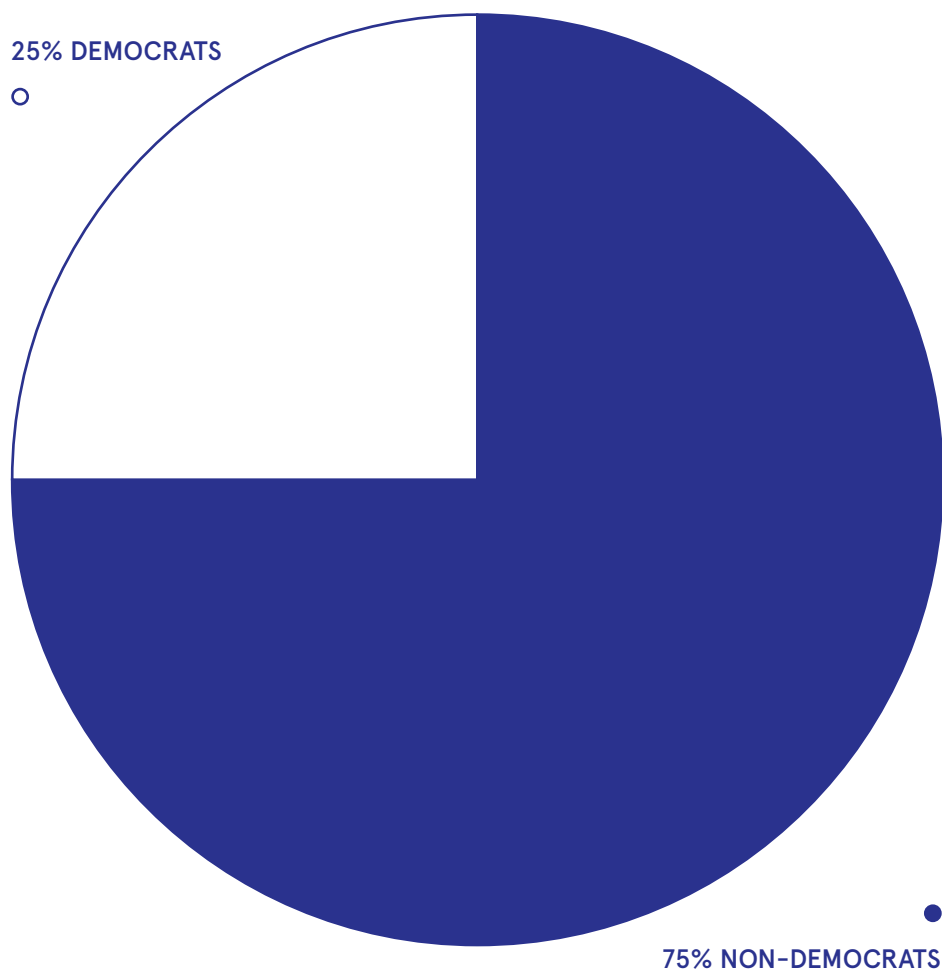
⁵ We might speculate that this is because the question item probing views about equality refers specifically to gender equality. Gender equality, perhaps, takes on a different standing in Islamic societies

Part I : A Democratic Political Culture?

One way to probe these results further is to consider respondents who support both individual responsibility and gender equality as endorsing “democratic values” and to compare that group to others who do not support these values, non-democrats. It turns out, and as Figure 1.5 shows, about one in four Maldivians qualify as “democrats” by those criteria. Who are these “democrats”? And are they systematically different in any respect from those who are “non-democrats”?

FIGURE 1.5

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC VALUES



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013.

Question: here are some things people sometimes say about politicians, the government, and others. For each one, please tell me if you very much agree, agree, disagree or completely disagree with these questions.

1. Individual responsibility: "People who don't get ahead should blame themselves, not society."

2. Equality: "Men make better leaders than women."

The index 0 (Non-democrat) – 2 (Democrat). Democrats (2) are compared to non-democrats (0–1).

TABLE 1.2

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Gender	Democrats	Non-democrats
Male	30	70
Female	21	79
Education		
Low	19	81
High	30	70
Age		
Under 35	29	71
35 or older	18	82

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Question: "here are some things people sometimes say about politicians, the government, and others. For each one, please tell me if you very much agree, agree, disagree or completely disagree with these questions."

1. Individual responsibility: percentage of respondents "very much agree" or "agree" that "People who don't get ahead should blame themselves, not society."

2. Equality: percentage of respondents "Completely disagree" or "disagree" that "Men make better leaders than women."

"What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?"

"Low education" = Secondary school or less, "high" = college & university educated.

Perceptions of Democracy

The data summarized in Table 1.2 provide some indications of how these particular value outlooks are distributed in Maldivian society.

Notice that there are statistically significant differences by gender, age, and educational criteria. Men are more likely than women to be democrats.⁶ The young are more “democratic” in their outlooks than those in the generation over 35 years of age. And those with higher levels of formal education are substantially more likely to qualify as democrats than are those with less.

⁶ It is striking that men are *more likely* than women to support gender equality.

Quite aside from support for democratic values and evaluations of how satisfied people are with “how democracy works” in the country, people also hold quite different visions and expectations about the democratic process.

TABLE 1.3

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Sometimes violence is necessary as a response to injustice.

Very Much Agree	Agree	Disagree	Completely Disagree
15	20	29	36

It is better to move to another country to ensure a better future.

Very Much Agree	Agree	Disagree	Completely Disagree
18	25	33	23

Political power is concentrated in the hands of too few people.

Very Much Agree	Agree	Disagree	Completely Disagree
41	43	12	4

Dialogue is the best way to solve the problems of the country.

Very Much Agree	Agree	Disagree	Completely Disagree
61	30	5	3

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Question: "Here is a list of some of the things people say about political processes in the Maldives. For each one, please tell me if you very much agree, agree, disagree or completely disagree with these opinions."

Perceptions of Democracy

The Democracy Survey probed these outlooks by presenting various statements about “the political process in the Maldives” and asking respondents if they agreed or disagreed with those statements. The results, summarized in Table 1.3, are revealing.

First, a clear majority of citizens disavow violence as a solution to injustice. That said, about one third of respondents agreed that

“Sometimes violence is a necessary response to injustice”

The good news is that there is virtually a consensus when it comes to how problems in the Maldives should be resolved. More than 90% of respondents believe that

“Dialogue is the best way to solve the problems of the country”

There is no appetite for other strategies of problem resolution.

Even so, citizens are critical about how power is concentrated in society. 84% agree with the statement that

“Political power is concentrated in the hands of too few people”

As in most transitional states, “exit” is a strategy preferred by some citizens. About 2 out of 5 citizens think that it is

“Better to move to another country to ensure a better future”

And a majority of those who hold that view (54%) already have “close relatives” who have moved to live in another country in the last 5 years. Exit is a more attractive option for those who have family members who already live in another country. ●

ENGAGEMENT

Sustainable democracies require at least minimal levels of citizen engagement and there are some dimensions of engagement that are particularly critical. Interest in politics, for example, is a form of psychological engagement, and it is important because interest supplies the motivation for citizens to acquire knowledge about their political community (Gabriel and van Deth 1995). Knowledge, in turn, is a form of cognitive engagement and knowledgeable citizens are better equipped to contribute to the quality of public debate. Other research has also shown that interpersonal trust and community involvement are profoundly important to sustaining democratic social dynamics (Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993). Interpersonal trust lubricates social and political exchanges. It makes transactions between citizens easier. By contrast cynicism, the belief that politicians and governments more generally do not care about ordinary people, has corrosive effects on democratic life; it drives citizens away from active participation in public sphere.

The general consensus is that people are more likely to trust those who are closest to them. And the notion of “closeness” can carry connotations of primary relationships or have a cultural dimension.

Engagement

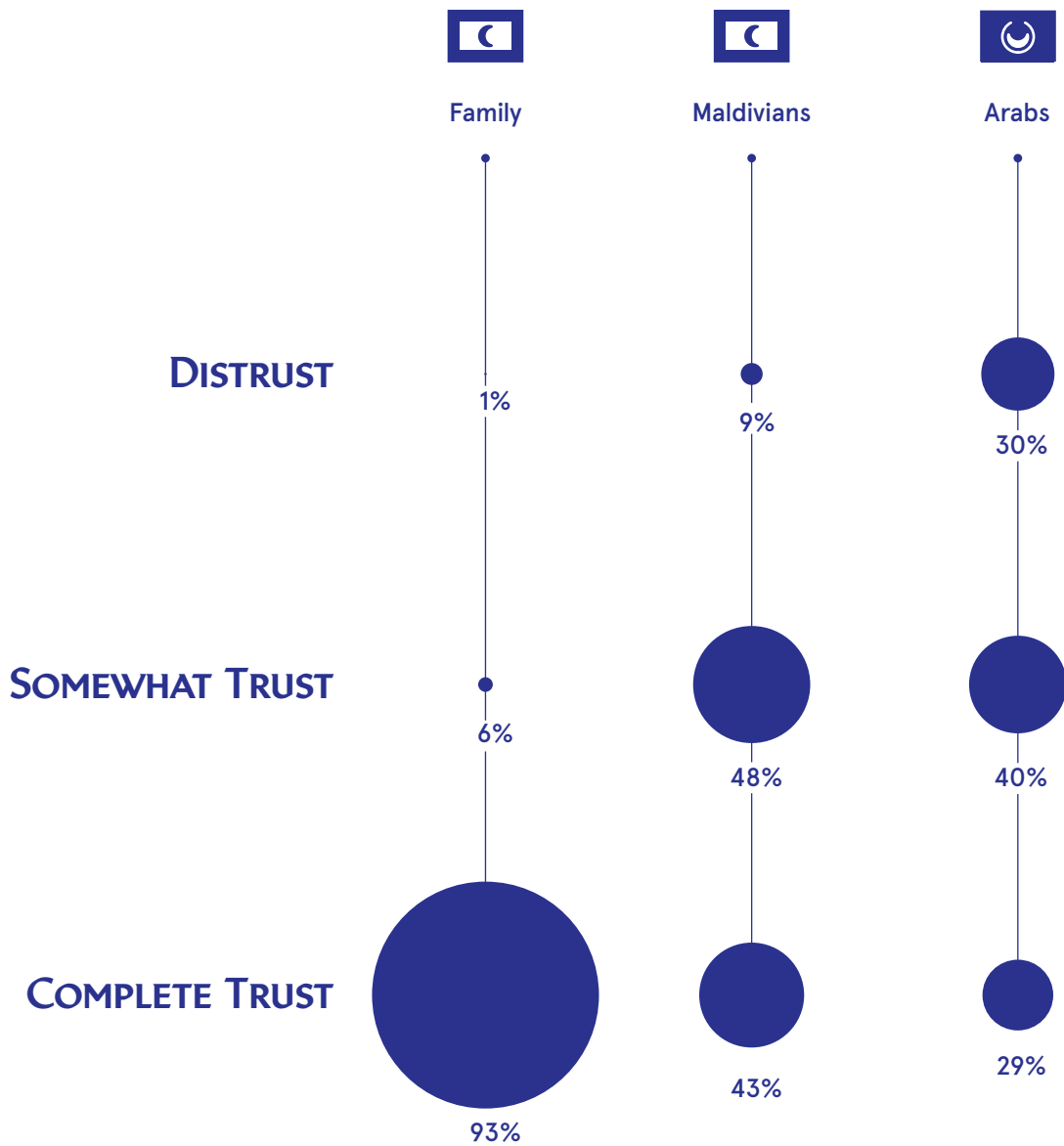
The Democracy Survey asked respondents:

“How much trust do you have in the following groups”

and they were given a list of primary and cultural groups to consider.

