BAANI

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Baani Election Poll 2023 - September Report

A public information project by the Baani Center for International Policy

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Introduction

We have been tracking the popularity of political leaders since April 2023, ahead of the presidential election. The first round of the election took place on 9 September 2023. As none of the candidates secured over 50% of the votes (the legally required minimum to become the president), a run-off will take place on 30 September 2023. The data for this poll was collected between 23 to 26 September, just ahead of the second round of voting

Our opinion poll gauges the popularity of political leaders through a random telephone interview. The poll was repeated every month to allow us to see how politicians' popularity shifts over time. This is the sixth poll we have conducted in this series and for this poll we measured the popularity of the two presidential candidates. We also measured the voter's preferred system of government (presidential vs parliamentary), in anticipation of a referendum in the near future.

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)

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

5. Preferred candidate (Q5)
6. Preferred system of government (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 presidential candidate, we asked the following open-ended question: *Q5) Who is your preferred candidate for the second round of presidential elections?*

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 September 23 and concluded on September 26.

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 rigorous, 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.
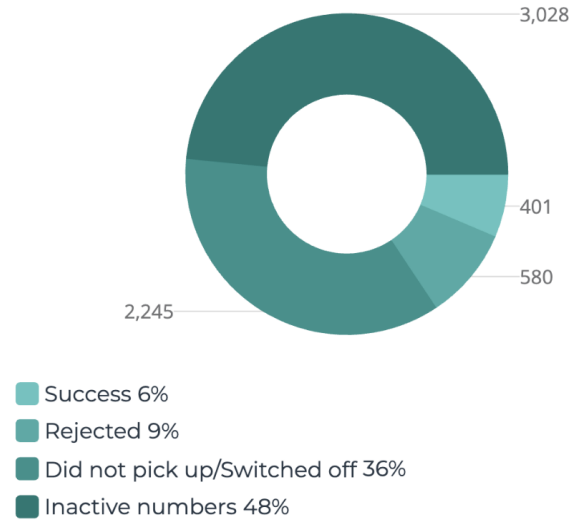
Results

Sample

During the September enumeration period we made a total of 6,254 telephone calls.

As seen in **Figure 1.1**, of the 6,254 calls, 401 were successful responses while 580 were persons who did not want to participate in the survey. Meanwhile, 2,245 numbers were either switched off or unresponsive and 3,028 phone numbers were inactive.

Figure 1.1: Total Calls Breakdown

3,028

401

580

2,245

Success 6%
Rejected 9%
Did not pick up/Switched off 36%
Inactive numbers 48%

As shown in **Figure 1.2**, 61 percent of the respondents were male while 39 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

61%

39%

Male   Female
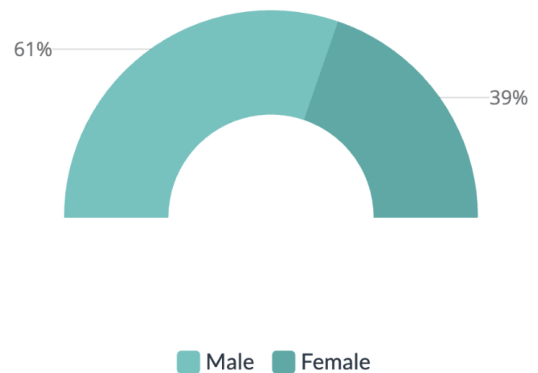
When looking at the different age groups (**Figure 1.3**), 10 percent respondents were between 18 to 25 years old, 30 percent were between 25 to 35 years old, 42 percent were between 35 to 54 years old, 11 percent were between 55 to 64 years old, and 6 percent were above 65.

