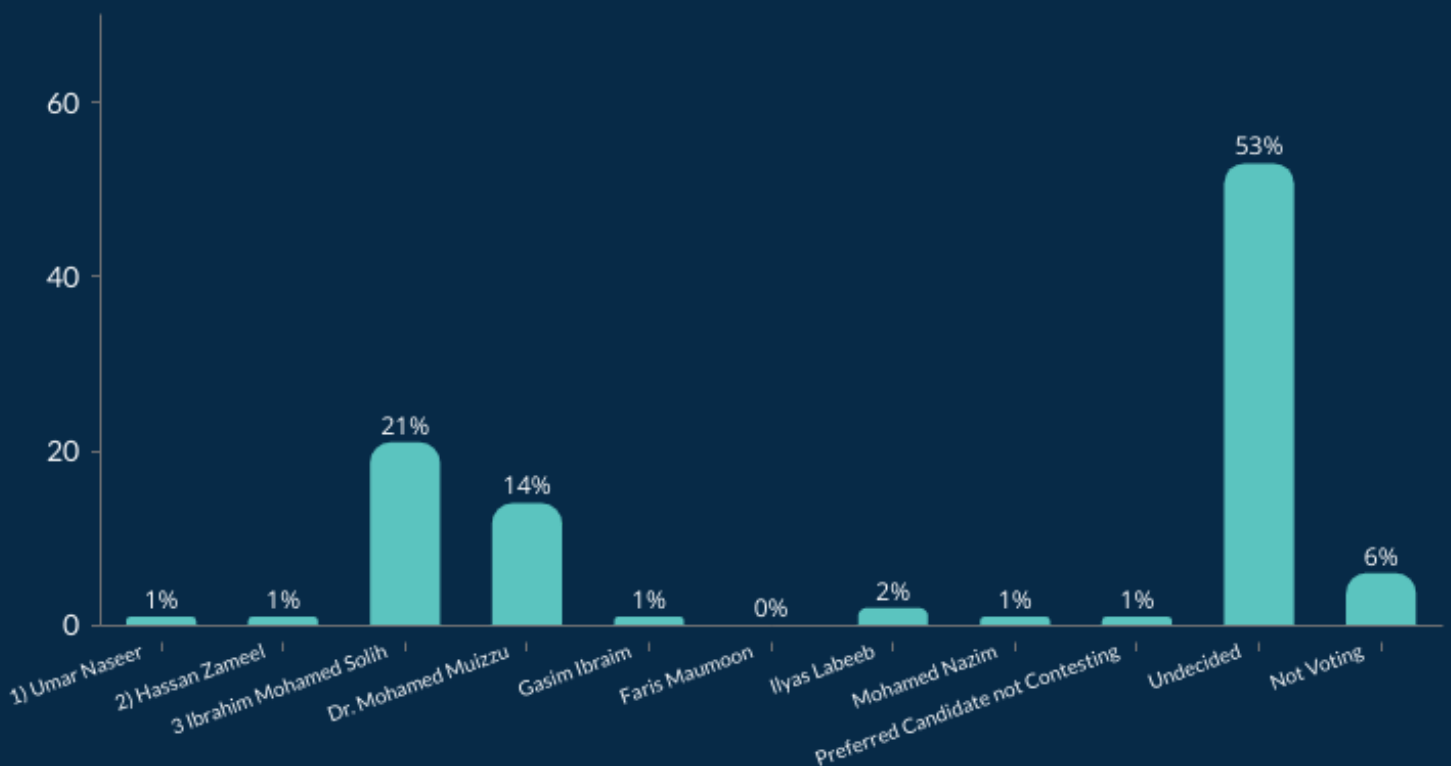# BAANI

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

BAANI ELECTION POLL- SNAPSHOT

AUGUST 2023 POLL IN NUMBERS

WE ASKED MALDIVIANS WHO THEY WOULD VOTE FOR

IF AN ELECTION WERE TO BE HELD TOMORROW

Here are their answers

Candidate preference (weighted)

Candidate	Percentage
1) Umar Naseer	1%
2) Hassan Zameel	1%
3 Ibrahim Mohamed Solih	21%
Dr. Mohamed Muizzu	14%
Gasim Ibraim	1%
Faris Maumoon	0%
Ilyas Labeeb	2%
Mohamed Nazim	1%
Preferred Candidate not Contesting	1%
Undecided	53%
Not Voting	6%

IN AUGUST

WE CALLED

5827

RANDOMLY GENERATED NUMBERS

OF THOSE

384 Calls were successful
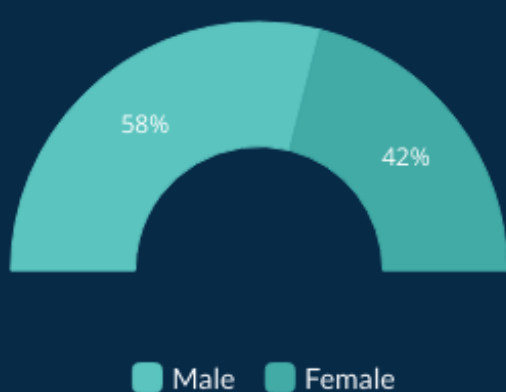540 Calls were rejected
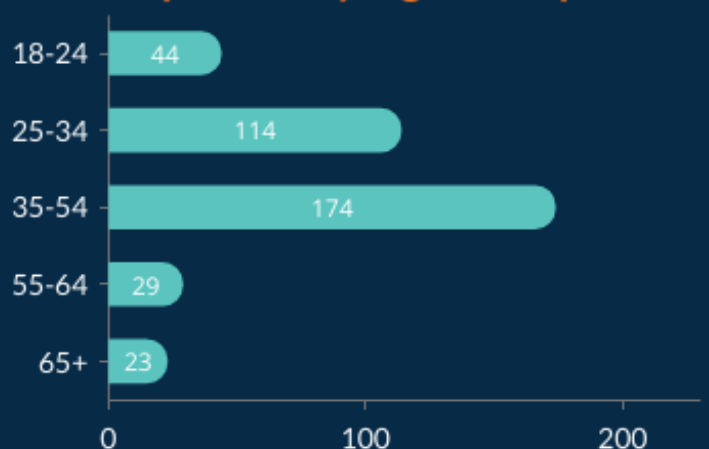2252 Were either switched off or did not pick up
2651 Numbers were inactive
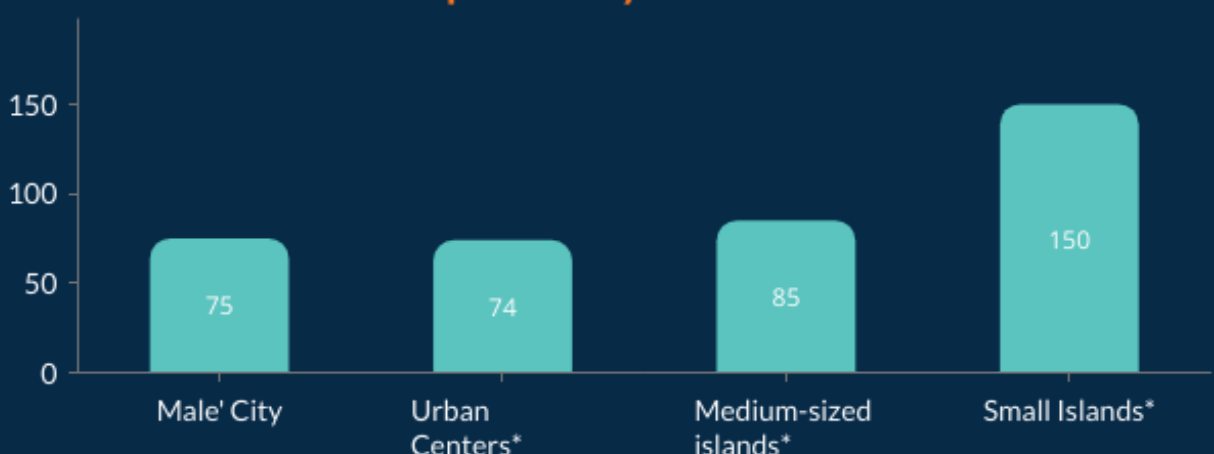
REQUIRED SAMPLE FOR THE POLL

