

# Advancing Political Pluralism & Transparency (APPT) in Maldives & Sri Lanka

Election Information Assessment Report  
(Maldives)  
1st August 2024



SOCIETY FOR  
**PEACE&DEMOCRACY**

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## I. Executive Summary

The Electoral Information Assessment (EIA) was carried out by the Society for Peace and Democracy in the Maldives in 2024 under the Advancing Political Pluralism and Transparency (APPT) project funded by the European Union. The APPT project objectives include enhancing democratic governance and supporting political pluralism and inclusiveness through improved integrity and transparency in the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Upon completion, the EIAs are to be shared with stakeholders and are intended to inform the election reporting curriculum and the community awareness of election reporting issues components of the APPT project.

Society for Peace and Democracy (SPD) is a non-profit and non-governmental organization registered in the Maldives. Its activities include community development, peace education, women and youth empowerment, worker's rights, and digital rights/digital safety.

Through primary and secondary data collection, the EIA aims to better understand, the scope of involvement and participation of marginalized groups (including women, youth, and people with disabilities) in the electoral process; how information is disseminated during elections; and what role misinformation and disinformation might play in influencing voter engagement. Key target groups identified included media personnel as well as locally elected island council and women's group members.

Based on the analysis of the key findings which reflected both direct and indirect challenges within the electoral system, this assessment provides actionable recommendations which include further awareness of political ethics and media literacy in order to limit political influence over media and increase accurate information dissemination. It also provides recommendations for tools to support and improve marginalized groups' access to vote freely. Based on the broader findings of the research, the assessment identifies further recommendations that include, the insertion of a 'none of the above' option in ballots to express voter dissatisfaction; education and awareness raising to enhance civic responsibility and rights; and to strengthen collaboration between authorities in order to address issues of systemic corruption.

## II. Country Context

### Political Landscape

The Maldives has seen significant political change following the 2023 presidential election, where Dr. Mohamed Muizzu of the Progressive Alliance defeated the incumbent Ibrahim Solih, marking a shift in leadership. This transition was further solidified by the 2024 parliamentary elections, which saw President Muizzu's party, the PNC, achieve a supermajority in parliament<sup>1</sup>.

### Freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and the press

According to the 2024 Human Rights Watch report on the Maldives, the country experienced a decline in democratic norms, particularly in the lead-up to the presidential elections, with increased suppression of protests, escalating violence against journalists and restrictive laws against press freedom<sup>2</sup> as evidenced by the Maldives' significant drop in global press freedom rankings from 72<sup>nd</sup> to

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<sup>1</sup> Shivamurthy, Aditya Gowdara, *The Malé Dossier: An introduction to Maldivian polity 2024*, Observation Research Foundation, Published Oct 2023. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-mal-dossier-an-introduction-to-maldivian-polity-2024>

<sup>2</sup> Proposed amendments to election law that would restrict reporting by freelance and foreign journalists and threaten source confidentiality

100<sup>th</sup> <sup>3</sup>. The deregistration of the Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN), a human rights organization, was perceived (according to the report), as a politically motivated decision. The government's failure to enact reforms to ensure accountability, despite its obligations to international conventions, led to the UN special rapporteur expressing concern about the 'level of impunity' for abuses to take place and the lack of protection for civil society and human rights defenders. At a meeting between European Union and Maldivian officials, the EU emphasized the importance of maintaining a commitment toward 'the protection of human rights' and 'implementing reforms in the justice sector'<sup>4</sup>.

## Electoral system

A report by Global Human Rights Defence noted that the recent elections were marred by allegations of vote buying, misuse of state resources, low representation of women in candidate roles, and voter disenfranchisement due to outdated registration systems (such as the use of permanent address-based voter lists which left out many voters, particularly those who had relocated to the capital, Malé for work)<sup>5</sup>. The report cites Transparency Maldives' recommendations to strengthen oversight of campaign finance, tackling the barriers that women face in political parties, and reforming the voter registration system as possible solutions, going ahead.

## Women's rights and political participation

The Human Rights Watch report also concluded that women in the Maldives face persistent structural discrimination rooted in societal norms, gender-stereotyping, and religious conservatism, hindering their labor force participation. Their vulnerability was further heightened by online harassment and intimidation, and they faced barriers to equal participation, with information dissemination largely controlled by the government. Despite calls from the UN, there has been a lack of progress in the government's addressing of gender-based violence and discrimination.