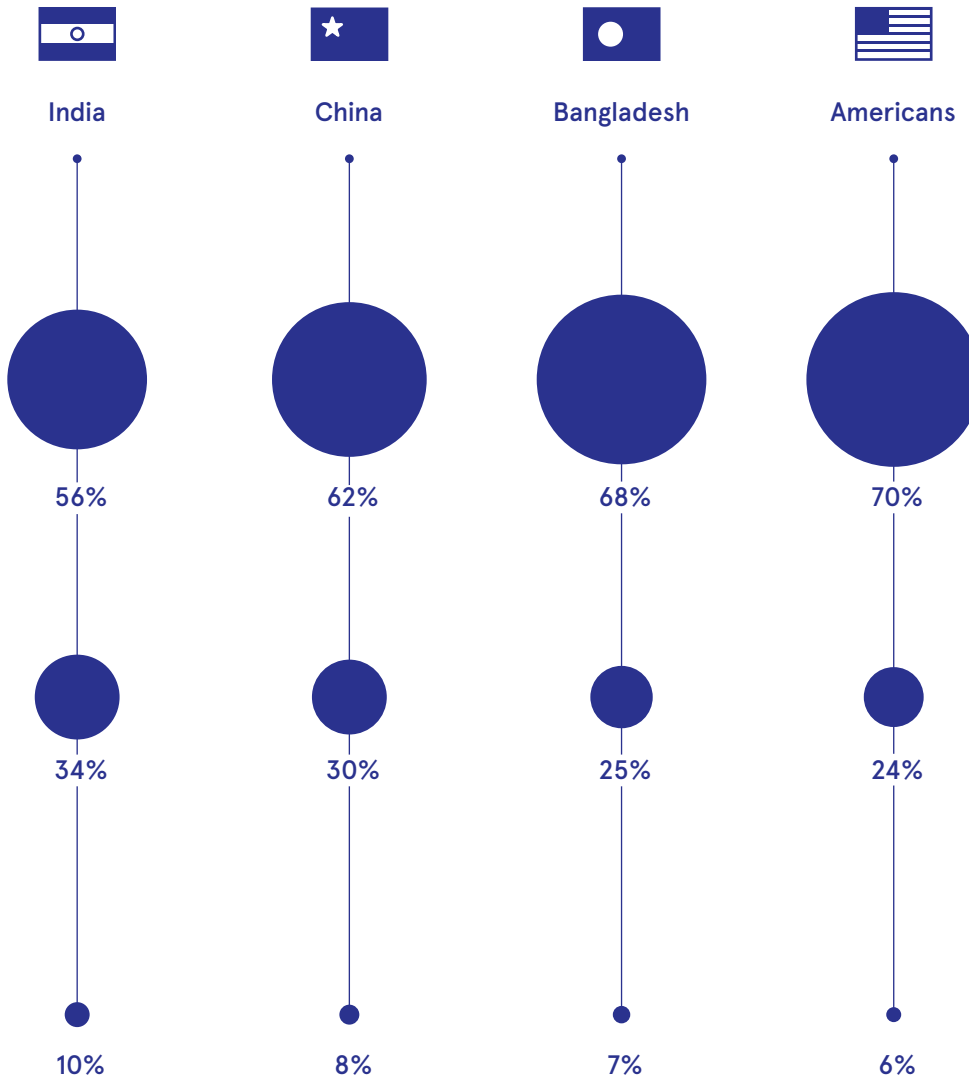
FIGURE 1.6

LEVELS OF TRUST



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Engagement



Part I : A Democratic Political Culture?

The data reported in Figure 1.6 are consistent with findings reported in other countries (Inglehart 1990). The cross-national data show that people are most likely to trust members of their own family. And the Democracy Survey data confirm that the same finding holds in the Maldives (Figure 1.6). Only a small proportion of respondents distrust their co-nationals. But the more culturally distant the reference group under question, the less likely people are to trust them. These same general findings are reflected in the data summarized in Figure 1.6.

When it comes to the likely success of any democracy, however, there is more to consider than just how citizens happen to feel about other groups.

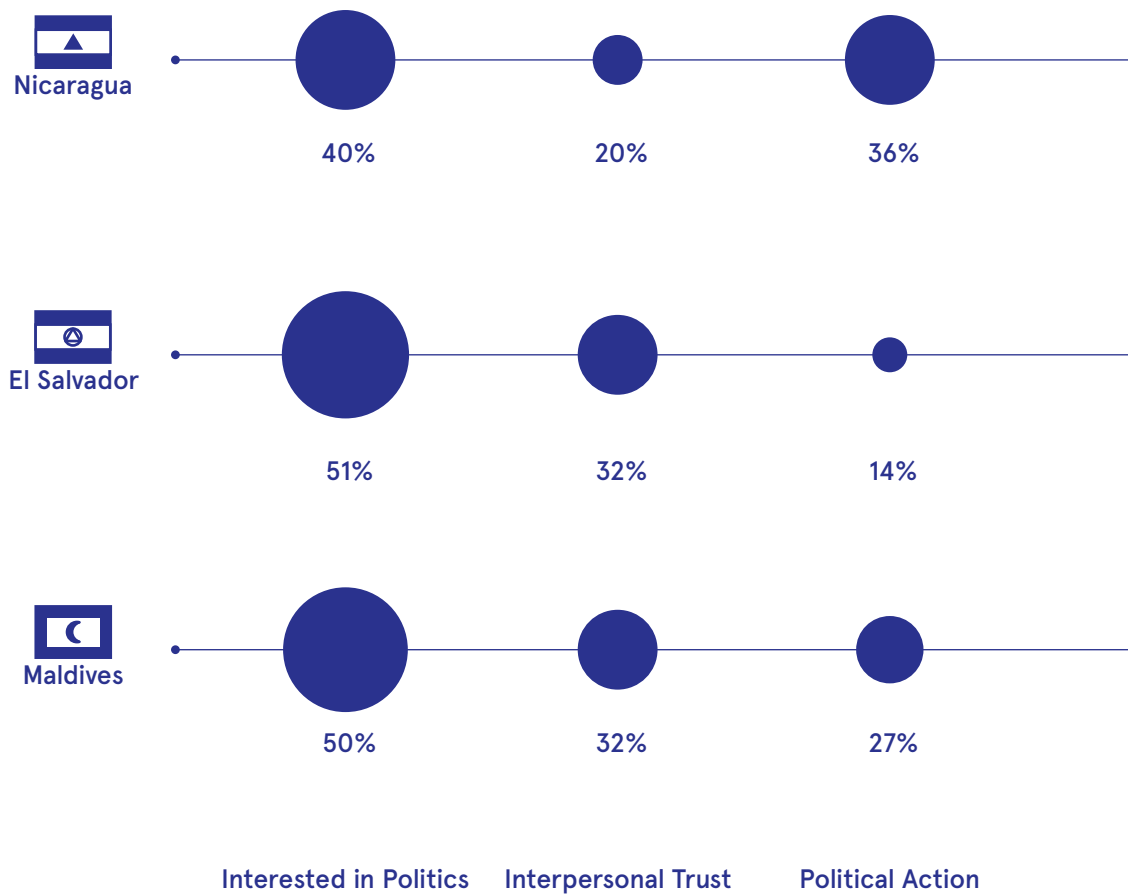
Engagement

The democratic ideal, of course, is that all citizens should be interested, knowledgeable, and active in the political and community life of the country. No country in transitional or stable consolidated democracies fully satisfies these standards entirely. But understanding where citizens stand on these various dimensions of engagement provides an important indication of the health of civil society. Is the state of civil society robust? Or is it feeble? Which domains of engagement are weak or strong?

The Democracy Survey asked a battery of questions specifically designed to shed light on these questions. Who is engaged? To what extent? And in what ways? And equally important, who is disengaged?

FIGURE 1.7

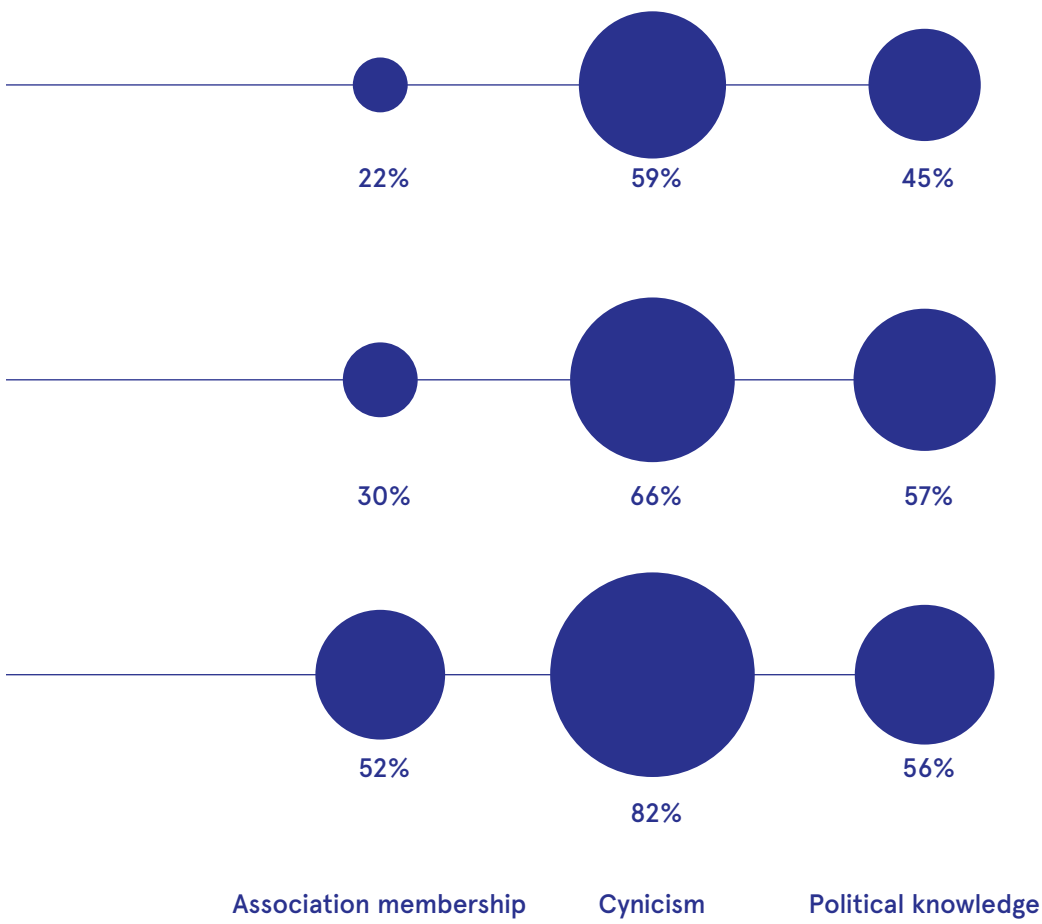
ENGAGEMENT, CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISONS



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013; 2009 EL SALVADOR BENCHMARK DEMOCRACY SURVEY; 2009 NICARAGUA BENCHMARK DEMOCRACY SURVEY.