384 RESPONSES

Responses by Gender

58% Male
42% Female

- Male
- Female

Responses by Age Groups

Age Group	Responses
18-24	44
25-34	114
35-54	174
55-64	29
65+	23

Responses by Location

Location	Responses
Male' City	75
Urban Centers*	74
Medium-sized islands*	85
Small Islands*	150

* Urban Centers - Islands with population higher than 5000.
* Medium-sized - Islands with population higher than 1500
* Small islands - Islands with population less than 1500

THE POLL RESULTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE VOTING POPULATION OF THE MALDIVES, WITH A 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL AND A 5% MARGIN OF ERROR. THIS MEANS THAT IF THE POLL WAS CONDUCTED MULTIPLE TIMES, 95% OF THE TIME THE RESULTS WOULD BE WITHIN 5% OF THE RESULTS SHOWN.

Baani Election Poll 2023 - August Report

A public information project by the Baani Center for International Policy

23 August 2023

Baani Election Poll - August 2023 Report

Introduction

Our opinion poll gauges the popularity of all the main political leaders through a random telephone interview. The poll is conducted monthly, to allow us to see how politicians' popularity shifts over time.

The poll follows internationally established methodology guidelines regarding sample size, as well as weighting for respondents' age and gender. Our poll has a 95% confidence level, with a 5% margin of error and is conducted in Dhivehi by a team of trained Maldivian enumerators.

Our Polling Methodology

Sample Size
In the 2019 parliamentary election, 264,442 individuals were eligible to vote.[1] Based on this figure,, we need to conduct a minimum of 384 telephone interviews to generate results with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. This means that if the survey was conducted multiple times, 95% of the time the results would be within 5% of the results in this report.

The Questionnaire
The telephone questionnaire collected the following information from each participant:

1. Citizenship(Q1)
2. Age (Q2)
3. Gender (Q3)
4. Permanently registered island (voting constituency) (Q4)
5. Preferred candidate (Q5)
6. Preferred political party (Q6)

Information was only collected from Maldivians, who are 18 years of age at the time of the call. The Poll was conducted in Dhivehi over the phone.

To determine respondents' preferred political candidate, we asked the following open-ended question: *Q4) If a presidential election was held tomorrow, which of the candidates would you vote for?*

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[1] **http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/yearbook/2021/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/06/20.5.pdf**

The candidates listed in the questionnaire reflect the final candidate list announced by the Elections Commission.. The question helped us capture the respondents' preference at the time of the survey.

The full questionnaire (Dhivehi and English) can be found at Annex 1.

Phone Number generation
To achieve the required sample size of 380 telephone interviews, we estimated having to call around 3,800 numbers, assuming a success rate of 10 per cent. As we were unable to obtain a list of active mobile phone numbers from telecom operators we had to generate our own list. To do this, we used a random number generator to generate two separate lists of 7 digit numbers. The first list consisted of numbers that begin with a "7" (Dhiraagu Numbers), and the second list consisted of numbers that begin with a "9" (Ooredoo numbers). The two lists were then merged and randomized to create a fully random list of phone numbers.

Polling Period
To ensure that we capture voters' preferences in a timely manner, we conducted telephone interviews over a four-day period. A survey conducted over a longer period could potentially obscure the data set as respondents would be influenced by political events. Data collection began on August 14 and concluded on August 17.

Enumeration
To conduct the survey we employed a team of experienced Maldivian enumerators and trained them. The enumerators input the data gathered from the surveys into our data collection tool. Additionally, the enumerators tracked the number of successful calls and deactivated numbers, allowing us to track response rates.

Data Weighting
In order to weight the data, we use publicly available information to determine our desired makeup of the sample, which was then compared to our actual sample. A weighting factor for each of our data categories (age and gender) was then determined and used to calculate a weighted result.

Safety Measures

We take data safety seriously and took the following measures to protect our data:

1) Our data is stored securely with limited access.
2) Following each poll the phone number lists will be stored only for a period of one month and will not be shared with third parties, to ensure privacy of survey respondents.
3) All data sharing happens through double-encrypted services.

Prior to polling we informed telecom operators, Maldives Police Service, National Bureau of Statistics and the Communication Authority of Maldives of our plans to conduct polling.

Limitations

While we put in extensive efforts to ensure our polling methodology is rigourous, no polling survey is perfect. Following are the limitations we encountered:

1) Data weighting - We have been unable to obtain location based demographic data from the Elections Commission. As a result, all location based results in this poll are not weighted. We did model location-based weighting by using our own estimates – and it affected the overall poll results by less than 1 percent. Nevertheless, in future polls, we hope to obtain the necessary data from the Elections Commission in order to allow location based weighting.
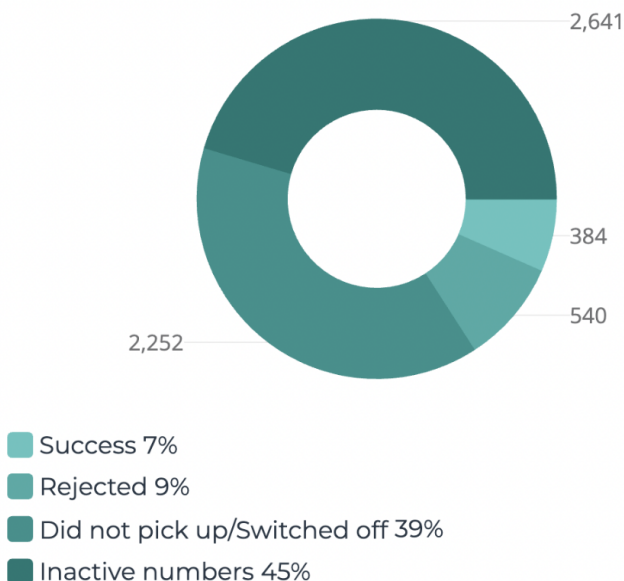
Results

Sample

During the August enumeration period we made a total of 5,817 telephone calls.