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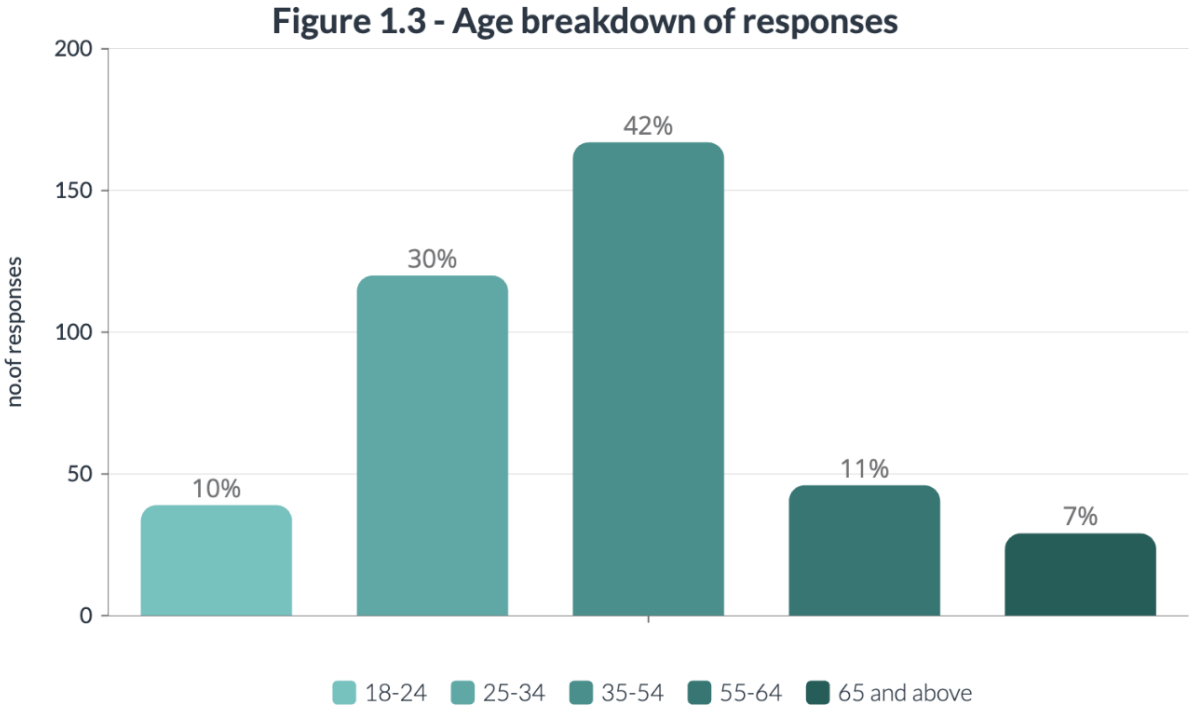
Here, again, we weighted the data using information from the 2022 census. All age based analysis below uses weighted data. The age weighting is as follows:

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**), 19 percent of the respondents were from Male' City, 17 percent were from Urban Centers (islands with population above 5,000). Medium-sized island (population above 1,500) responses made up 26 percent of responses and 38 percent of the responses were from small islands (population below 1,500).