Details in the next page.

Engagement



Part I : A Democratic Political Culture?

**SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE,
2013; 2009 EL SALVADOR BENCHMARK DEMOCRACY SURVEY;
2009 NICARAGUA BENCHMARK DEMOCRACY SURVEY.**

Questions:

1. Interest in politics

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

2. Interpersonal trust

Thinking about people in your own community (neighbourhood or village), do you think you can trust most of them, or do you have to be careful when dealing with them? Results report percentage stating "Most people can be trusted"

3. Association membership

Here is a list of groups and organizations; I'd like you to tell me if you have always, often, sometimes, or never participated in the following types of meetings or activities over the past year: 1. Religious groups; 2. Cultural groups; 3. Sports groups; 4. Unions or workers associations; 5. Community development groups.

An additive index with a range of values 0-5. 0 through 1 = low membership (0), 2 = moderate membership levels (1), 3 through 5 = high levels of membership (2). Results report percentages with "high" levels of membership.

4. Political action

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 participated in each of the following activities. 1. Request the government's assistance with a community problem; 2. Participate in a legally authorized demonstration; 3. Participate on a strike at your workplace; 4. Support a public protest.

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."

5. 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 ("very much agree" or "agree" = 1; "disagree" or "completely disagree" = 0); 2. Politicians are ready to lie to get elected.

The index 0 (Not cynical) – 2 (cynical). Those cynical (2) are compared to those who are not (0-1). Results report percentage that is "cynical"

6. Knowledge index

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?

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.

Engagement

There are no universally agreed upon thresholds for engagement and so the most useful place to start is with the broad picture. Are Maldivians generally more or less engaged than comparable publics in other transitional democracies? The basic results, reported in Figure 1.7, present the broad picture.

Notice, first, that Maldivians do not suffer any shortfall of interest in politics; they are as interested in the political life of the country as the publics in the two other transitional countries. That same finding also holds for levels of interpersonal trust.

When it comes to “association membership”, a general measure of participation in the life of the community in which people live, levels of membership in local activities are generally higher in the Maldives than they are in the two other countries. And the levels of political action undertaken by Maldivians—a measure of the repertoire of actions people are prepared to use—is higher in the Maldives than in El Salvador, but somewhat lower than those found in Nicaragua.

The most troubling finding concerns the extraordinary high levels of cynicism about politics among Maldivian citizens. A substantial proportion of citizens in transitional and consolidated democracies alike are cynical about politics perhaps for understandable reasons. But the fact that 82% of all Maldivians hold these outlooks is worrisome not least of all because cynicism signifies an emotional disengagement and distrust of the political classes in society. But this finding is nonetheless consistent with results reported earlier. Recall that a clear majority of Maldivians also believe that the most important problem facing society is “politics”.

Are there any particular set of background factors indicating systematic variations in these different dimensions of engagement within the Maldivian public?

Part I : A Democratic Political Culture?

When it comes to interpersonal trust, it turns out that men (70%) are less trusting than women (65%). And those with higher levels of formal education (72%) and income (73%) are less trusting than are those with lower levels of education (61%) and income (62%). Interpersonal trust is unrelated to people's level of knowledge about politics or interest in politics. But it is related, as predicted, to levels of political action and associational life. Those with lower levels of interpersonal trust are less active and less engaged in community life.

There are also background variations in interest in politics. In this case, there is a striking gender gap: women (59%) are significantly more likely to be interested in politics than men (40%). And there is also some evidence of generational variations. The youngest age cohort, those who are between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age, are less inclined to be interested in politics (42%) than older cohorts (all over 50%).⁷ Not surprisingly, interest in politics is related to engagement in community affairs. Of those who are at least "somewhat interested" in politics (63%) are active in their community.

There are two quite striking other findings. First, there is no relationship whatsoever between cynicism and interest in politics. Those who are cynical are just as interested in politics as those who are not. Second, and as results from other countries would lead one to predict, interest in politics is very strongly related to knowledge about politics.

⁷ This finding is not unusual. Data from other countries indicate that interest in politics reflects life-cycle effects: older people tend to become more interested in politics as they approach middle age.

Engagement

What about cynicism? Given that levels of cynicism are so high in the Maldives there is little room for variation. Even so, it is evident that the youngest cohort (under 25 years) is more cynical about politics. So too are those with higher levels of formal education. Cynicism apparently dampens interpersonal trust. And, tellingly perhaps, those who are more knowledgeable about politics tend to be more cynical than others.⁸

⁸ And the cynical are significantly less likely to support the incumbent government.

There are significant differences also in political knowledge. First, there is a clear gender gap. As it happens, the proportion of women who score as “very knowledgeable” (64%) is significantly higher than the proportion of men (49%) who can pass the political knowledge test. And knowledge is related to participation in community life: the more knowledgeable are more involved. More striking, though, is the relation between political knowledge and cynicism: the more Maldivians know about politics the more likely they are to be cynical. Those with “high” political knowledge (59%) are four times more likely than those who score “low” on the knowledge test to be cynical about politics (13%). And the knowledgeable are systematically more likely to be more interested in politics (73%) than the less knowledgeable (47%).⁹

⁹ 58% of Maldivians identified TV as their main source of political information. And 8%, 3%, 12%, 11%, and 13% of Maldivians respectively identified radio, newspaper, online news, friends and relatives, and social media as their main source of information. Among individuals scored “high” in the political knowledge test, 62% of respondents identified “TV” as their main source of political information. While 15% identified “online news” and 14% identified “social media” as their main source of political information.

●

PART 2

Confidence in Institutions

Institutions are vital links between citizens and the state. And to be effective bridges these institutions need to have at least a modicum of public support (Klingemann, 1995). Like other benchmark surveys, the Maldives Democracy Survey asked respondents a standard set of questions designed to probe how much confidence citizens have in a variety of institutions: for each institution, respondents were asked to indicate if they have “total confidence”, “a lot of confidence”, “some confidence” or “no confidence” at all.

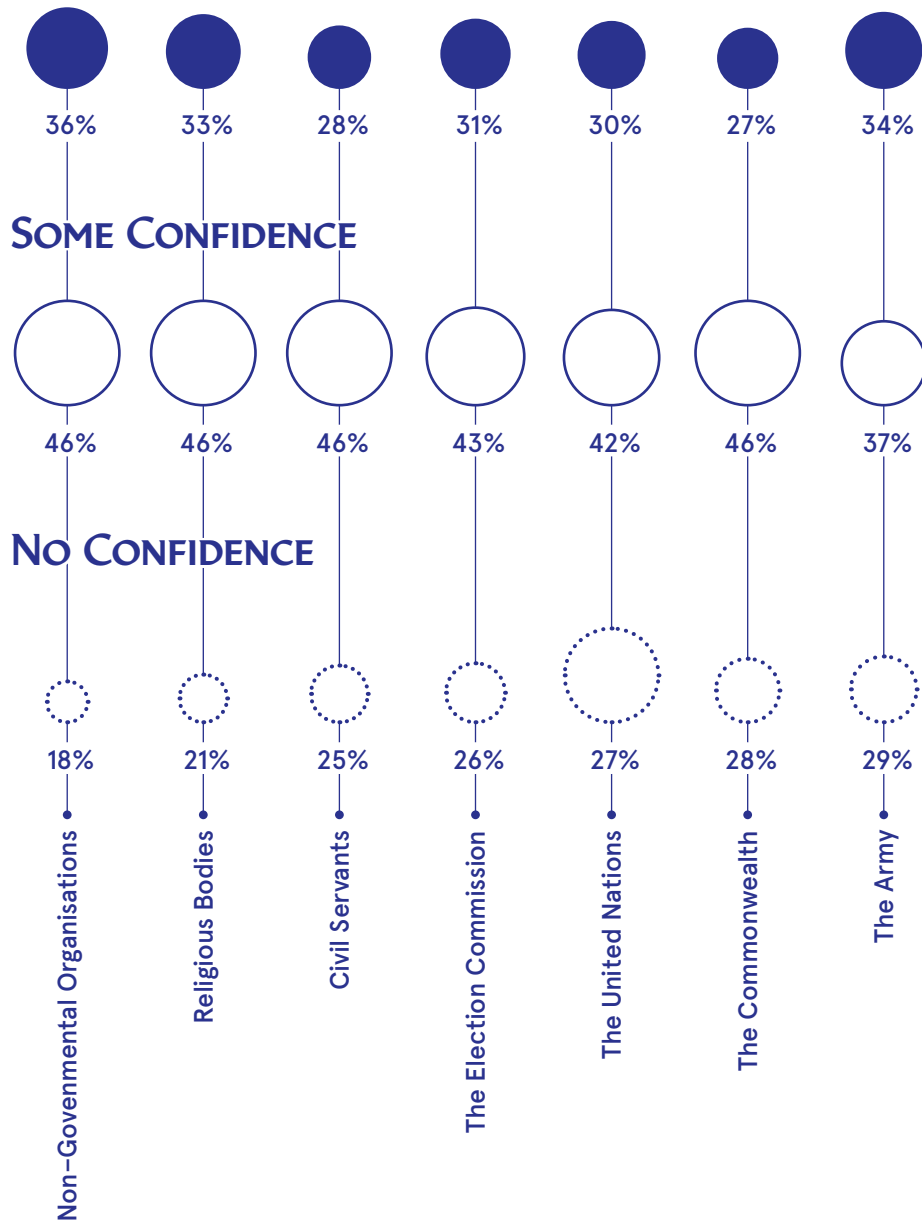
The overall data are summarized in Figure 2.1¹⁰

¹⁰ For presentation purposes, the “total” and “a lot of confidence” responses are merged into “a great deal of confidence.”