As seen in **Figure 1.1**, of the 5,817 calls, 384 were successful responses while 540 were persons who did not want to participate in the survey. Meanwhile, 2,252 numbers were either switched off or unresponsive and 2,641 phone numbers were inactive.

Figure 1.1: Total Calls Breakdown

2,641

384

540

2,252

- Success 7%
- Rejected 9%
- Did not pick up/Switched off 39%
- Inactive numbers 45%

As shown in **Figure 1.2**, 58 percent of the respondents were male while 42 percent of the respondents were female.

Baani weighted the gender data based on the results of the 2022 census, resulting in a weighted sample size of 196 male and 188 female responses.

Please note that all gender based analysis in this report will use the weighted data as opposed to the actual response data.

Figure 1.2 - Gender breakdown of responses

58%

42%

- Male
- Female
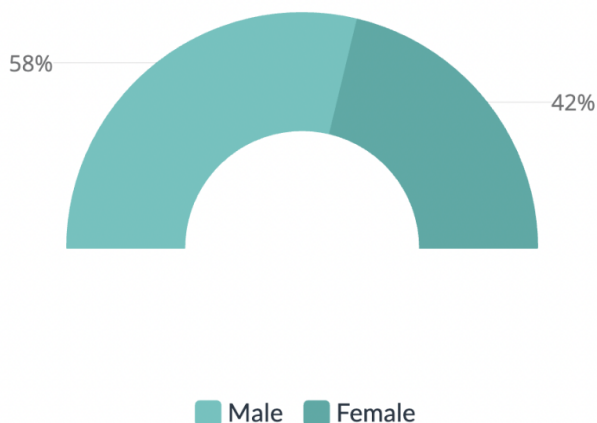
When looking at the different age groups (**Figure 1.3**), 11 percent respondents were between 18 to 25 years old, 30 percent were between 25 to 35 years old, 45 percent were between 35 to 54 years old, 8 percent were between 55 to 64 years old, and 6 percent were above 65.

Figure 1.3 - Age breakdown of responses
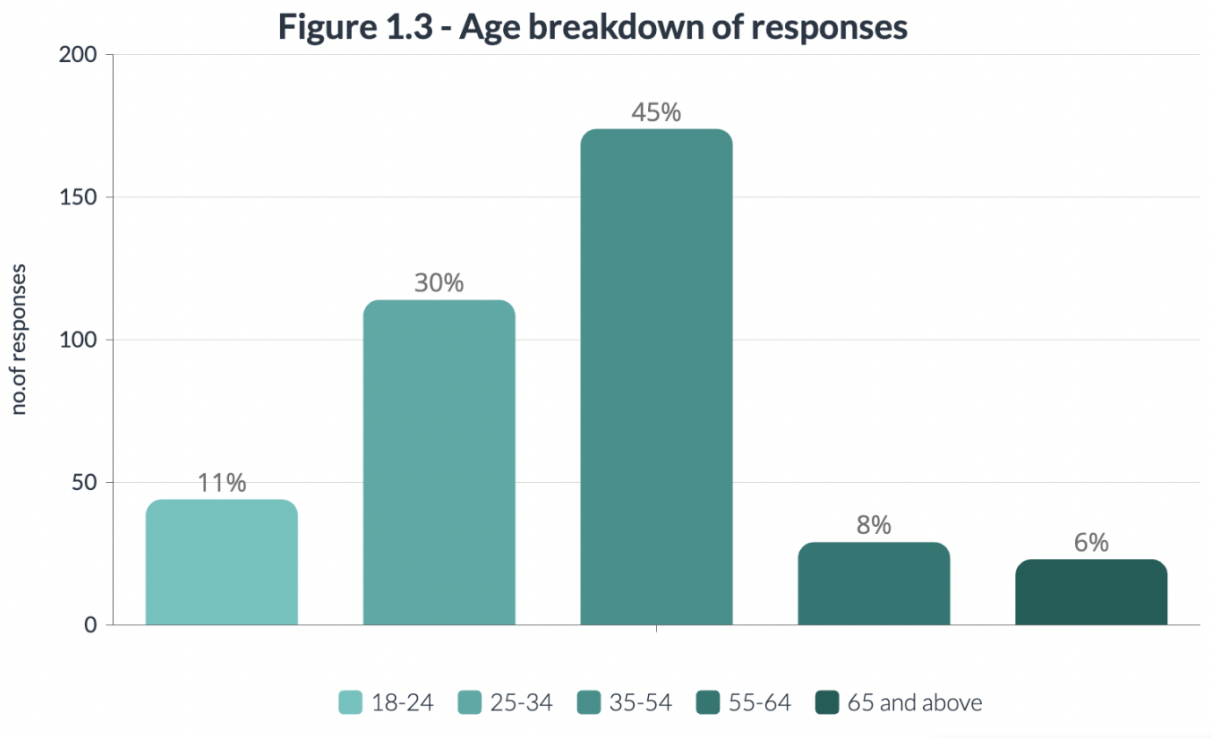
Here, again, we weighted the data using information from the 2022 census. All age based analysis below uses weighted data. The age weighting is as follows:

18 to 24 years - 60

25 to 34 years - 106

35 to 54 years - 150

55 to 64 years - 40

65 and above - 29

When looking at the geographic spread of the respondents (**Figure 1.4**), 20 percent of the respondents were from Male' City, 19 percent were from Urban Centers (islands with population above 5,000). Medium-sized island (population above 1,500) responses made up 22 percent of responses and 39 percent of the responses were from small islands (population below 1,500).