Figure 1.4 - Geographic breakdown of responses
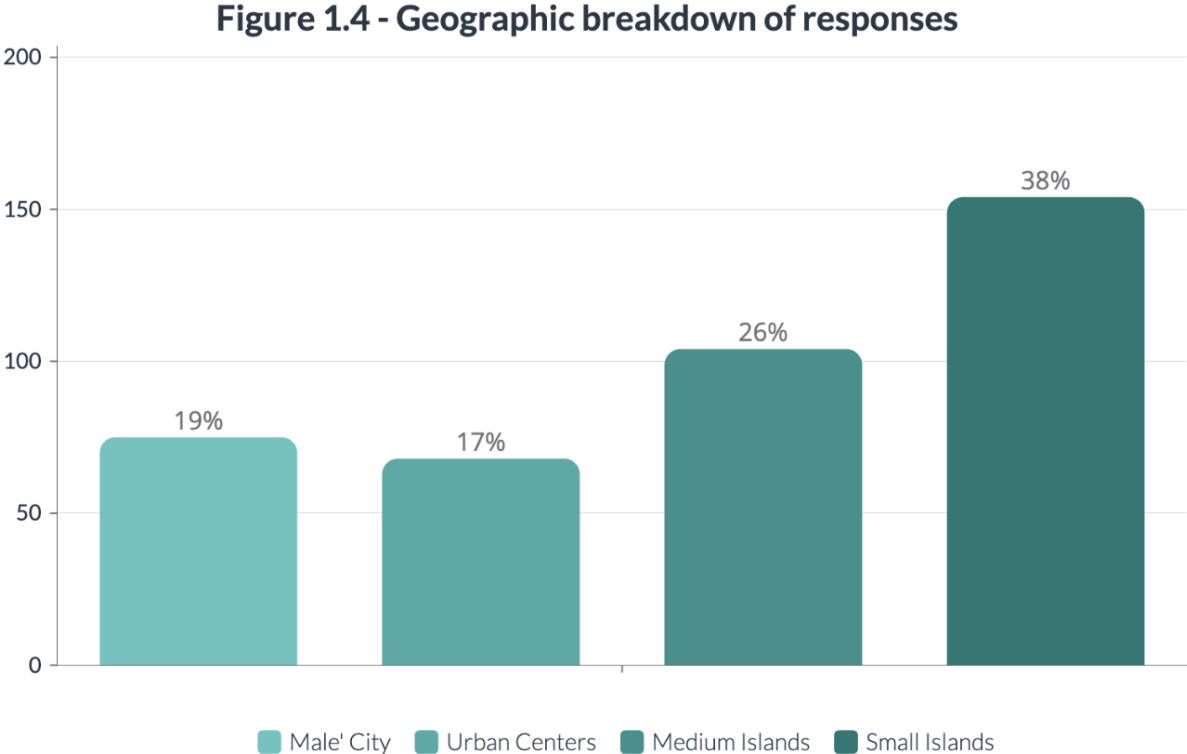
Since the 2022 census data records resident population, as opposed to the number of people registered to an island, we requested for a list of eligible voters disaggregated by location from the Elections Commission. However, this information was not available at the time of publication and we were unable 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

Similar to previous months, September's data (Figure 2.1) indicates that a majority of Maldivians (36%) are yet to decide on how they will vote in the upcoming election. President Solih leads the poll with 30% support, while PNC/PPM candidate Dr. Muizzu has 24%. Meanwhile, 10% (up from 6% in August) indicated they will not vote.

Figure 2.1 - Voter Preference

When asked who their preferred candidate was for the second round (weighted)

Legend: President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih — Dr. Mohamed Muizzu — Undecided — Not Voting
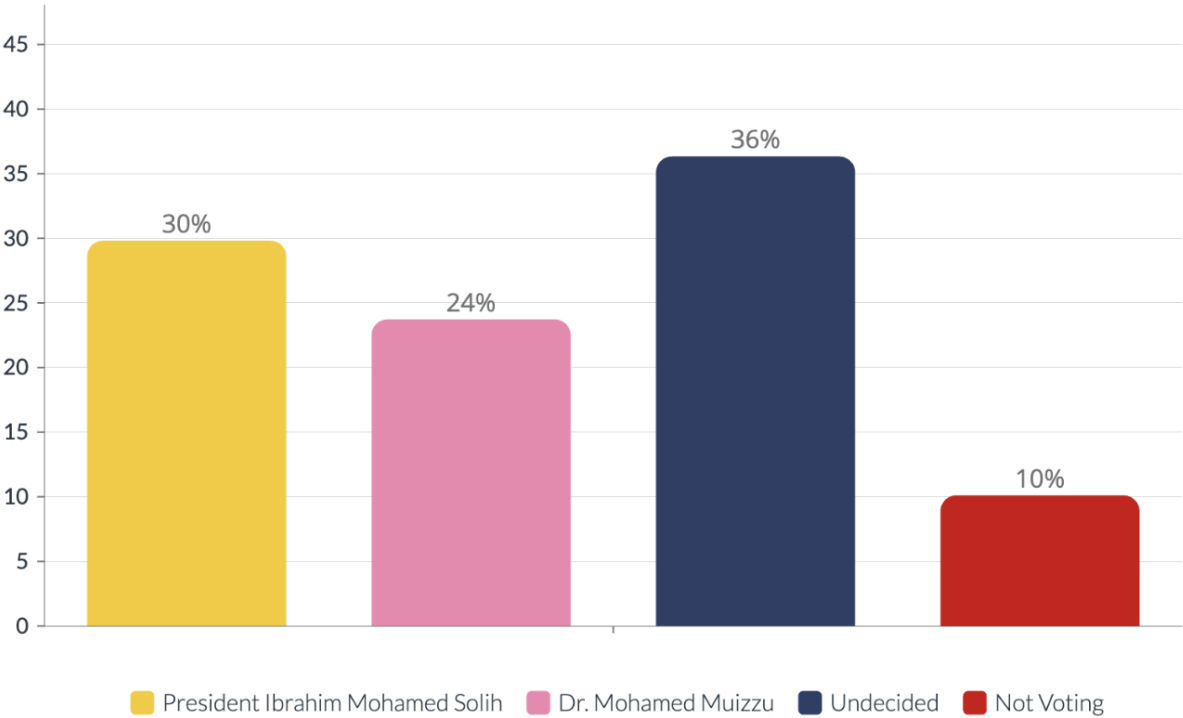
When looking at preferences between men and women (**Figure 2.2**), President Solih is the most popular candidate among Male respondents (34%), while Dr. Muizzu is slightly more popular among Female respondents (27%).