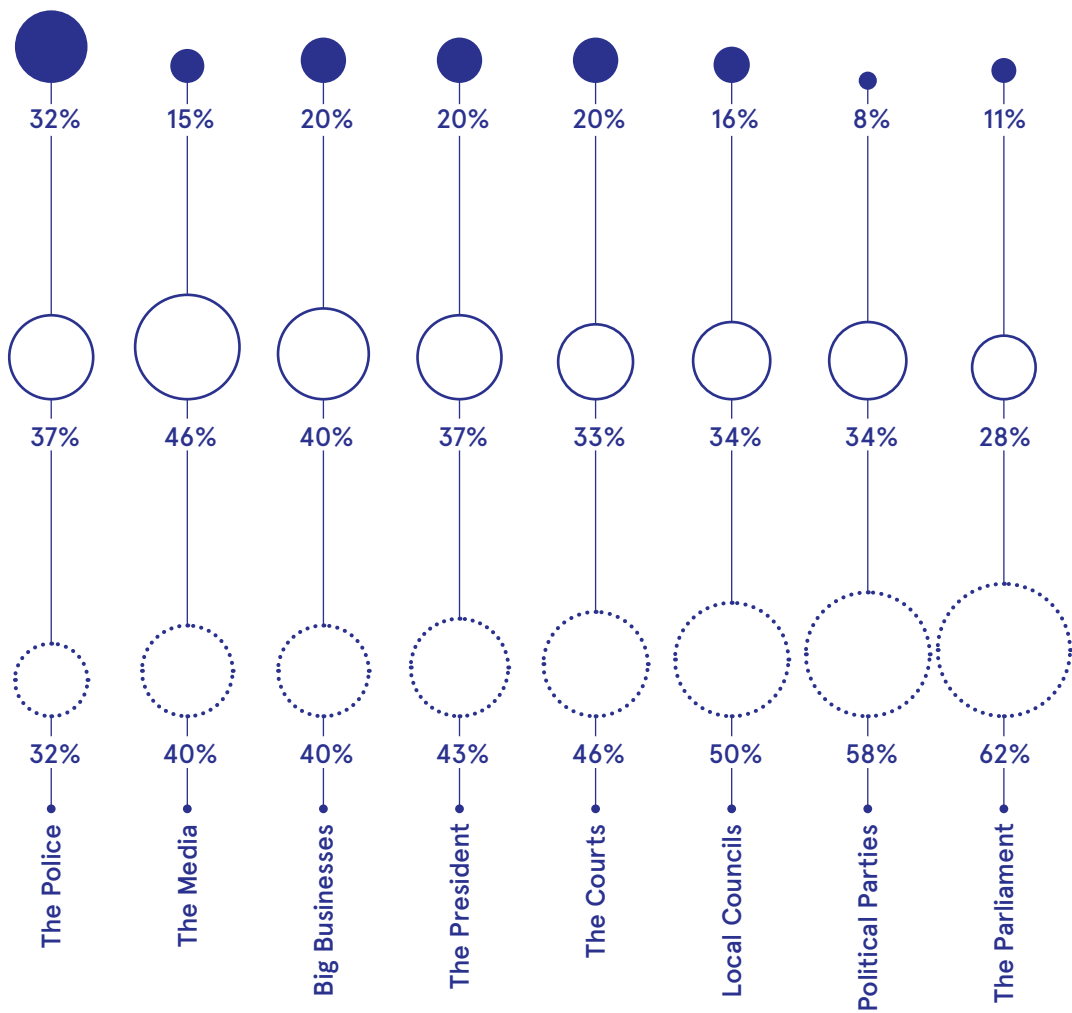
FIGURE 2.1

LEVELS OF INSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENCE

A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE



Confidence in Institutions



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: respondents were told:

"Now I am going to mention a number of organizations. I'd like you to tell me how much confidence you have in each one." Those answering "total" and "a lot" of confidence are coded as "a great deal of confidence."

Part 2 : Confidence in Institutions

A number of striking findings emerge from these data. One way to read the findings is to look at the balance of the response distribution between “great deal of confidence” responses and the “no confidence at all” categories.

Notice at the top end of the figure the proportion of Maldivians expressing “a great deal of confidence” in NGOs outnumbers those saying they have “no confidence at all” in those institutions by a ratio of about 2:1. Responses are more evenly balanced in the cases of the two international organizations included in the list—“the United Nations” and “the Commonwealth.”

What is also striking is how divided opinions are about the security and enforcement institutions of the State. About one third of all respondents say they have “a great deal of confidence” in the army (34%) and the police (32%). But then again about the same proportions report that they have “no confidence at all” in the army (29%) and the police (32%). Maldivians are clearly deeply divided in their assessments of these institutions.

For the other institutions the balance of confidence shifts in the other direction. About twice the number of people say they have “no confidence at all” in the media and big business compared to those to have a great deal of confidence in those institutions. Only 15% of Maldivians have “a great deal of confidence” in the media.

Confidence in Institutions

Perhaps most striking finding of all is the discovery that a clear majority of respondents indicate that they have no confidence at all in key representative institutions such as parliament (62%) and political parties (58%). And about twice as many respondents say that they have “no confidence at all” in local councils (50%), the courts (46%) and the office of the President (43%) as the proportion that expresses a great deal of confidence in these institutions (20%).

Are there any systematic patterns behind the low levels of confidence in such representative institutions as Parliament, political parties and the office of the President? A more detailed investigation of the data indicates that the short answer is “yes”.

These findings are summarized in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1

CONFIDENCE IN REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Gender	Level of confidence	
	Low	High
Male	56	14
Female	44	19
Education		
Low	38	20
High	57	14
Age		
18 – 25	60	14
26 – 35	52	14
36 – 45	48	14
46 – 55	24	29
55+	34	22
Cynicism		
Low	35	34
High	54	12

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Note: This is an index that includes responses to questions about confidence in Parliament, Political Parties, and the President.

Confidence in Institutions

Interest in Politics	Level of confidence	
	Low	High
Low	66	10
High	35	20
Political Action		
Low	52	16
High	42	19
Interpersonal Trust		
Low	55	12
High	41	24
Satisfied with Democracy in the country		
Yes	38	21
No	63	11
Democratic Values		
Yes	57	12
No	46	19

Part 2 : Confidence in Institutions

There is clear evidence of gender, education and age differences. Men have less confidence in these institutions than women. People with higher levels of formal education express less confidence in these institutions than those with less education. And there is a clear age gradient. A majority of those under 35 years of age have no confidence in these institutions. And those over 46 years of age are twice as likely as their younger counterparts to say that they have high levels of confidence in these institutions.

What is also striking is that levels of confidence in these institutions are systematically related to a set of orientations that other research has indicated contribute to the effective functioning of democracy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Pharr and Putnam, 2000).

As has already been shown, the levels of cynicism are extremely high in the Maldives. Levels of cynicism, in turn, are systematically related to low confidence in these representative institutions. Half of all those who are cynical about politics have little confidence in these institutions. Two thirds of those who are not interested in politics express no confidence in these political institutions. And people who are less trusting of others and less participatory report significantly lower levels of confidence in these institutions.

Confidence in Institutions

It is not possible to definitively prove that lack of confidence in these institutions causes people to be turned off politics, cynical and non-participatory. But it is clear that these orientations form a well-defined cluster of attributes and behaviours. More disturbing, perhaps, is the clear evidence indicating that those who support democratic values have less confidence in these institutions than others. And people with little confidence in these institutions are significantly less satisfied with the state of democracy in the Maldives. ●

PART 3

The Electoral Culture

The timing of the Democracy Survey coincided with the height of the campaign for the 2013 Presidential Elections. And, clearly, politics was on the minds of citizens. Recall that when asked to identify the most important problem facing society a huge majority, some 70%, volunteered an answer that had something to do with politics.

Although Maldivians do not express much confidence in political parties or parliament, they do not paint the Election Commission with the same negative brush. To be sure about one quarter of respondents said they had no confidence in the Election Commission but a significantly larger proportion, about one third (31%), indicated that they had “total” or “a lot” of confidence in the institution.

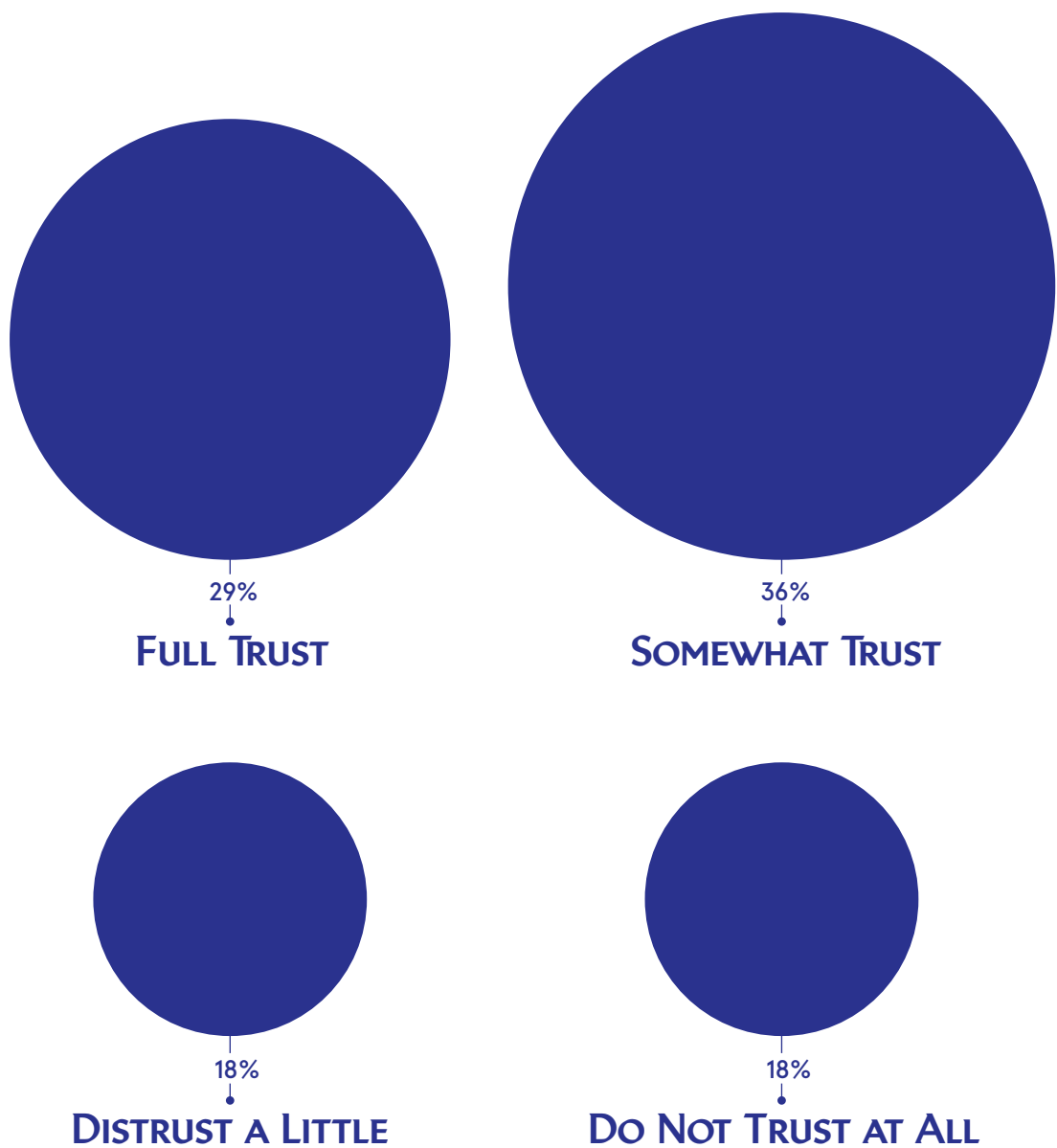
FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