Figure 1.4 - Geographic breakdown of responses
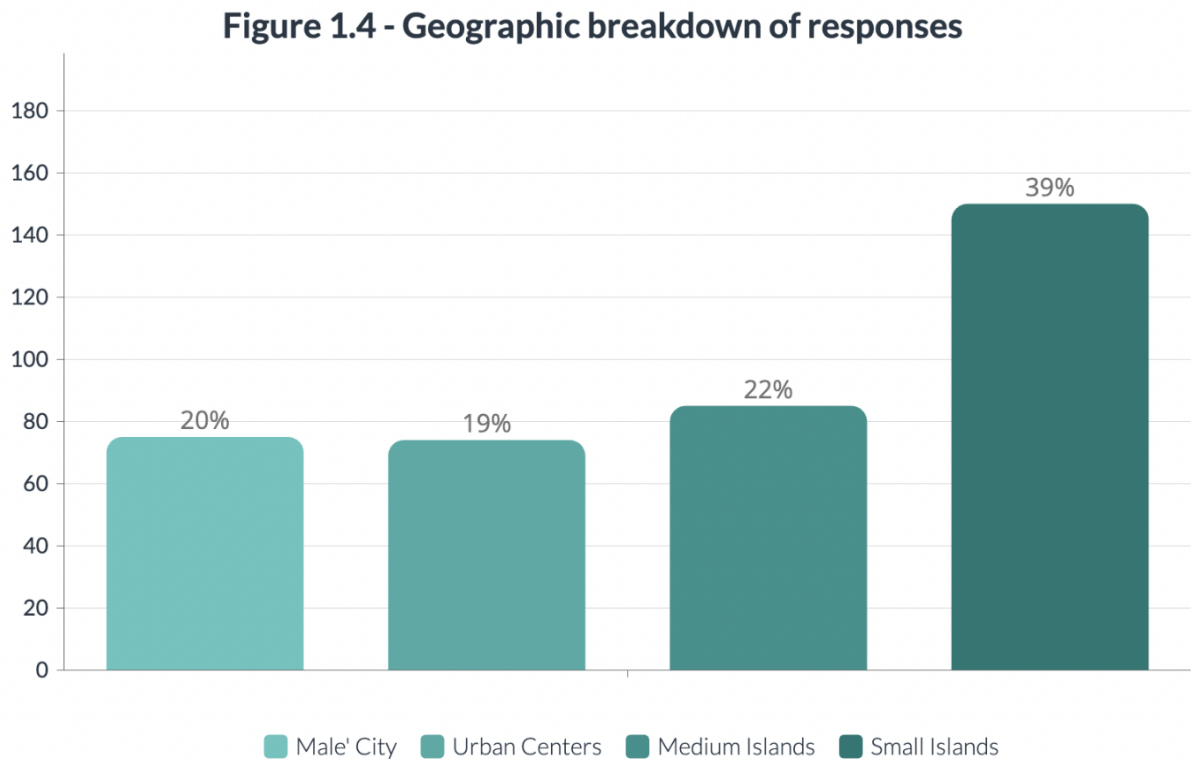
Since the 2022 census data records resident population, as opposed to the number of people registered to an island, we requested for a list of eligible voters disaggregated by location from the Elections Commission. However, this information was not available at the time of publication and we were unable to weight the data by location. If we had used the resident population figures from the census to weight the data, the results would have been heavily biased towards Male', the capital city. However, this would not have been useful since voting is based on the voter registry for each constituency, not on the resident population.

Preferred candidate

August's data (Figure 2.1) indicates that a majority of Maldivians (53%) are yet to decide on how they will vote in the upcoming election. President Solih leads the poll with 21% support, while PNC/PPM candidate Dr. Muizzu has 14%.

Figure 2.1 - Voter Preference

When asked who they would vote for if an election were to be held tomorrow (weighted)

Legend:
- 1) Umar Naseer
- 2) Hassan Zameel
- 3) Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
- 4) Dr. Mohamed Muizzu
- 5) Gasim Ibrahim
- 6) Faris Maumoon
- 7) Ilyas Labeeb
- 8) Mohamed Nazim
- Preferred Candidate Not Contesting
- Undecided
- Not Voting
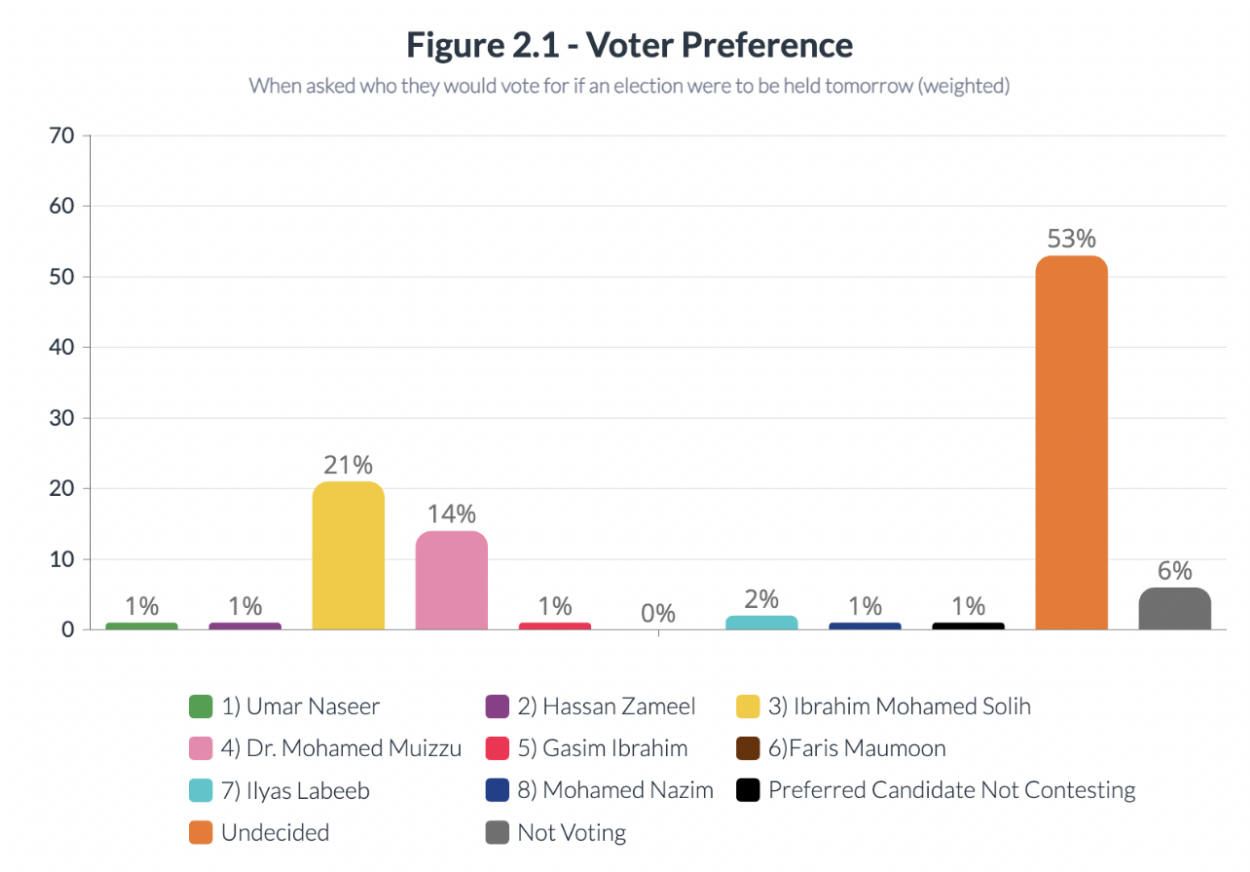
The Democrats candidate Ilyas Labeeb is the third most popular candidate with 2 percent support, while independent candidates Umar Naseer, Hassan Zameel, Jumhooree Party Leader Gasim Ibrahim, and Maldives National Party Leader Mohamed Nazim polled 1 percent. Meanwhile, 6% indicated that they will not vote.