Figure 2.2 - Voter Preference Across Genders

When asked who they would vote for if an election were to be held tomorrow (weighted)
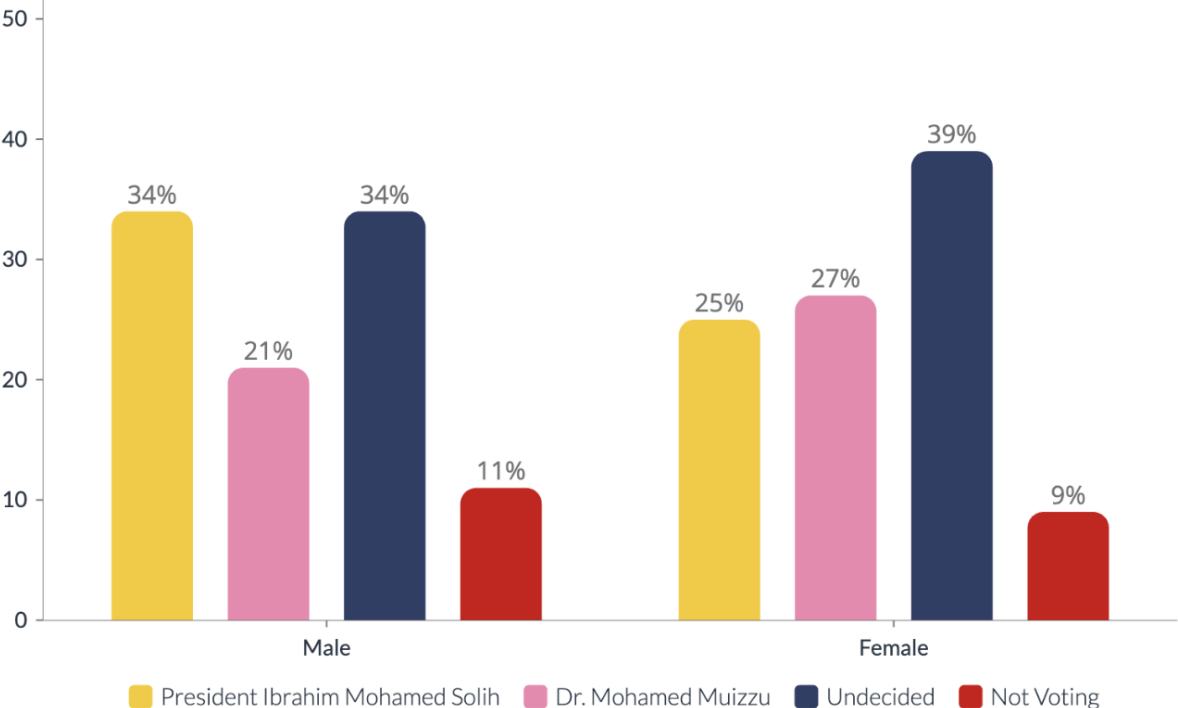
A higher percentage of women (39%) indicated that they are yet to decide on how they will vote compared to 34% of men.