In 2014, IFES convened a roundtable with diverse stakeholders, including women political party members with the aim of addressing the multifaceted challenges women face in the political arena in the Maldives; from structural barriers to discriminatory attitudes and practices. Recommendations included; increasing women's political engagement at the local level, preparing women to become candidates, addressing societal perceptions, electoral system reform, political finance reform, education on gender stereotypes and addressing harmful perceptions and attitudes, gender sensitization and combatting vote coercion<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Maldives events: 2023*, World Report 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/maldives>

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, World Report 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Global Human Rights Defence, *2024 Parliamentary Elections in the Maldives*, Article, April 2024, <https://ghrd.org/article/article-2024-parliamentary-elections-in-the-maldives/>

<sup>6</sup> Ritchie, Megan, et al., *Women's Empowerment in the political processes in the Maldives*, IFES, 2014, [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00K59B.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00K59B.pdf)

### III. Assessment overview and Methodology

In addition to strengthening electoral reform and establishing a comprehensive understanding of voter-related issues, the primary objectives of the Electoral Information Assessment (EIA) are to:

- Understand the scope of involvement of marginalized groups (such as that of women, youth, people with disabilities, the elderly) in the electoral process
- Identify gaps in information dissemination prior to and during elections
- Understand the Impact of misinformation and disinformation in voter engagement

The assessment was conducted from May to August 2024, with the desk research and designing the survey questionnaire done during the month of May. June to July included data collection through KIIs and FDGs, transcription of recordings, and data analysis. The EIA report was finalized in August.

#### Research Design

Primary data collection was conducted through survey questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Interview questions were designed based on the findings of the desk review and by applying the [Internews Information Ecosystem Assessment](#) tool as a guide.

Surveys targeted three specific groups: journalists, women and youth, and Island councils and women's development groups. Survey questionnaires had both open and close-ended questions for the purpose of collecting qualitative and quantitative data, which would be especially helpful when understanding the perceptions and the role of women's involvement in political participation.

#### Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

The participants were identified through SPD's local networks and interviews were conducted at a location chosen by the participants in small groups or one-on-one in the capital, as well as the islands.

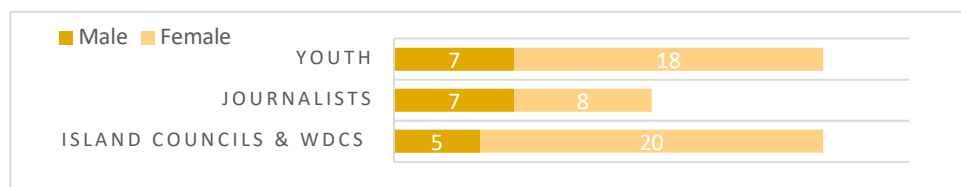
Adjustments were made to interview questions to reflect the differences in function and role of each target group, resulting in three survey questionnaire templates. (please refer Annex A for survey questionnaires).

#### The Focus Group Discussions (FDGs)

FDGs were conducted by SPD in groups on each island's local school or community centers where participants could access and gather easily. No prior local government approval was necessary and participants seemed happy and willing to cooperate. Surveys and discussions were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

## Sampling Techniques and size

Adopting a purposive sampling method, the community members/groups most relevant to the subject matter were identified as members of Island Councils, Women’s Development Committees (WDCs), Journalists, and youth. Women made up 69% of the total 65 participants.



### Sampling techniques:

Non-random sampling was used to ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups such as women, youth between the ages of 18 to 30, as well as key informants from media and local councils. Random sampling was utilized only for interviews with women in general, with the only criteria being that they were adults.

## Data Collection

A three-member team (women and men) conducted the research. No questions were directed at the participants outside of the questionnaire, nor did personal conversations take place during the interview process. Participants were given time to prepare and familiarize themselves with the purpose of this research prior to the interview. To gain a more authentic response, all participants were assured that their personal details will not be shared with third parties.

The data was collected between 2<sup>nd</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024 from the capital Malé City, as well as 7 Atolls<sup>7</sup> in which 15 islands are located.