In transitional democracies Election Commissions face the unenviable task of administering elections under challenging conditions. It is critical that the administration of the election should be seen to be even-handed and fair. The perception that the administration of an election is biased or unfair is problematical because those evaluations undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process. The Democracy Survey asked respondents:

**In 2013 we are having a new Presidential Election.
How much do you trust that the Election Commission
is going to perform in a fair and unbiased way?**

FIGURE 3.1

TRUST THE ELECTION COMMISSION TO BE FAIR AND UNBIASED



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: respondents were asked "in 2013, we are having a new presidential election. How much do you trust that the Election Commission is going to perform in a fair and unbiased way?"

TABLE 3.1

TRUST THE ELECTION COMMISSION TO BE FAIR AND UNBIASED

Confidence in Election Commission	Level of trust			
	high	somewhat	little	not at all
No confidence	8	20	22	50
Some confidence	23	49	19	9
A lot of confidence	45	44	6	4
Total Confidence	70	19	9	2
Gender				
Male	25	42	18	15
Female	34	28	17	20
Education				
Low	33	32	15	20
High	28	39	18	16

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Note: 1. Respondents were asked "in 2013, we are having a new presidential election. How much do you trust that the Election Commission is going to perform in a fair and unbiased way?"

2. "What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?"

"Low education" = Secondary school or less, "high" = college and university educated.

Fairness and Transparency

Age	Level of trust			
	high	somewhat	little	not at all
18 – 25	26	39	18	18
26 – 35	27	42	18	14
36 – 45	33	29	19	20
46 – 55	38	27	13	22
55+	36	30	15	19
Income				
Low	29	34	17	20
Medium	35	30	22	14
High	18	55	11	16

Part 3 : The Electoral Culture

The results are summarized in Figure 3.1 and the responses are unpacked in some detail in Table 3.1. First, notice that about two thirds of respondents (65%) say that they do trust, at least somewhat, that the Election Commission is unbiased and fair in fulfilling its duties. And the proportion of citizens who do not “trust at all” (18%) is smaller than the proportion who have “no confidence” (25%) in the institution. Moreover, as the data in Table 3.1 clearly show, the lack of confidence in the Election Commission as an institution is clearly related to levels of trust people have in how fair or unbiased the Commission will be in doing its job. The relationship is statistically significant and strong: the less confidence people have in the Election Commission the less likely they are to believe that the Commission will be unbiased and fair.

These orientations are also related to such background socio-economic factors as age, gender, education and income. Women are less likely to “fully trust” the Election Commission than men. Those with higher levels of formal education and income are less likely to “fully trust” the Election Commission than their counterparts with lower education and income. And as elsewhere there is some evidence of an age gradient: those under 35 years of age are significantly less likely than older people to “fully trust” the election commission.

Fairness and Transparency

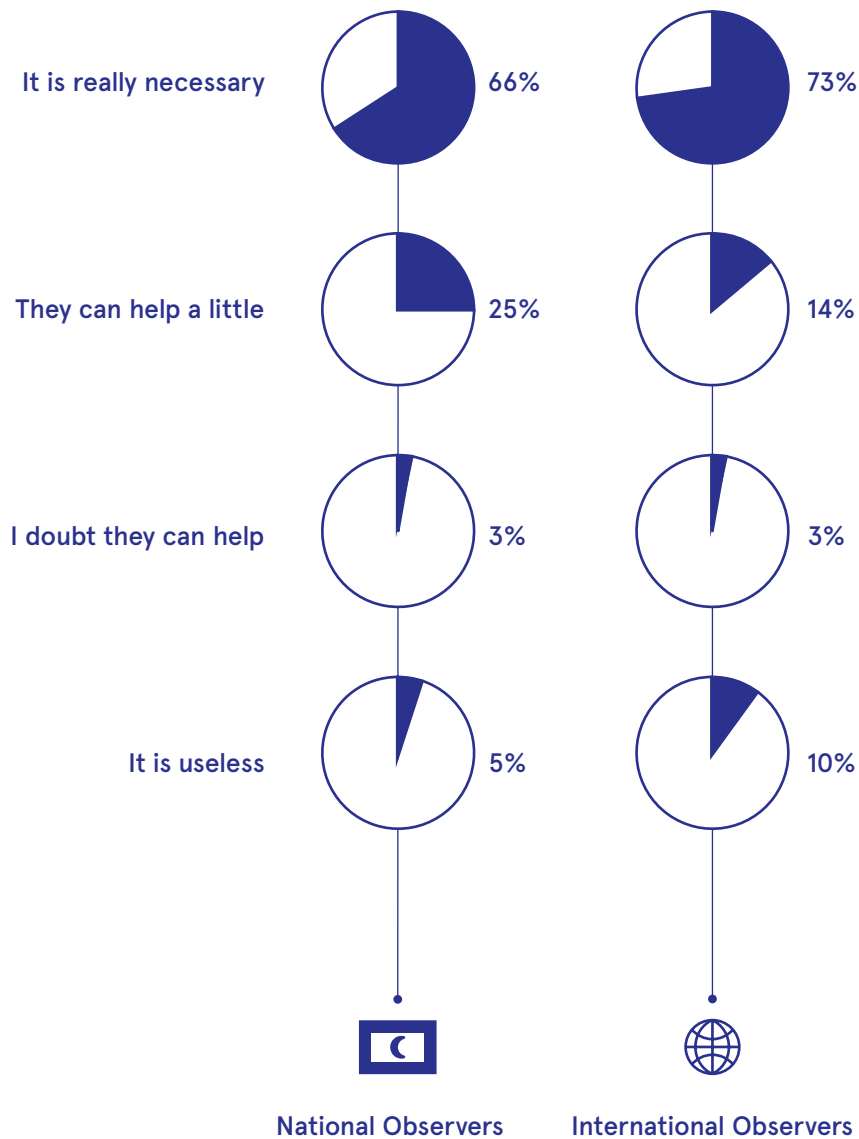
One way to shore up public confidence in the fairness of the electoral process is through the involvement of impartial election observers. And so it is not unusual at all for election observers to be present on election day in transitional democracies. Their goal, typically, is not to detect election fraud; it is to promote the transparency of the electoral process and to act as a deterrent to electoral irregularities. There is a longstanding tradition of international organizations, such as the U.N. or the Commonwealth, sending observers to elections around the world. And there is a growing tradition for the involvement of non-partisan domestic observer groups in transitional elections.

There is overwhelming public support for the presence of observers in the 2013 Presidential Elections in the Maldives. The Democracy Survey asked:

“Do you think that the involvement of international / national observers is necessary to guarantee a transparent election”?

FIGURE 3.2

INVOLVE ELECTION OBSERVERS?



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: respondents were asked: "Speaking of the next election, do you think that the involvement of international observers / national observers is necessary to guarantee the transparent election?"

Fairness and Transparency

As the data summarized in Figure 3.2 shows nearly three out of four citizens (73%) thought that international observers were “really necessary” and about two thirds (66%) thought that national observers were “really necessary.” Only a tiny minority of the public viewed the involvement of observers as “useless” or doubted that observers could “help”.

The sorry reality is that election outcomes can be skewed in a variety of ways. In some countries, the names of citizens are deliberately omitted from the voter registry or necessary identity cards are withheld, or distributed, in partisan ways. Records reveal that dead people have somehow voted. Aggressive political parties sometimes intimidate voters or conduct illegal activities during campaigns. Then again, vote counting procedures have sometimes been called into question. Biases in the media coverage and the use of state resources to bolster the efforts of incumbent political parties can also shape electoral outcomes unfairly. Charges of various combinations of these kinds of nefarious practices are commonplace in transitional elections, particularly in divided societies.

The Maldives is no exception. ●

VOTE BUYING

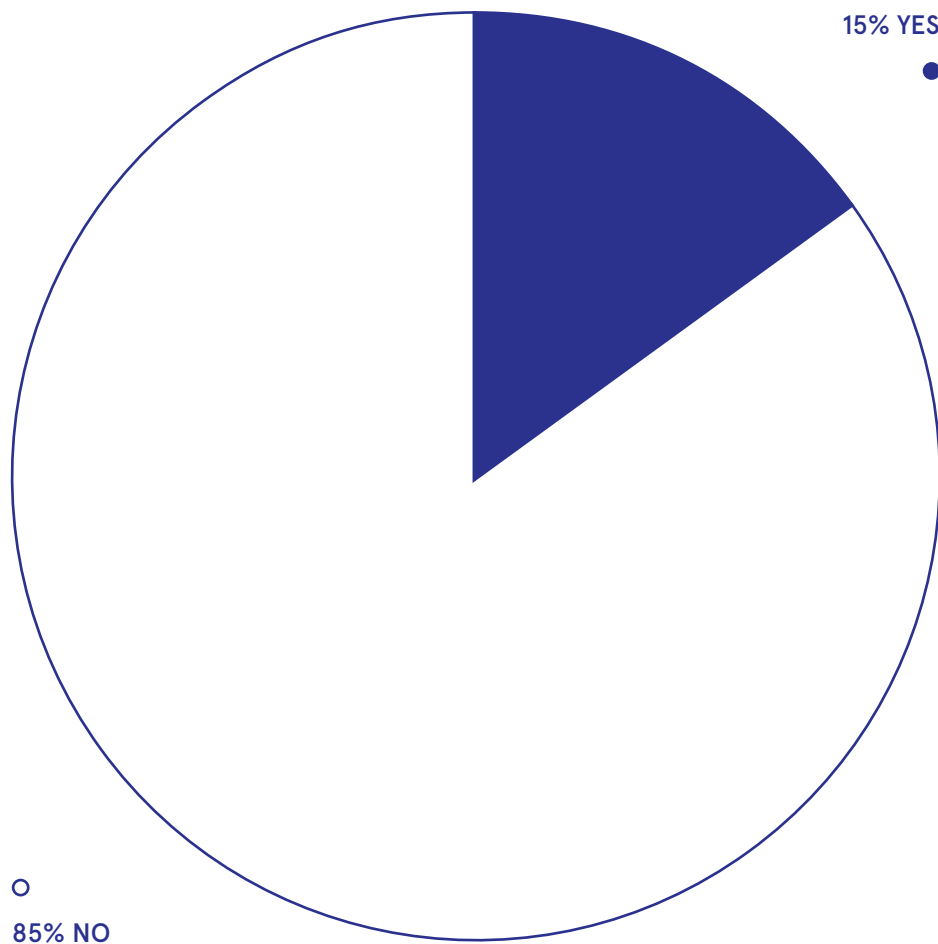
Much of the street talk during the campaign in 2013 raised concerns about vote-buying, offering citizens an incentive, monetary or otherwise, to cast their ballot in favor of one party or another. Some speculated that vote-buying was widespread. Others countered that it was “not a serious problem.” The Democracy Survey probed this issue.