When looking at voter preference across age groups (Figure 2.3), Dr. Muizzu is the preferred candidate for voters between 18-24 years (21%), and 55-64 years.

President Solih is the more popular candidate amongst 25-34 (32%) and 35-54 (31%) age groups. Meanwhile, 20% of 25-34 age group and 19% of 35-54 year olds prefer Dr. Muizzu.

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

A considerable portion of the population remains undecided across all age groups, with younger voters broadly more undecided than older voters.

President Solih is the more popular candidate in urban centers (37%), medium-sized islands (31%) and small-islands (32%) (**Figure 2.4**). In Male' both candidates commanded the same level of popularity at 23%.

Figure 2.4 - Voter Preference Across Locations
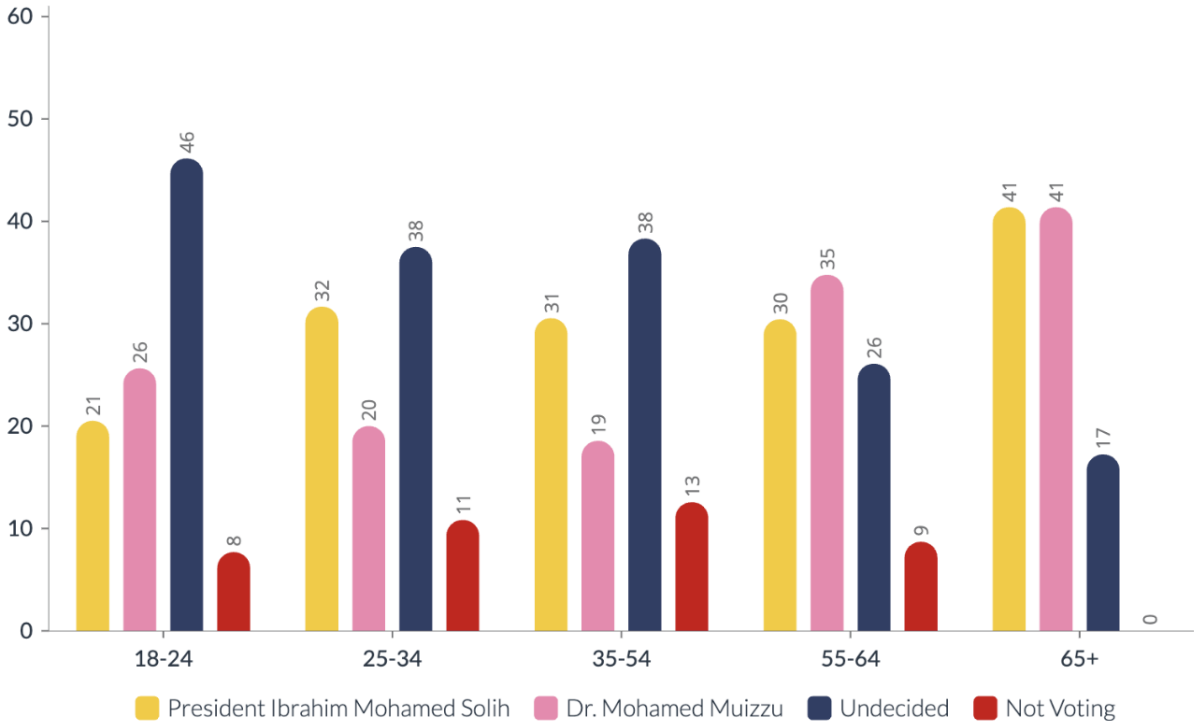When asked who they would vote for if an election were to be held tomorrow