<i>Atolls</i>	<i>Islands</i>	<i>Date collected</i>
<b><i>Raa Atoll</i></b>	Ungoofaaru, Hulhudhuffaaruu	12&13 July
<b><i>Baa Atoll</i></b>	Eydhafushi, Kamadhoo	26 July
<b><i>Kaafu Atoll</i></b>	Himmafushi, Thulusdhoo, Huraa, Dhiffushi, Gulhi, Maafushi	6&28 June/15&17 July
<b><i>North Ari Atoll</i></b>	Thoddo	20 June
<b><i>South Ari Atoll</i></b>	Dhangethi	21 June
<b><i>Vaavu Atoll</i></b>	Fulidhoo	2 June
<b><i>Meemu Atoll</i></b>	Kolhufushi, Muli	5&6 June

Constraints to data collection included difficulties in travel: movement from the capital to the islands required purchasing seats from private speedboat transfers serving each island (no public transport is available). These speedboat services are mostly run by guesthouses in islands primarily serving the direct transfer of guests to Malé/Airport and back. As these services do not cover inter-island routes, the SPD team would have to travel all the way back to Malé in order to continue FDGs on another island, which was both time-consuming and tiring.

<sup>7</sup> Atolls are first-level administrative divisions in the Maldives, and are divided according to natural geographical groupings. Islands are second-level administrative divisions. Malé City is geographically in the Kaafu Atoll, but being the capital, it is considered its own administrative division.

## Data Analysis

Information was analyzed through the inductive coding method, which involves reading and interpreting raw and contextual data. The reviewed data is then separated based on commonality of opinions. A thematic mapping process, or mind map contributed to understanding how opinions differed between genders.

## IV. Preliminary Research: Desk Review

### Vote buying and bribery

The International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) revealed in 2014, that 37% of Maldivian voters had personally witnessed attempts at vote buying; 20% of voters had been offered money or gifts; while 17% reported that someone in their family had been offered money or gifts. In addition, the report states that the ‘Maldivian public is highly cynical of the way in which political parties and candidates spend their campaign funds’<sup>8</sup>. Ten years on, vote buying where some voters actively demand payments and benefits in exchange for their votes, continues to be a pressing issue in election cycles, as reported in Transparency Maldives’ 2024 Pre-Election Assessment<sup>9</sup>. Despite there being legislation of “electoral bribery” under the Maldivian penal code<sup>10</sup>, it is cited as ‘a failure’ in the report due to the lack of information available to the public on submitting complaints or the mechanism itself, and the five-day window for lodging complaints post-election. For example, of the 184 complaints received by the Election Commission during the presidential election of 2023, only 10 complaints related to electoral bribery.

### Electoral participation of people with disabilities

The Elections Commission has used various means to disseminate electoral information, including usage of television/radio airtime, social media, roadshows, and distribution of flyers. During the 2023 Presidential Election, the commission conducted public awareness sessions in just a handful of islands<sup>11</sup>. Of these, only one session targeted a marginalized community – the blind and visually impaired. The 2023 Presidential Election, however, marked a historic milestone for voters with disabilities by providing tactile templates for the first time. As a result, 45 visually impaired voters were able to cast their votes unassisted in the 2023 Presidential Elections<sup>12</sup> and 60 registered for the 2024 Parliamentary Elections<sup>13</sup>.

### Ease of access to ballot boxes for remote islands and diaspora

The Elections Commission of the Maldives has at least one ballot box in every inhabited island which is usually placed in strategic locations, such as ports, for easy access. In the case of islands which aren’t ‘inhabited’ but used as industrial islands or resort islands, the Commission decides whether or not to place a ballot box based on the number of voters registered. If the number of registered voters in these islands fall short of the voter threshold set by the Election Commission, their registration at their place of work (in tourist resort or industry) automatically reverts to their permanent address—which may

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<sup>8</sup> IFES. *Money and Elections in the Maldives*, November 2014, available online: <https://www.ifes.org/publications/money-and-elections-maldives>

<sup>9</sup> Transparency Maldives, *Parliamentary Election: Pre Election Assessment*, Report, 2024: <https://transparency.mv/publications/2024-parliamentary-election-pre-election-assessment/>

<sup>10</sup> The Elections General Act defines bribery as providing or pledging material benefits or services to specific individuals, groups, or for general benefit during the election period, from the announcement date until 30 days after official results are declared. Elections (General) Act, Law No. 11/2008 [https://www.elections.gov.mv/uploads/Elections%20\(General\)%20Act%20-%20Consolidated%2028082023-70f54cd28fc6b518e998.pdf](https://www.elections.gov.mv/uploads/Elections%20(General)%20Act%20-%20Consolidated%2028082023-70f54cd28fc6b518e998.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Election Commission, *2023 Presidential Election Report*