When looking at preferences between men and women (**Figure 2.2**), President Solih was the most popular candidate across both Male (24%) and Female (18%) respondents. A higher percentage of women (59%) indicated that they are yet to decide on how they will vote compared to 47% of men. Dr Muizzu polled 14% with men, and 13% with women.

Figure 2.2 - Voter Preference Across Genders

When asked who they would vote for if an election were to be held tomorrow (weighted)

- ■ 1) Umar Naseer
- ■ 4) Dr. Mohamed Muizzu
- ■ 7) Ilyas Labeeb
- ■ Undecided
- ■ 2) Hassan Zameel
- ■ 5) Gasim Ibrahim
- ■ 8) Mohamed Nazim
- ■ Not Voting
- ■ 3) Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
- ■ 6)Faris Maumoon
- ■ Preferred Candidate Not Contesting
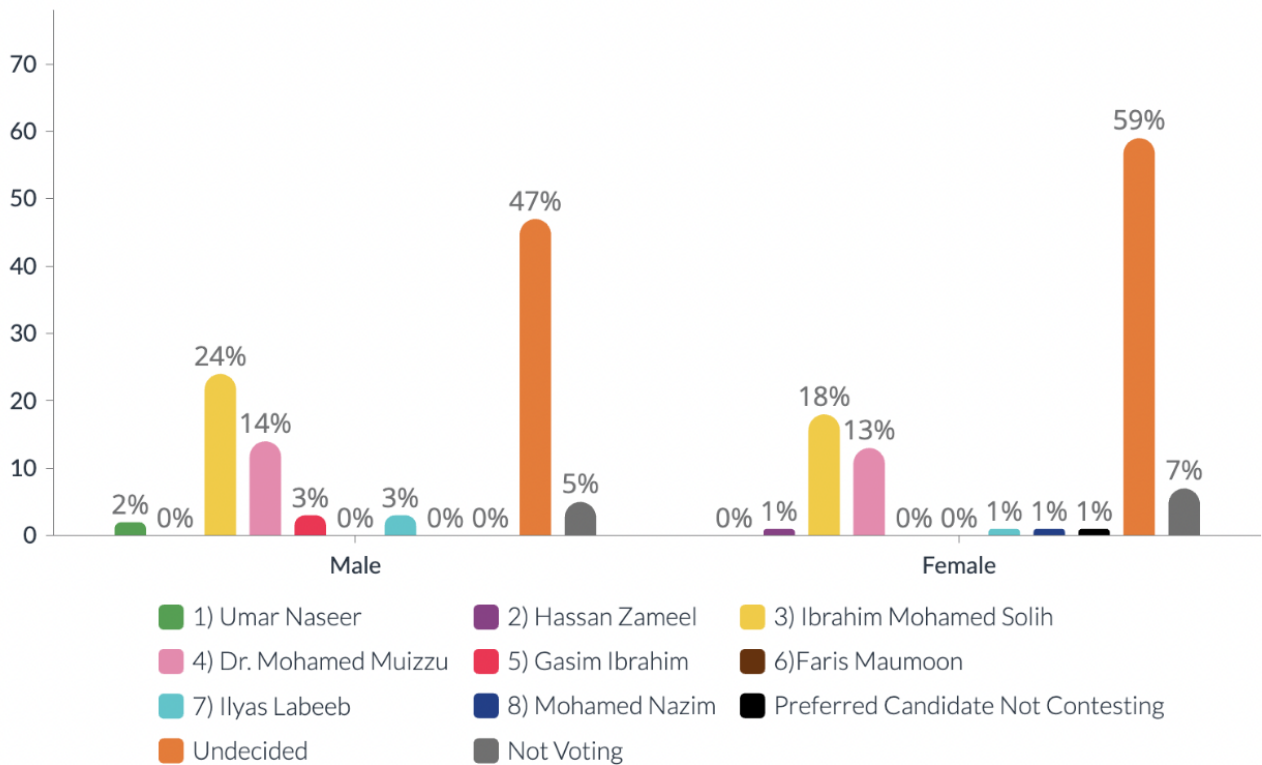
When looking at voter preference across age groups (Figure 2.3), President Solih was the most popular candidate amongst those between 18-24 years, 25-34 years and 35-54 years. Dr. Mohamed Muizzu was the most preferred candidate for those between 55-64 years, and is significantly more popular than President Solih in the 65+ group, with a lead of 26% to Solih's 4%.

Figure 2.3 - Voter Preference Across Age Groups
When asked who they would vote for if an election were to be held tomorrow (weighted)