Legend: President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih — Dr. Mohamed Muizzu — Undecided — Not Voting
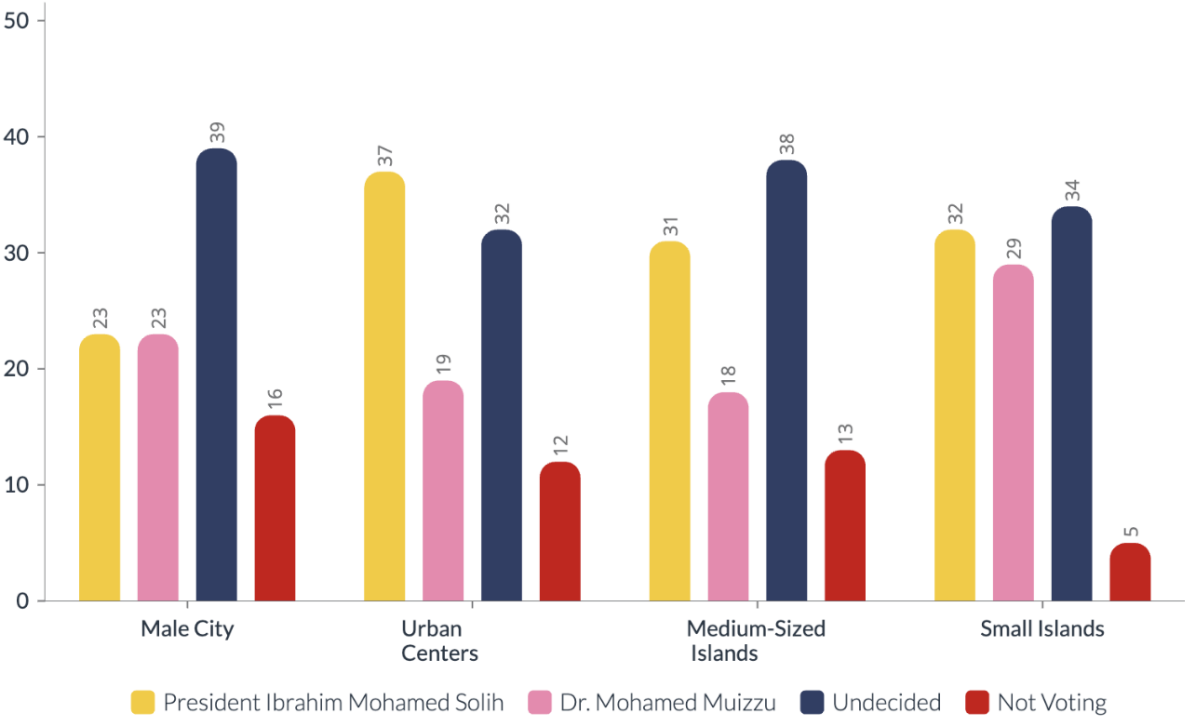
Similar to previous polls, a very large section of the electorate are unsure who they will vote for. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of Male's voters, 32% of Urban center voters, 38% of medium-sized island voters and 34% of small-island voters say they still have not made up their minds, less than 5 days before voting day.

When asked how they would vote in a referendum to choose between presidential and parliamentary system, a large majority (64%) indicated that they prefer the current Presidential system. Meanwhile, 12% of respondents stated that they would prefer to switch to a Parliamentary system.