Respondents were told: “There has been some talk about vote buying in Maldivian elections: and they were then asked directly: “has anyone ever offered you, personally, money or any other incentives for your vote?”

The results are surprising. An astonishing 15% of respondents reported that they had been offered money or other incentives in exchange for their vote.

FIGURE 3.3

OFFERED YOU A BRIBE?



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: respondents were asked "in 2013, we are having a new presidential election. How much do you trust that the Election Commission is going to perform in a fair and unbiased way?"

TABLE 3.3

WERE YOU OFFERED A BRIBE FOR YOUR VOTE?

Gender	Yes	No
Male	10	90
Female	21	79
Education		
Low	10	90
High	20	80
Age		
18 – 25	18	82
26 – 35	19	81
36 – 45	15	85
46 – 55	6	94
55+	8	92
Income		
Low	15	85
Medium	19	81
High	22	78

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: 1. respondents were asked "there has been some talk about vote buying in Maldivian elections. Has anyone ever offered you personally money or any other incentives for your vote?"

2. "What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?"
 "Low education" = Secondary school or less, "high" = college and university educated.

Vote Buying

A more detailed analysis of background factors (Table 3.3) indicates some systematic variations in citizens' responses. Women and those with higher levels of formal education are twice as likely as their male and lesser educated counterparts to report that they have been offered bribes for their vote. And, once again, there is evidence of an age gradient; younger people are significantly more likely to report that they had been offered bribes. It is reasonable to suppose that poorer people would be more vulnerable targets for vote buying than those from upper income groups. Admissions about illegal activities are usually underreported in surveys. These data, then, point to a clear conclusion: vote buying is widespread problem in the Maldives. ●

TO VOTE OR NOT TO VOTE

Voting is a form of political participation that deserves particular attention not least of because it is the main mechanism by which citizens hold elected leaders and legislators accountable. The assumption in democratic countries is that all eligible citizens should in practice be able to vote. The corresponding expectation is that citizens are interested and informed, and that they will exercise that right. Practice falls short of these ideals even in open, mature and stable democracies. Most citizens vote out of a sense of duty (Blais 2000). But there are a variety of other factors that explain variations in levels of voter turnout. Electoral rules matter. Proportional Representation rules, for example, tend to promote higher levels of voter turnout than other rules. (Banducci and Karp 2009). The type of election also matters. Local and municipal elections tend to have lower levels of voter turnout than national elections. To explore what factors are related to voting in the Maldives, all respondents were asked:

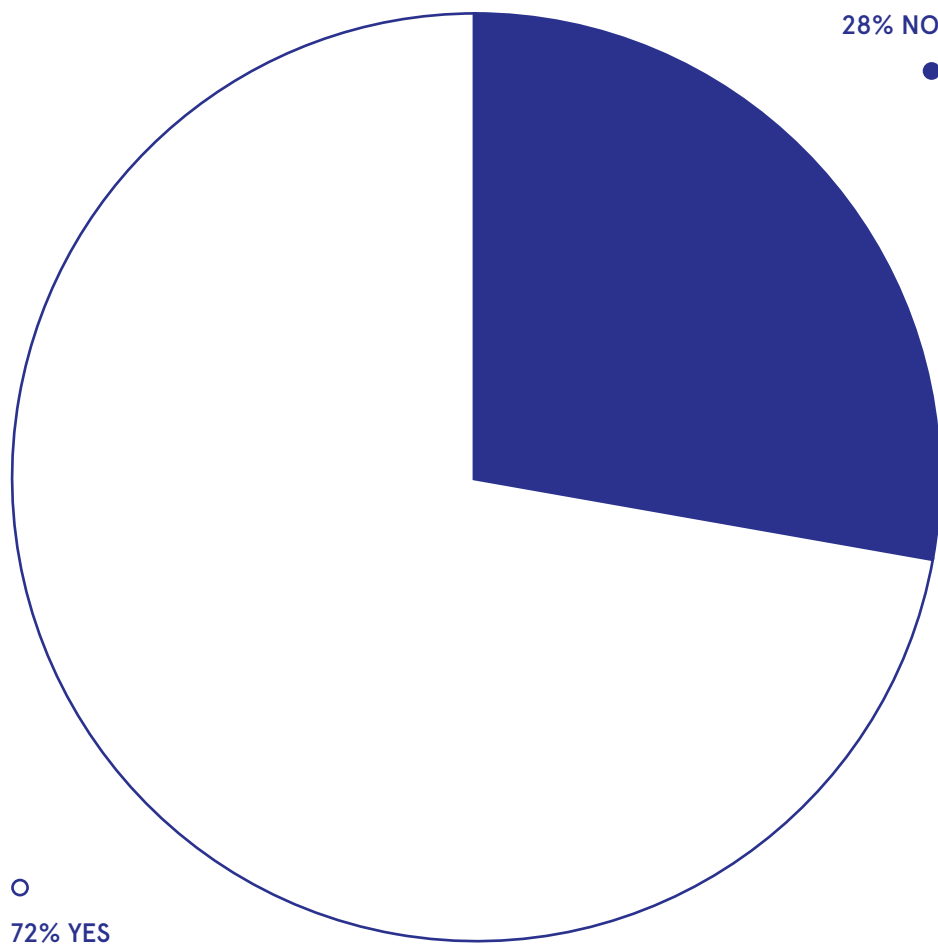
“Do you happen to recall if you voted in the 2011 Local Council Elections?”

As Figure 3.4 shows, some 72% of respondents indicated that they did vote in that local council election. Some 28% admitted that they did not.¹¹

¹¹ Most election related surveys around the world tend to overreport voting levels somewhat. This is usually attributable to social desirability effects; people recognize that it is a “civic duty” to vote.

FIGURE 3.4

VOTED IN 2011 LOCAL ELECTIONS



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: respondents were asked: "Speaking of the next election, do you think that the involvement of international observers / national observers is necessary to guarantee the transparent election?"

TABLE 3.4

VOTED IN THE LOCAL ELECTION

Gender	No	Yes
Male	30	70
Female	26	74
Education		
Low	13	87
High	37	63
Age		
18 – 25	53	47
26 – 35	20	80
36 – 45	12	88
46 – 55	12	88
55+	5	95
Income		
Low	23	77
Medium	28	72
High	40	60

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

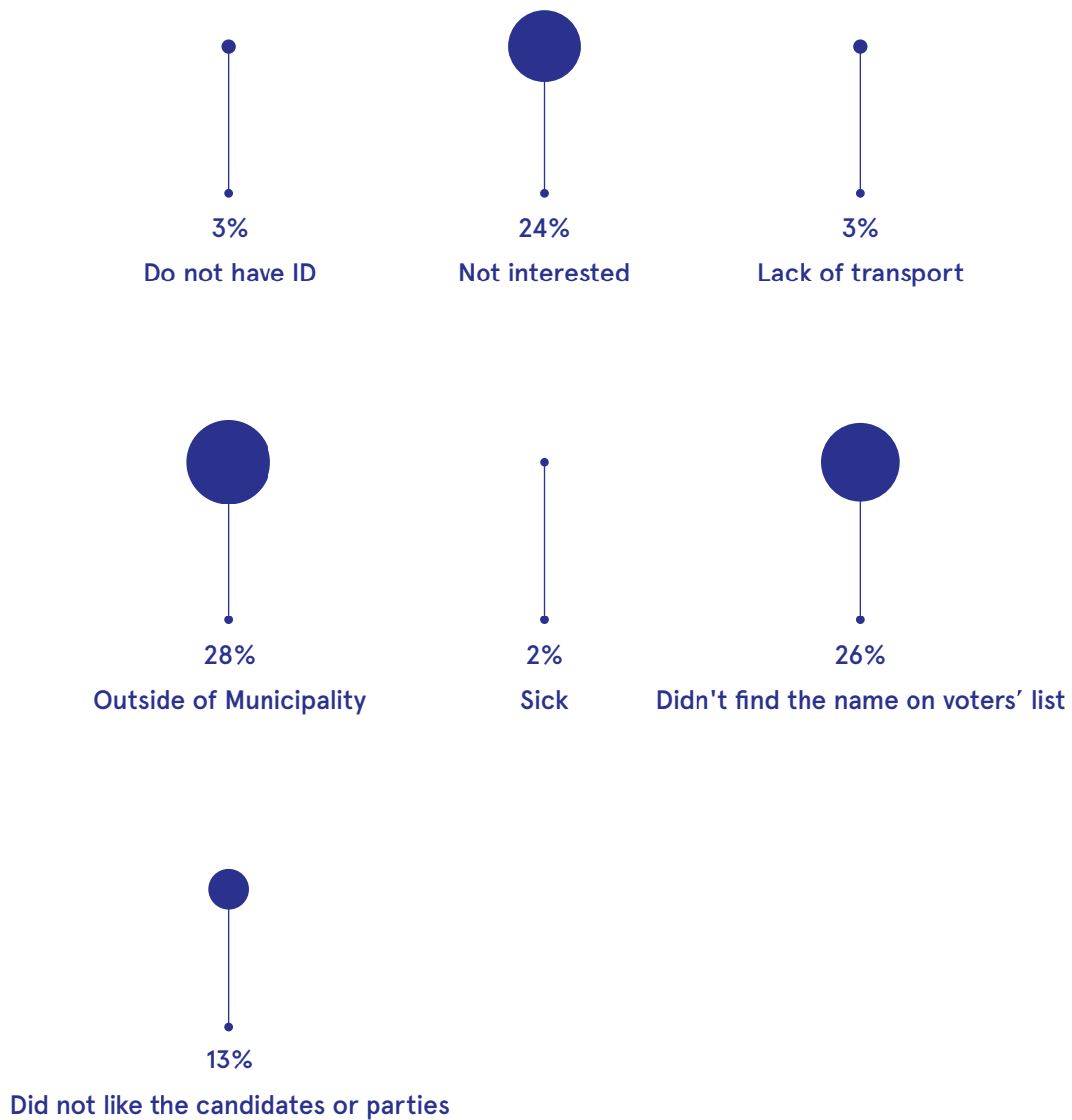
To Vote or Not to Vote

Voting research around the world reports strikingly similar patterns when it comes explaining variations in voter turnout. Levels of voter turnout are typically higher among men, older citizens, and those with higher levels of education and income. And as the data summarized in Table 3.4 indicate there is evidence of some similar findings when it comes to reported voter turnout for the 2011 Local Council Elections in the Maldives.