<sup>12</sup> News Article, online, September 2023: <https://en.sun.mv/84707>

<sup>13</sup> News Article, online, March 2024: <https://psmnews.mv/en/134640>

cause some citizens to forego their exercise to vote depending on how far from work their homes are situated. It is the same in case of expatriate Maldivians or diaspora who are able to vote at their country's embassies abroad (in Colombo, Kuala Lumpur and London)<sup>14</sup>. For example, the 2023 Presidential election thresholds were a minimum of 30 voters in resorts and industrial islands, and a minimum of 150 voters in cities outside the Maldives<sup>15</sup>; which rendered any island or embassy not making the threshold, lose out on having a ballot box in their premises.

## Legal framework reform

In 2018, the EU Electoral follow-up mission (EFM) stated that 'neither the government, nor the parliament, nor the opposition had sought to address the issue of electoral reforms' in the Maldives<sup>16</sup>. The Election Observation Mission of 2014 had made 22 recommendations that aligned with the Maldives' commitment and obligations to the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), but the EFM noted that only one recommendation (adaptation of the Gender Equality Act in 2016, which outlawed both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex) had been implemented fully by 2018. The European Parliament (EP) and the United Nations (UN) criticized the politicized judiciary and the use of arbitrary detentions, threats, and intimidation as means of applying pressure on political opponents, civil society activists, media, and politicians<sup>17</sup>. According to the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) of 2023, 'the framework remains virtually unchanged from previous elections...and the existing legal framework requires revision and consolidation and requalification of some provisions from the level of regulation to legislation'<sup>18</sup>.

## Information, Misinformation and Disinformation

Anonymous social media accounts:

Misinformation and disinformation, a prevalent issue in the Maldives, is often used by political forces to confuse or manipulate voters. Primarily, there are anonymous social media accounts on "X" that act as public-interest whistleblowers and gain mass followings, but also periodically spread unverified claims and blatant disinformation to sway public opinion<sup>19</sup>. The rise of such social media accounts is a phenomenon characterized by a blend of digitized half-truths, personal attacks on public figures, and gossip, while their "verified" claims frequently carry an undercurrent of misinformation and disinformation<sup>20</sup>. In the Maldives, where legacy media are often tied to political interests through sponsorships and other affiliations, these accounts fill a void by surfacing allegations that the media may hesitate to cover. This gap in traditional journalism further amplifies the trust and mass following that these anonymous accounts receive, often fostering reliance on them as credible sources. A study by the IFJ revealed that a majority of its respondents agreed that "fake news" is prevalent in the online news media sphere and believed that the media must be held accountable for political divisions in the Maldives<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> PSM News, ECM to place ballot boxes in three countries for parliamentary election, Article, March 2024, <https://www.psmnews.mv/en/134866>

<sup>15</sup> Election Commission, *2023 Presidential Election Report*, in local language (Dhivehi), <https://elections.gov.mv/uploads/Election%20report%20FINAL%202023.02-efaa8b1d85e38fbf54bb.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ahmed, Farah, *Maldives failed to address issue of electoral reforms: EU*, News Article, The Edition: April 2018, <https://edition.mv/media/5784>

<sup>17</sup> Ahmed, Farah, *Maldives failed to address issue of electoral reforms*

<sup>18</sup> Election Observation Mission, *Presidential Election Maldives 2023*, Final Report: European Union Election Observation Mission in Maldives 2023: P.11, Published, January 2024, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-maldives-2023/final-report-presidential-election-maldives-2023\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-maldives-2023/final-report-presidential-election-maldives-2023_en)

<sup>19</sup> News Paper Article, 2023, online: <https://en.sun.mv/85413>

<sup>20</sup> News Paper Article, 2023, online: <https://en.sun.mv/83863>

<sup>21</sup> Villa College for IFJ, *Media Mirror: Unveiling public trust in the Maldivian media*, Report, 2023:

[https://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/231219\\_Media\\_Mirror\\_-\\_Unveiling\\_Public\\_Trust\\_in\\_the\\_Maldivian\\_Media.pdf](https://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/user_upload/231219_Media_Mirror_-_Unveiling_Public_Trust_in_the_Maldivian_Media.pdf)



Disinformation by political parties:

The EU Election Observation Mission to the 2023 Presidential Elections of the Maldives explicitly mentions online disinformation attempts by political parties and misleading election-related content which were spread through registered media outlets<sup>22</sup>. The mission said that ‘this contentious style of campaigning overshadowed meaningful policy debates and intensified the climate of mistrust’.