Legend:
- 1) Umar Naseer
- 2) Hassan Zameel
- 3) Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
- 4) Dr. Mohamed Muizzu
- 5) Gasim Ibrahim
- 6) Faris Maumoon
- 7) Ilyas Labeeb
- 8) Mohamed Nazim
- Preferred Candidate Not Contesting
- Undecided
- Not Voting
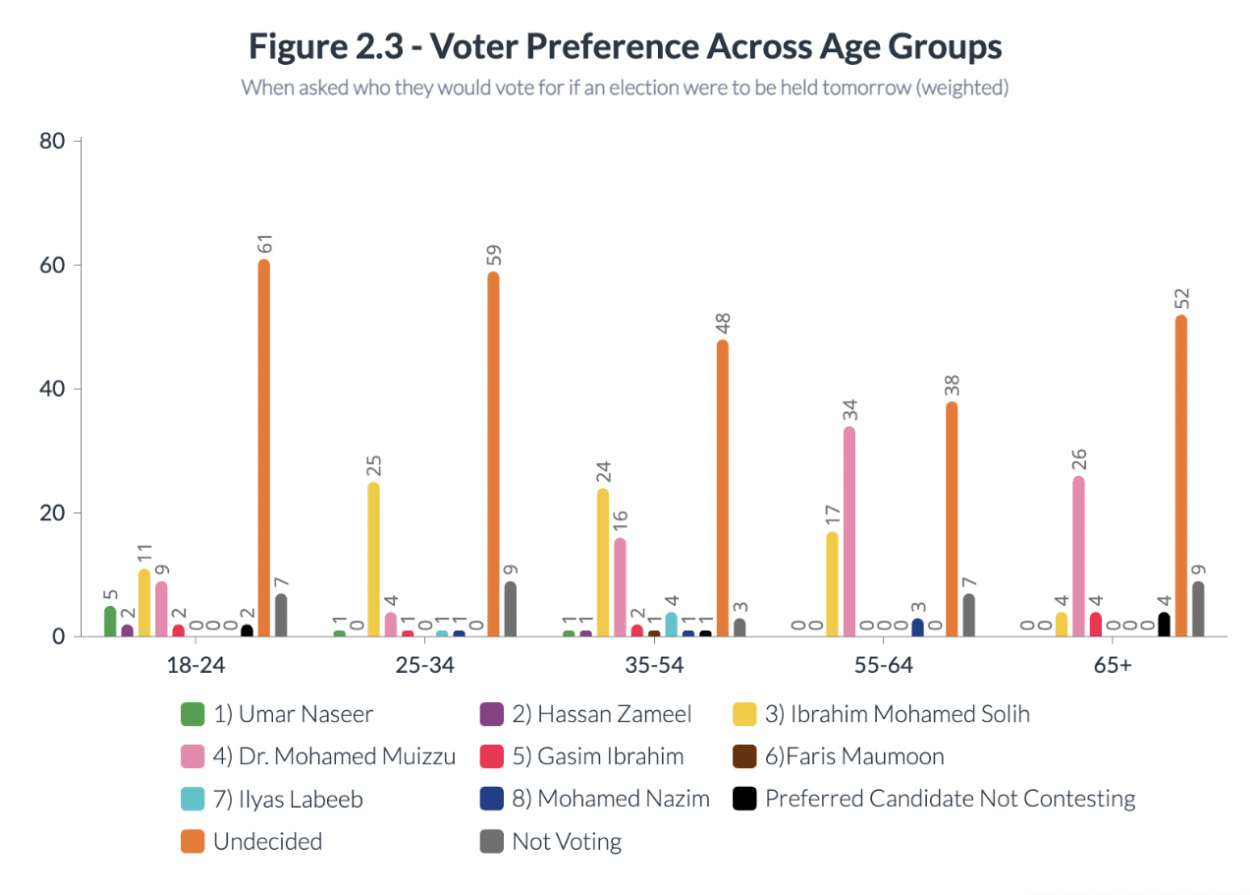
While a considerable portion of the population remains undecided across all age groups, with younger voters broadly more undecided than older voters.

President Solih was the most popular across Male', medium-sized islands and small islands (**Figure 2.4**). Dr. Muizzu emerged as the favored candidate in urban centers excluding Male', securing 14% of the vote compared to President Solih's 12%.

Figure 2.4 - Voter Preference Across Locations

When asked who they would vote for if an election were to be held tomorrow

Legend:
- 1) Umar Naseer
- 2) Hassan Zameel
- 3) Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
- 4) Dr. Mohamed Muizzu
- 5) Gasim Ibrahim
- 6) Faris Maumoon
- 7) Ilyas Labeeb
- 8) Mohamed Nazim
- Preferred Candidate Not Contesting
- Undecided
- Not Voting
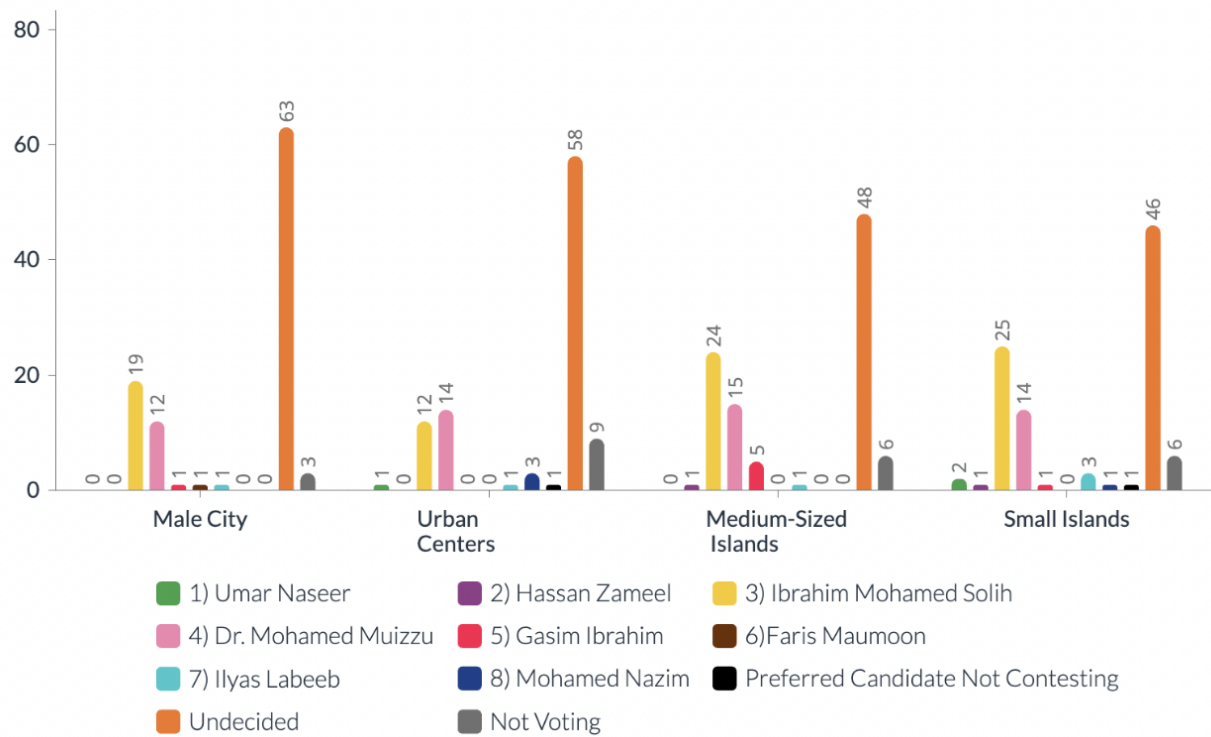
Similar to previous polls, a very large section of the electorate are unsure who they will vote for. A whopping 63% of Male's voters say they still have not made up their minds, less than a month before the election's first round, on 9 September.

When asked if they supported any political party or political ideology (**Figure 2.5**), 56% of the respondents stated that they did not support a political party. The ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) was the most popular with 26% of respondents stating that they supported the party.