Figure 2.5 - Preferred System of Governance

When asked if they preferred a presidential vs parliamentary system
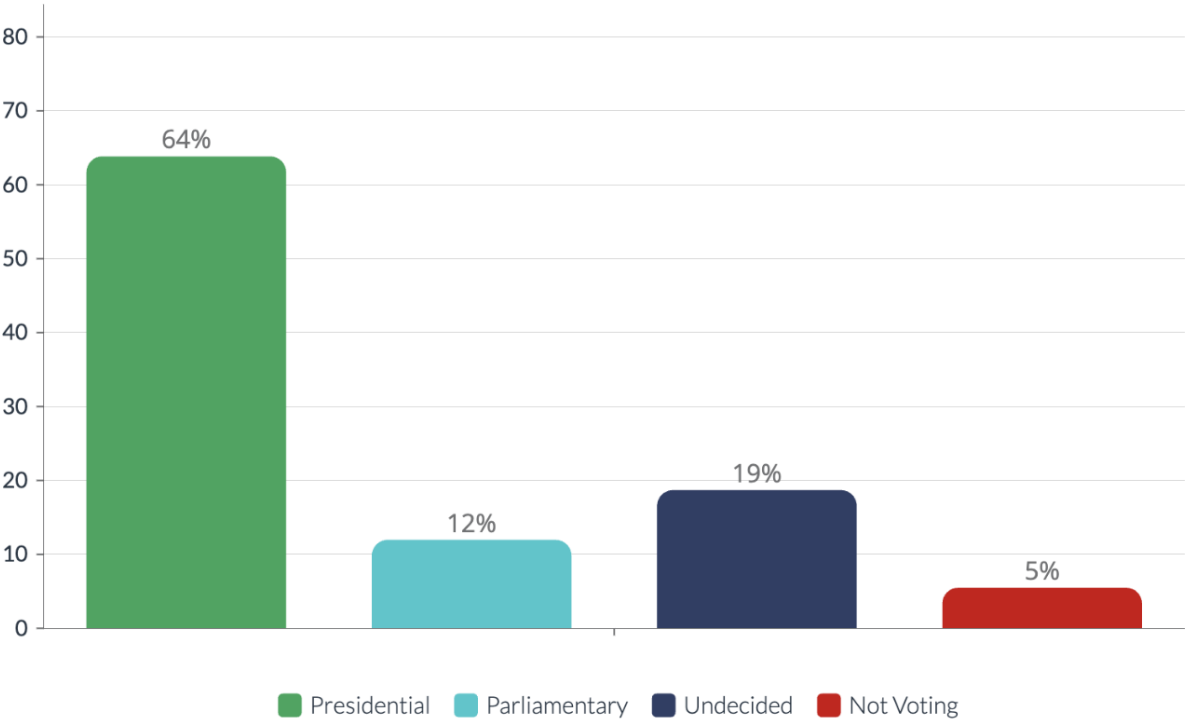
A total of 19% of the respondents stated that they are still undecided on what their preference is between the two systems. Another 5% stated that they would not vote on any such referendum.

When followed up on why they were undecided, 59% of the undecided group stated that they needed more information before deciding between the two systems. A further 24% stated that they needed more time to decide between the systems before a vote.

Figure 2.6 - Reasons for Indecision on Governance System
When asked why they were undecided on Presidential vs. Parliamentary System

Legend:
- ■ Need more information
- ■ Need more time to decide
- ■ We do not need a referendum
- ■ Need to know election results first
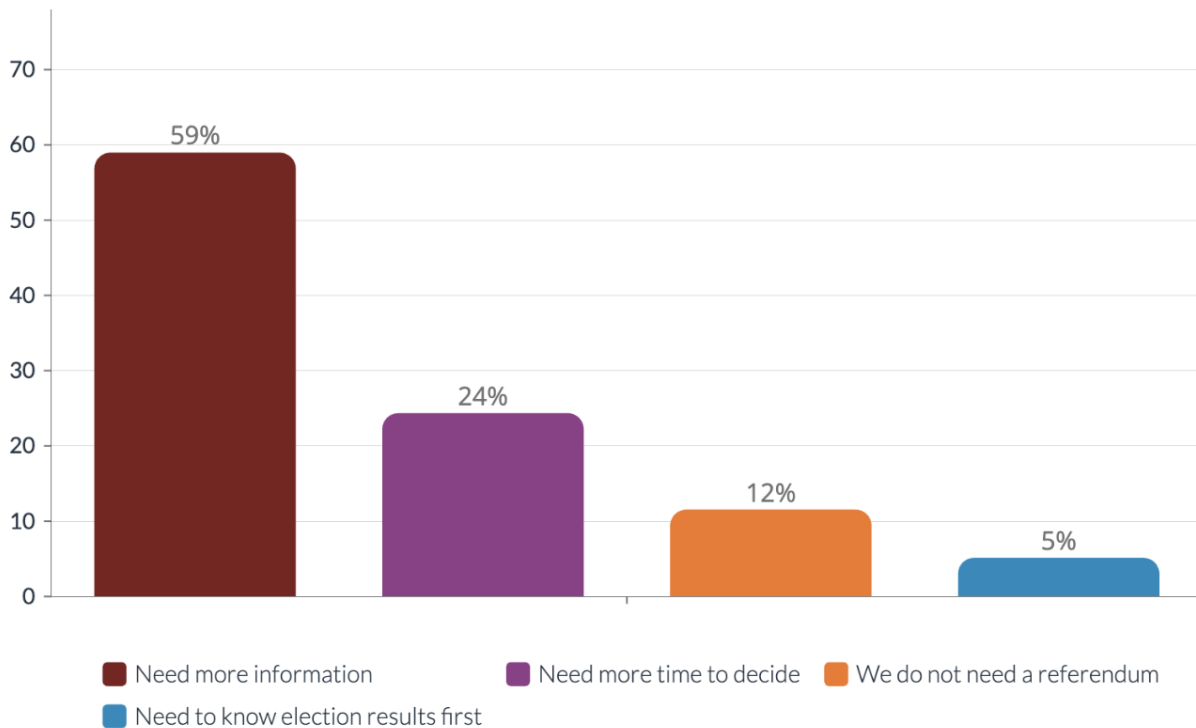
Meanwhile 12 percent of the undecided group stated that they do not believe that there is a need for a referendum on the issue. Five percent of the undecided group stated that they need to know the results of the presidential election before deciding on how to vote in the referendum.