The referenced EU and IFJ reports reveal the shortcomings in the Maldives’ efforts towards safeguarding the accuracy of information through verification and fact-checking initiatives, and strongly recommend supporting civil society-led initiatives in these efforts.

Policy documents and Manifestoes:

Apart from mainstream media, another important source of information—especially regarding policies and agendas of a candidate or party—is from policy documents and manifestoes. Manifestoes became a common concept in the Maldives during the first democratic elections in 2008. Manifestoes are documents of policies and plans that function as a guiding document that a candidate would formulate their policies on, so voters have access to their plan for office. It is also used as an accountability tool—a voter is able to refer to it to compare campaign promises to actual activities post-election, making a manifesto a useful apparatus for voters to make informed decisions prior to voting<sup>23</sup>.

Women’s political participation:

An IFES study on perception about women’s participation in public life found that the primary role of women is perceived to be ‘in the household, as mothers and caretaker(s), across the Maldives while ‘all other activities are viewed as secondary’<sup>24</sup>. The study revealed that ‘particular religious-based interpretations’ of women’s role in society were observed and may limit their ability to participate in public life.

Women are active in grassroots politics but are underrepresented in political leadership or public office. Another 2014 IFES study noted that women were active at the grassroots level in a supportive role through campaign and rally participation in significant numbers, though this involvement was not viewed to ‘translate into leadership roles in the political sphere’ (the Maldives was ranked 136<sup>th</sup> out of 154 countries in number of Women MPs in parliament)<sup>25</sup>. According to the 2023 Final Report of the Election Observation Mission (EOM), there has not been a woman commissioner in the Maldives Elections Commission since its formation. To combat women’s underrepresentation, the Maldives began implementing the National Gender Equality Plan, under which the country introduced a 33% quota for women in local councils. Women are also provided with various civic education opportunities, including the Practice Parliament for Women, a collaborative effort between the People’s Majlis and UNDP in Maldives<sup>26</sup>. In addition, despite anti-discrimination laws and no legal barriers for women to be involved in politics in the Maldives, aspiring female political leaders continue to face invisible hurdles, such as lack of access to economic resources and a falsely generalized perception of being too weak<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Election Observation Mission, Presidential Election Maldives 2023, Final Report.

<sup>23</sup> Nikolaus Eder et al. *Manifesto functions: How party candidates view and use their party's central policy document*. Electoral Studies, V.45, p75, February 2017. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S026137941630035X>

<sup>24</sup> IFES. *Qualitative Assessment: Perceptions about women’s participation in public life in the Maldives*, Publication, July 2015: <https://www.ifes.org/publications/qualitative-assessment-perceptions-about-womens-participation-public-life-maldives>

<sup>25</sup> Megan Ritchie, et al. *Women’s empowerment in the political process in the Maldives*. IFES, 2014. [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00K59B.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00K59B.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> UNDP. Practice Parliament for Women. Article, April 2023: <https://www.undp.org/maldives/news/practice-parliament-women>

<sup>27</sup> Megan Ritchie, et al. *Women’s empowerment in the political process in the Maldives*, IFES, 2014.

## V. Primary Findings

Findings include analyzed data from the survey questionnaires used in KIIs and FDGs. The data is represented categorically to provide visual understanding. The results are divided as per the three target groups, allowing us to differentiate, compare, and understand the commonality, or if any, variances between responses.