Figure 2.5 - Party preference

When asked if they supported a political party or political ideology

Legend:
- Maldivian Democratic Party
- Progressive Party of Maldives
- Jumhooree Party
- The Democrats
- Maldives Reform Movement
- Adhaalath Party (AP)
- Maldives National Party
- I do not support a political party
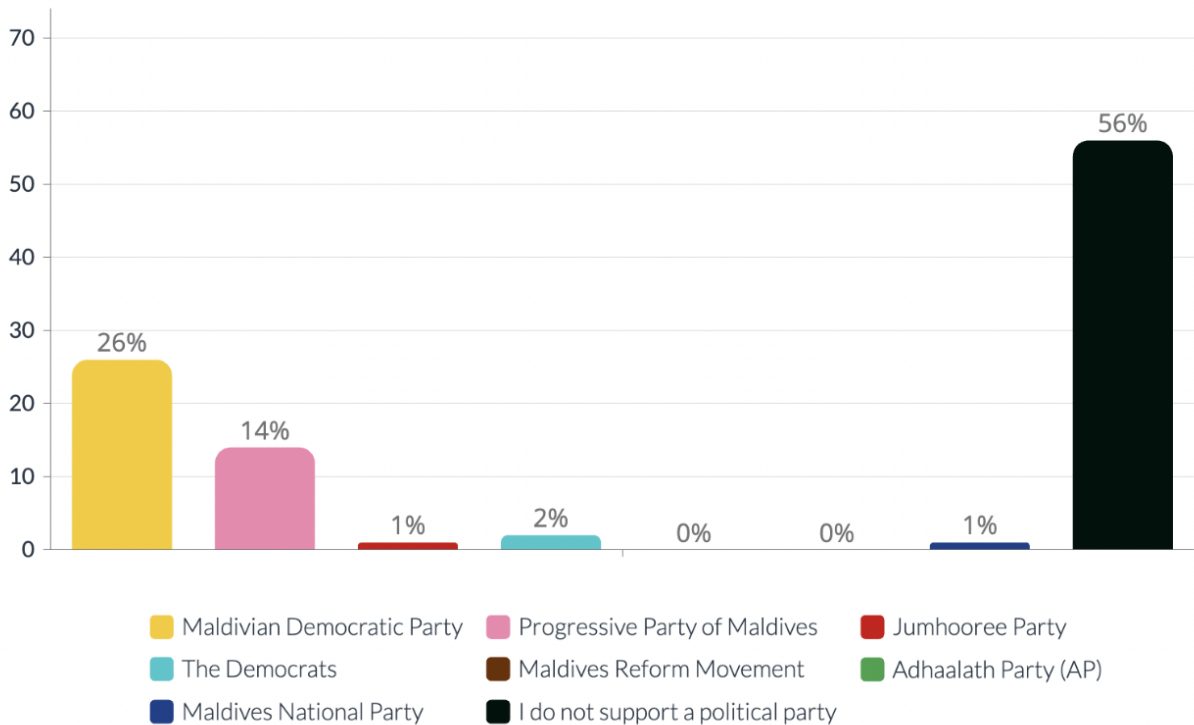
Meanwhile, the opposition Progressive Party of Maldives received 14% of support. Newly formed the Democrats, received 2 percent of the support.

Analysis

August's poll reveals a majority of voters, 53%, remain undecided just three weeks before the first round vote on 9 September. This month's poll has seen the most 'undecideds' since Baani began its monthly poll in April (when 42% of voters said they were undecided).

Moreover, the 'undecideds' category is much bigger than polls conducted in other democracies. This leaves the Maldivian presidential election inherently difficult to predict.

President Solih remains the most popular candidate, as he has been since we started our monthly polls. The President scored 21% in this month's poll – his best figure to date and the first time he has crossed the 20% threshold. Solih scored 19% in July's poll.

Dr Muizz came second in this month's poll, with 14% of the vote. This suggests that former President Yameen's vote (Yameen's name is not allowed to appear on the ballot because of a criminal conviction) has largely transferred to Dr Muizz, who Yameen has endorsed. Yameen polled 18% in Baani's July poll, but was not included in August's.

The Democrat's candidate, Ilyas Labeeb, polled 2% in August's poll (former President Nasheed scored 4% in July's poll, but his name was not included in this month's poll because he is not a candidate). Meanwhile, Umar Naseer, Hassan Zameel, Gasim Ibrahim, and Mohamed Nazim all scored 1%.

President Solih's *'ehburun'* scenario

Polling firms in other democracies often present their data differently to our poll, by removing the 'not voting' and 'undecided' categories, and then recalculating candidates' results accordingly.

We have chosen not to follow this method because of the very large number of undecided Maldivian voters (and we cannot assume that undecided voters will vote the same way as those who have already made up their minds).

Nonetheless, if we remove the 'undecided' voters from the statistics (thus making the assumption that undecided voters will vote in a similar fashion to those who are decided), and we also remove the 'not voting', we end up with an intriguing result.

Under this hypothetical scenario, President Solih's vote share automatically increases from 21% (81/384*100) to 51% (81/158*100), handing the President an outright victory in the first round.

Figure 2.6 - Voter Preference

When asked who they would vote for if an election were to be held tomorrow (adjusted to remove undecideds/not voting)

Legend:
- 1) Umar Naseer
- 2) Hassan Zameel
- 3) Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
- 4) Dr. Mohamed Muizzu
- 5) Gasim Ibrahim
- 6) Faris Maumoon
- 7) Ilyas Labeeb
- 8) Mohamed Nazim
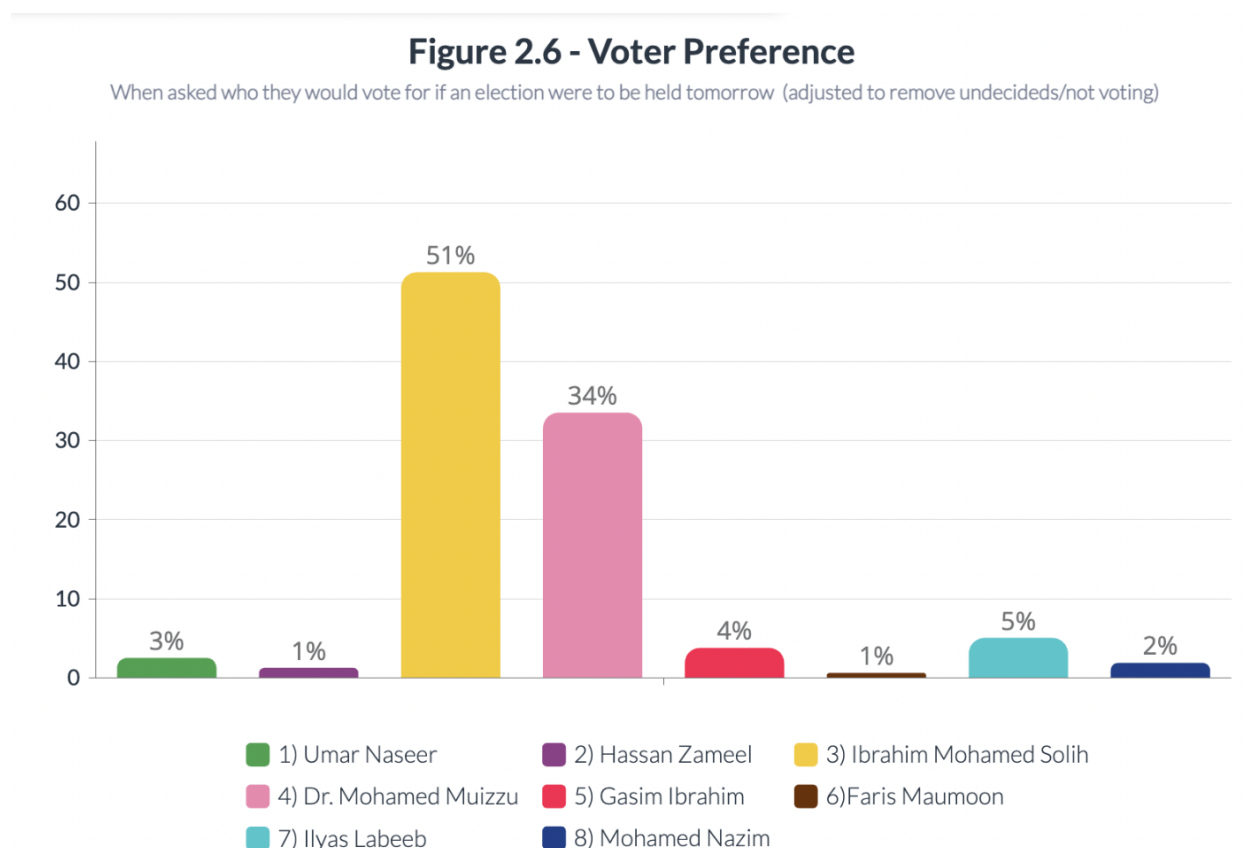
While the President's election team will no doubt be thrilled by the prospect of a first round victory, we cannot make such a prediction because we do not know how the 53% of voters who are currently undecided will likely vote.