But there are also some exceptions. The levels of voter turnout are marginally higher among women, but the difference is not statistically significant. Recall that women express more interest in , and more knowledge about, politics than men. There is clear evidence of an age gradient; older citizens are more likely to vote than their younger counterparts. But there are also departures from the general pattern. In the case of these elections more educated and higher income citizens, evidently, were not more likely to vote than their lower income and education counterparts. The Democracy Survey asked those who did not vote in the election, what was their reason for not voting. The distribution of responses to that follow-up question is summarized in Figure 3.5.

FIGURE 3.5

REASONS FOR NON-VOTING



SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: respondents who did not vote in the 2011 Local Council election were asked to answer the reason why they did not vote.

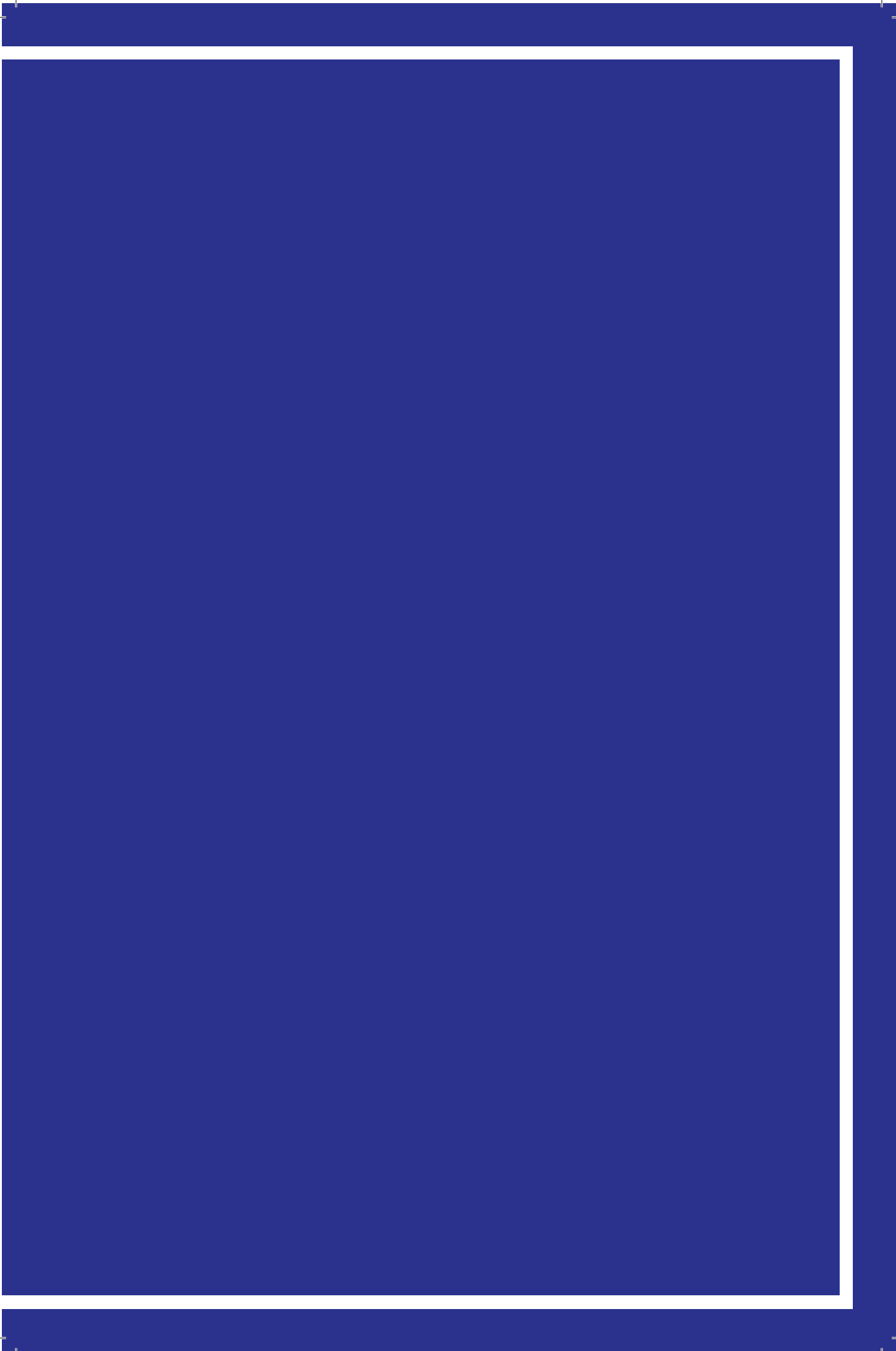
To Vote or Not to Vote

Of the 28% of non-voters, about one third supplied reasons for why they did not vote in that election: about one quarter (24%) said they were “not interested” and another 13% said that they did not like the candidates or parties. About one third of the non-voters supplied “administrative reasons”; they didn’t find their name on the voters’ list (26%) or they did not have their identification cards (3%). The rest of the non-voters cited logistical reasons. They were “away” (28%), were “sick” (2%) or “did not have transportation” (3%).

To decide not to vote is a reasonable choice made by citizens in many countries; voting is an act of free will. To be prevented from voting, however, is quite a different matter. The fact that over one quarter of all non-voters (26%) did not vote because they could not find their name on the voter list is a problematical administrative barrier to citizen participation. It is a finding that warrants deeper investigation. ●

PART 4

Parties and leaders



PARTIES AND LEADERS

The data have very clearly shown that many citizens do not think much of their political parties, or, for that matter, the office of the President. The Democracy Survey asked respondents more detailed questions about specific political parties and specific leaders. Respondents were presented with a standard thermometer scale and asked to rate each political party and each political leader. The idea behind thermometer scales is intuitively easy to understand: the higher the thermometer rating, on a range from zero (very cold) to 100 (very hot), the warmer the respondent feels about the political party or leader. On these scales the midpoint 50 is taken to mean that the respondent does not care about a leader, or a party, one way or another. They are indifferent. If a respondent gives a leader (or party) a score above 50, a “warm” rating, then it means that they like the leader / party. The higher the score the more they like the leader/party.

The place to begin is with the aggregate warm/cold evaluations: how do all citizens generally rate each political party and each leader? Do leaders get a score that is higher than score given to the party they lead? That is a leadership “dividend”? Or do the leader ratings fall below that of the score people give the political party they lead? That would signify a leadership deficit. In effect, people might support a particular party in spite of the leader or because of a leader.

Used in combination, these ratings can also shed light on how people who support one party feel about other leaders and other parties, or how people who support one leader feel about other leaders.

Table 4.1 contains a great deal of information.

TABLE 4.1

THERMOMETER SCORES FOR POLITICAL PARTIES & LEADERS

Party Leader	Political Parties			Average Leader Rating
	PPM	MDP	JP	
Abdulla Yameen PPM	63	12	41	26
Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, PPM	82	20	61	42
Mohamed Nasheed MDP	25	92	32	48
Qasim Ibrahim JP	55	26	79	41
Aggregated party rating	34	47	37	
How supporters rate their own party	90	94	86	

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Questions: 1. "Using the scale from 0 to 100, how do you feel about the following political parties who frequently appear on the news." Respondents were given a list of political parties.

2. PPM = Progressive Party of Maldives, MDP = Maldivian Democratic Party, and JP = Jumhooree Party.

Part 4 : Parties and Leaders

The bold row scores at the bottom of Table 4.1 corroborate evidence presented earlier: on average citizens do not feel “warm” about any of the political parties; all score below 50. The average leader ratings tell a similar story. No leader scores over 50, although Nasheed comes closest with a score of 48. And Yameen does worst with a leader rating of only 26.

But as we would expect, these average ratings mask substantial variations. PPM supporters like Gayoom (82) quite a lot, but MDP supporters like their leader even more; they give him a score of 92. Notice, though, that PPM supporters rate their party higher (90) than their leader (82). In effect, Gayoom has a “leader deficit” of some 8 points. MDP supporters give their leader virtually the same score that they give their party.¹²

¹² The difference is not statistically significant.

Parties and Leaders

Another noteworthy finding is that there are significant asymmetries across leader and party evaluations. MDP supporters, for example, dislike Yameen (12) and Gayoom (20) significantly more than PPM supporters dislike Nasheed (25).

Are there significant differences in the socio-demographic profiles of the people who support these different political parties? The short answer is “yes”. The summary data supporting that conclusion are reported in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILES OF PARTY SUPPORTERS

Gender	PPM	MDP	DRP	JP
Male	54	43	49	50
Female	46	57	51	50
Education				
Low	50	34	58	48
High	50	66	42	52
Age				
Under 35	53	65	46	56
35 and older	47	35	54	44
Income				
Low	54	54	58	54
Medium	36	36	35	35
High	10	10	7	11

SOURCE: THE MALDIVIAN SURVEY OF DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE, 2013

Notes: 1. "Using the scale from 0 to 100, how do you feel about the following political parties who frequently appear on the news." Respondents were given a list of political parties.