Analysis

September's poll (data was collected between 23-26 September) shows a 6-point lead for President Solih, which is just above the poll's 5% margin of error. The President scored 30% in the poll, to Dr Muizzu's 24%. In the first round, President Solih won 39% of the vote while Dr. Muizzu won 46 % of the votes.

The high number of undecided voters in this month's poll – at 36% – could pose a problem for the President, however. In Baani's August poll, conducted shortly before the first round, President Solih was ahead of Dr Muizz by 21% to 14%, with over half of voters undecided. The results of the first round suggest that these undecided voters broke heavily in favor of Dr Muizz on election day. Given the high percentage of undecided voters and uncertainty as to how they would vote, Baani is unable to predict the final results of the election.

Presidential or parliamentary system

This month's poll also asked voters whether they favour a presidential or parliamentary system. A national referendum on this question is due to be held before the end of October. The poll's results showed a big majority in favour of the existing presidential system, by 64% to 12%, with 19% undecided. This suggests the 'parliamentary camp', led by The Democrats, has an uphill task to convince voters to switch systems, with just a month of campaigning available before referendum day.

<u>Annex 1 - Baani Election Poll Questionnaire (English)</u>

<u>Baani Election Poll Questionnaire</u>

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.

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އައްސަލާމްޢަލައިކުމް!

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ސޮޅ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ސޮޑޮޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޓ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ޓ‌ޔ‌ރ‌އ‌ޓ‌ ޑ‌ރޮޓ‌ޔ‌؟
އ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ – ސޮޑ‌ޑޮޓ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌
ޓ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ – ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ ސ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ އ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ ޓ‌ޅ‌ ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌

Q1) ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ފ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ޑ‌ރޮޑ‌ޑ‌ ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌؟ (ޑ‌ ސޮޑ‌ޑ‌ ޓ‌ޅ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌)
ހ‌) އ‌ޓ‌ރ‌ – ސޮޑ‌ޑޮޓ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ޓ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌
ށ‌) ޓ‌ރ‌ޓ‌ރ‌ – ސޮޅ‌ރޮޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓޮޓ‌

Q2) ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ފ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ އ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌؟
ހ‌) ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌

Q3) ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ފ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ޔ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ޓ‌ޑޮޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌؟
ހ‌) އ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޓ‌
ށ‌) ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޓ‌

Q3) ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ފ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ އ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޔ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ؟
ހ‌) ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌

Q4) ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޓ‌ – އ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރޮޓ‌ޑ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌؟ (ޑ‌ޔ‌ އ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޔ‌ޔ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ޑ‌ސ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ ރ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌)
ހ‌) ޔ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌

Q5) ޓ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ ފ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ އ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ރ‌ޓ‌ ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ ސ‌ޑ‌ރ‌ޑ‌ޔ‌ ފ‌ޔ‌ޓ‌ ޔ‌ރޮޓ‌ ފ‌ޑ‌ޓ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌ ޓ‌ޑޮޑ‌ޔ‌ޑ‌؟