Baani's election poll results are available at https://baanicentre.org/research/.

Baani Election Poll Questionnaire

Assalaamu Alaikum!

I am calling on behalf of Baani Centre, a local NGO. We are conducting a poll to gauge the public's opinion of political leaders ahead of the 2023 presidential election.

Your number was randomly selected for the survey, which will take 2 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and we will not ask any questions that can be used to identify you. We will share the results of the opinion poll with you when it is finished.

May I proceed with the survey?
If yes - Proceed to Questions below
If no - Thank them and conclude the call

Q1) Are you a Maldivian citizen? (ask if only unable to determine)
a) Yes
b) No
If the answer is no, conclude the survey.

Q2) What is your age? (Do not provide options)
a) 18 to 25 years old
b) 25 - 35 years old
c) 35 - 50 years old
d) Over 50 years old
If the answer is "Under 18 years," conclude the survey.

Q3) What is your sex? (ask only if unable to determine)
a) Male
b) Female

Q3) Which voting constituency are you from?
a) Open-ended

Q4) If a presidential election was held tomorrow, which of the candidates would you vote for? (Do not provide options)

Thank you for your participation. Share website if requested.

ބޯހިޔާވަހިކަމާއި ގުޅޭ ސުވާލު ކަރުދާސް

އައްސަލާމްޢަލައިކުމް!

އަޅުގަނޑު މި ގެންދާ ދިރާސާ މަދަރުސީ ތަޢުލީމު ފުރިހަމަކޮށް ބޯހިޔާވަހިކަމާ ބެހޭ ސަރުކާރު ފަރާތުން އިންތިޒާމްކޮށްދެވޭ ޕްރޮގުރާމް ފުރިހަމަ އަޅުގަނޑުމެންގެ ދިރިއުޅުން 2023 ގެ ބޭނުމަށް އިންތިޒާމްކޮށް ދިރާސާ ސިއްރު ފަރުދީ މަޢުލޫމާތު އެއްވެސް ހިނދަކު ހާމަ ނުކުރެވޭ ބޭނުމަށް ބޭނުންކޮށް އެއް ހިންގަވަން

ފިނަވައިން 2 މިނެޓް ނަގާ މި ސުވާލު އަހާ ތިބާ ފަރާތު ނަންބަރު ފަހި ދެރާސާ ޖަވާބުތައް ހޯދާ، މި ސުވާލުތައް ކާކައަށް ކަމަކުރެވިދާ އެއްވެސް ސުވާލު އަޅުގަނޑުމެން ނުކުރާނަން އެދި މި ސުވާލުއަށް އިންތިޒާމު މައުލޫމަތު ފަހި ތިބާ ފަރާތު އެދިފާނެ. މި ސުވާލުގެ ނިޔާ ފައިސާ ވައުން ތިބަފަރާ ހިއްސާ ކުރެވިގެންދާނެ

ބޯހިޔާ ސުވާލުތަކައިގެން އަޅުގަނޑަށް ކުރިއަށް ދެވިދާ؟
އާއެކެވެ - ސުވާލުތައް ކުރަން
ނޫނެކެވެ - ޝުކުރު ވަދޫތަކާ ސާބަހު އަންމަނިފައި ކޮޅު ހިނދާމެ

Q1) ތިބާ ފަރާތަކީ ދިރިއުޅޭ ރައްޔިތެއްތަ؟ (މި ސުވާލު ކުރާނީ ދިރާސާކުރުމަށް)
ހ) އާން - ސުވާލުތަކައިގެން ކުރިއަށްދާ
ށ) ނޫން - ސާރުވާކުރުން ހުއްޓާލާ

Q2) ތިބާ ފަރާތުގެ އުމުރަކީ ކިހާވަރެއްތަ؟
ހ) ޖަވާބު ނޯޓްކުރޭ

Q3) ތިބާ ފަރާތުގެ ޖިންސަކީ ކޮބައިތޯ؟
ހ) އަންހެން
ށ) ފިރިހެން

Q3) ތިބާ ފަރާތުގެ ދާއިމީ އެޑްރެސް ހުންނަނީ ކޮން ރަށެއްގަ؟
ހ) ޖަވާބު ނޯޓްކުރޭ

Q4) މިހާރު ދިރާސާ އިންތިޒާމެއް ބޯހިޔާވަހިކަމާ ތަޢުލީމާއި ފޯރުކޮށްދީފައިވޭ ކޮން ކަހަލަޤ؟ (މިއީ އިޤުތިޞާދު ކުރިޔަށްދާ ކަންތައްތަކައިގެން ކަމަށް؟؟ ފާހަގަ ކުރޭ)
ހ) ޖަވާބު ނޯޓްކުރޭ

Q5) ތިބާ ފަރާތުން އެންމެ ފާއިތުވި ސިއްރު ޕްރޮ ނޯވާ ފިކަރޭ ކޮބައިތޯ؟

16