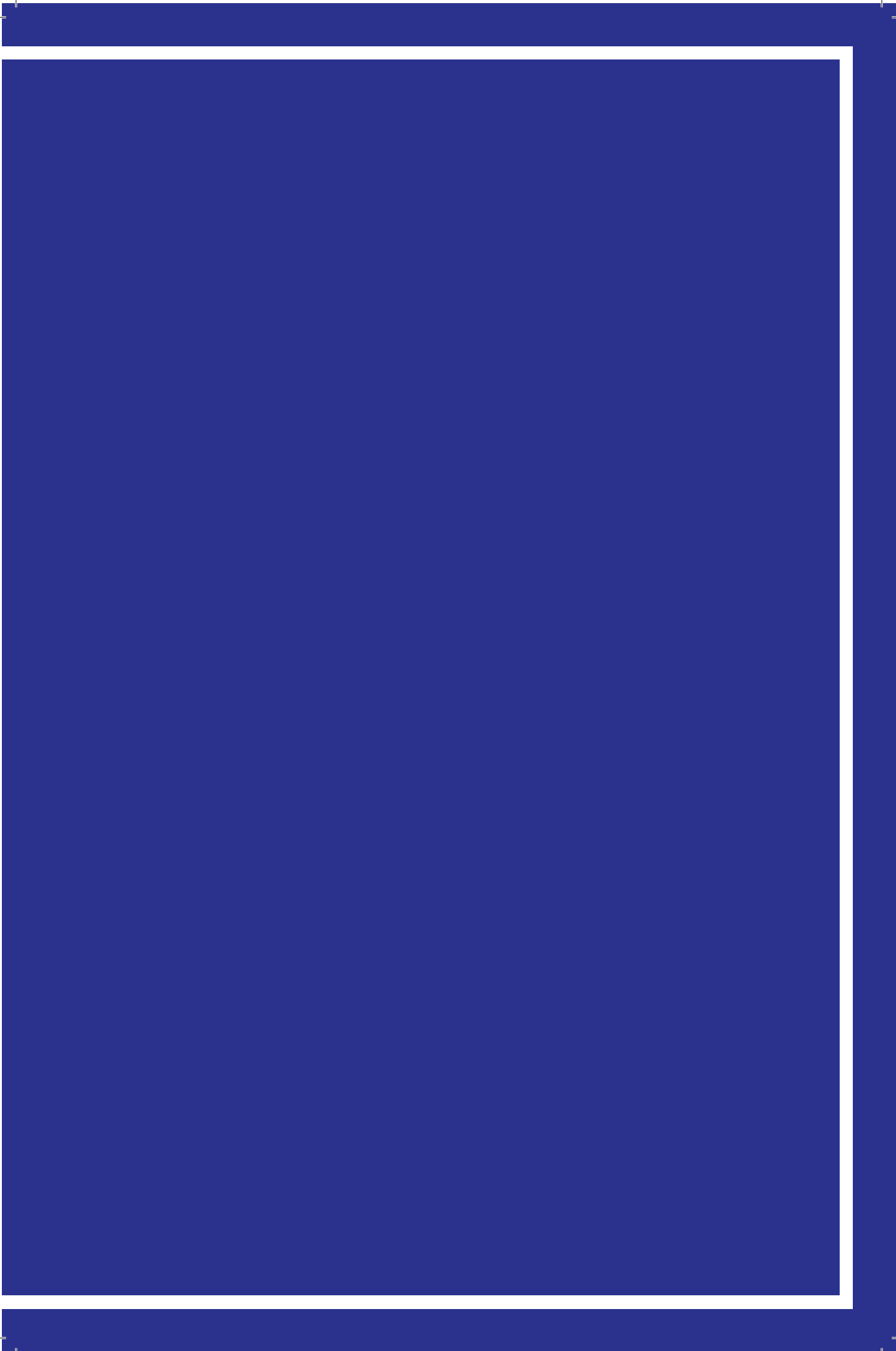
2. PPM = Progressive Party of Maldives, MDP = Maldivian Democratic Party, DRP = Dhivehi Rayyithunge Party, and JP = Jumhooree Party.

3. "What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?" "Low education" = Secondary school or less, "high" = college and university educated.

Parties and Leaders

First, there is evidence of a significant gender gap. Women form a larger support base of the MDP than for any of the other political parties. Indeed, when all of the data are considered together, the profile of MDP supporters turns out to be the mirror image of the support base of the DRP. On balance, MDP supporters are more female, younger and better educated. DRP supporters tend to be older, have somewhat lower levels of formal education and have lower incomes than their MDP counterparts. PPM supporters, by contrast, reflect a cross-section of these socio-demographic categories. Their gender, education, age and income profiles match the distributions of the general population reasonably closely. They are somewhat younger than DRP supporters, but not as youth orientated as the MDP. With the possible exception of the DRP, supporters of the other political parties have a similar income profile. ●

PART 5
Conclusions



CONCLUSIONS

The democracy survey has yielded a great deal of information about the state of Maldivian political culture. What are the main conclusions to emerge from findings? There are several:

First, there is no question that citizens are troubled about the political status quo. Several different findings underscore the same theme. When asked an open ended question probing views about “the most important issue facing the country” more than 3 out of 4 respondents nominated “political issues”. And the most prominent specific responses included “conflict,” “the party system,” “the lack of democracy,” and “corruption”. When asked to evaluate about “how democracy works in the country” half of all respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the way “democracy works”. Some pointedly responded, “the Maldives is not a democracy”.

A second strand of evidence unequivocally reinforces that same theme from a somewhat different vantage point. The legitimacy of democratic regimes rests, in part, on public support for representative institutions. Two striking findings emerged from those data. First, out of the 15 institutions considered, citizens expressed the least confidence in political parties and parliament. In fact, Maldivians were significantly more likely to report that they had more confidence in the army (34%) and the police (32%) than in political parties (8%) or parliament (11%). In this respect the states authoritative institutions, trump the states representative institutions.

Conclusions

A third piece of evidence adds nuance to this interpretation. It's not at all clear that citizens have positive associations with the idea of democracy. There is no more striking evidence of the extent to which the citizens are alienated from "politics as usual" as the data concerning cynicism. Politicians are rarely held in high esteem in any country. What is truly remarkable about these results is the extent to which these outlooks are embraced by the vast majority of the public.

Given evidence of widespread dissatisfaction with the way democracy works, lack of confidence in such representative institutions as political parties, and high levels of cynicism all provide good reasons to expect that Maldivian citizens are disengaged. But such a sweeping conclusion is not entirely warranted. Citizens are interested in politics and they are relatively knowledgeable: they are cognitively engaged. They are also relatively active, by international standards, in the life of their communities. And community life, arguably, is the incubator and training ground for political action in the political life of the broader community. Citizens do embrace such key democratic values as accepting individual responsibility for "getting ahead," even though they do not endorse enthusiastically such other democratic values as "gender equality". And they do embrace "dialogue" as the "best way to solve the problems of the country".

Part 5 : Conclusion

The democracy survey was undertaken in the run up to the presidential elections and it probed attitudes to the electoral environment. Maldivians do not paint all political institutions with the same brush. On balance, the majority believe that the Elections Commission could be trusted to deliver a fair and unbiased result. Most troubling in this respect is the evidence of vote buying: some 15% of all respondents responded that they had personally being offered some material inducement in exchange for their vote.

Taken as a whole, the large picture emerging from the democracy survey indicates that the Maldives face a number of significant challenges. One challenge, clearly, faces political parties and parliament. How can they build citizen confidence in those critical institutions? Transitional democracies are not sustainable in the absence of representative institutions that lack public support. A second challenge confronts government institutions more broadly. If there is such widespread belief that the government does not care about them, then what can government do to reconnect with the public? And aside from matters of the responsiveness and accountability, however, are the individual responsibilities of citizens themselves.

Conclusions

It's not at all clear that Maldivians enthusiastically embrace such democratic values as equality.

What can then be done to deepen commitment to these kinds of principles and to increase public understandings of the positive attributes of democratic life?

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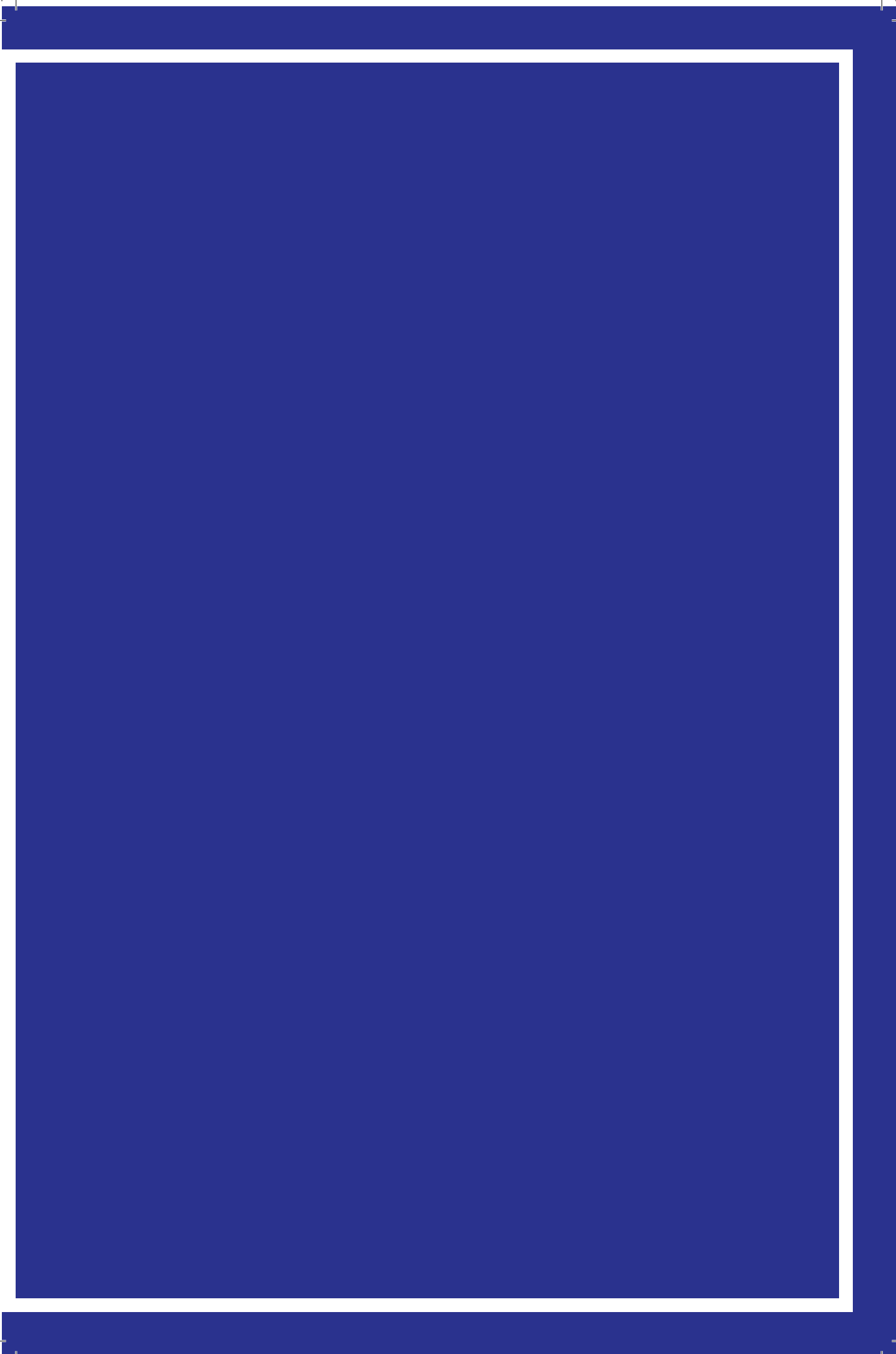
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