### Target Group 1: Journalists

*Survey Method – Questionnaires and Focus Discussion Groups/Interviews*

*Survey Sample – 15 journalists (7 male, 8 female)*

*The journalists who participated in the interviews represented the following news networks: PSM, The Edition, Vaguthu, Dhauru, Mihaaru, Sosal*

#### Overall voting experience:

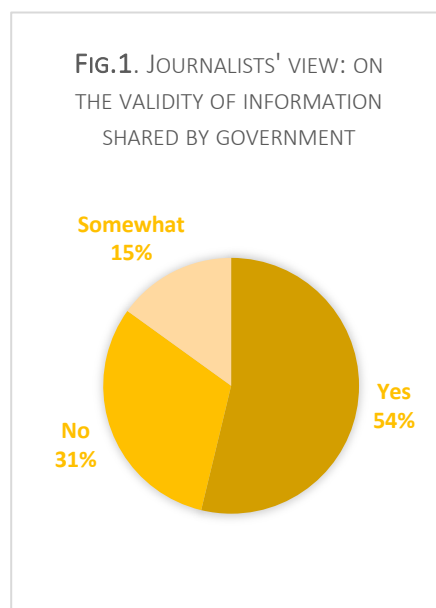
70% of journalists indicated that their voting experience was a positive one with the physical act of voting on election day (access to polling booths, casting ballots) being easy enough with the exception of the inconvenience of long queues. However, the majority noted that due to the privilege of their profession, they had the advantage of priority queueing at polling stations.

#### Opinion of the electoral system:

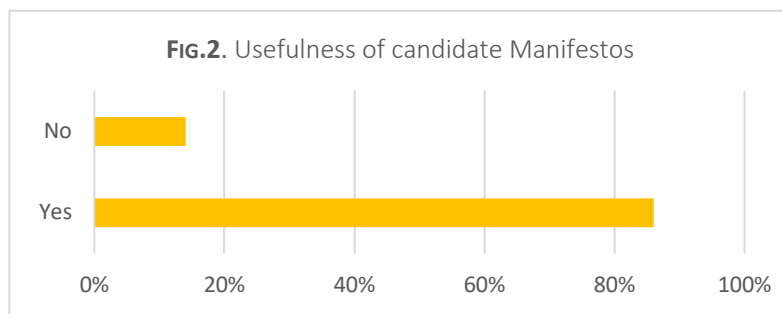
Journalists had somewhat mixed views on the electoral system in the Maldives, with 70% feeling that structural changes (political/social/legislative) were necessary to combat electoral malpractice such as vote buying, bribery, and abuse of power. 30% deemed the current system to be sufficient in deterring bribery and corruption. Concerns were raised about campaign malpractices such as disinformation by political parties and candidates, how widespread the practice of bribery had become, and the failure of authorities to take legal action against such practices.

#### Sources of Information:

55% of journalists questioned the legitimacy and accuracy of information spread by political forces such as candidates and political parties. However, as shown in *Figure 1.*, the validity of information provided by the government to journalists around election time was seen by the majority of respondents as 'valid'.



Most (70%) respondents indicated satisfaction at the Election Commission's officially disseminated information through the Government Gazette and the Commission's official "X" account – referring to them as to their primary sources of electoral information. Many also named the state broadcaster, Public Service Media (PSM) and *Raajje* TV as other main sources of electoral information.



On press freedom to make inquiries from the Election Commission, 14% deemed the process to be positive while 14% had no opinion, and 72% expressed dissatisfaction over the time gap between specific enquiries and receipt of responses.

**Fig. 2.** Most (83%) participants agreed on the relevance and significance of candidate manifestoes, and the importance of journalists and the general public to familiarize themselves with these documents.

Suggested changes:

The most requested change was that the public be given the choice of a “None of The Above” (NOTA) option on the ballot—in other words, the right to cast a formal protest vote to demonstrate dissatisfaction with the choice of candidates or the political system.

Challenges/constraints to their work:

- Journalists were equally for and against in their view of the time allotted to prepare for press conferences on voting and election matters by the Election Commission and candidates or political parties alike
- Excessive workloads were reported during election campaign periods, due to insufficient staffing at their workplaces, and demanding travel schedules for campaign coverage.
- Some participants also expressed concern about their right to report freely during elections, particularly due to job security concerns, the pressure to protect certain political figures, or even threats to write in a biased manner in support of a particular party’s campaign efforts, or to align with editorial political allegiances. Given the sensitive nature of these issues, many journalists were not comfortable speaking out in detail.
- Some participants alluded to public backlash and personal attacks or criticism they faced during election periods. Some talked about being labeled as a “party activist”, while others reported of slander and criticism. These concerns were expressed individually and were not the shared view among multiple journalists.
- Journalists stated that they were viewed negatively in regards to their role in misinformation and disinformation dissemination during election periods.

**Target Group 2: Youth**

*Survey Sample – 25 youth (7 male, 18 female)*

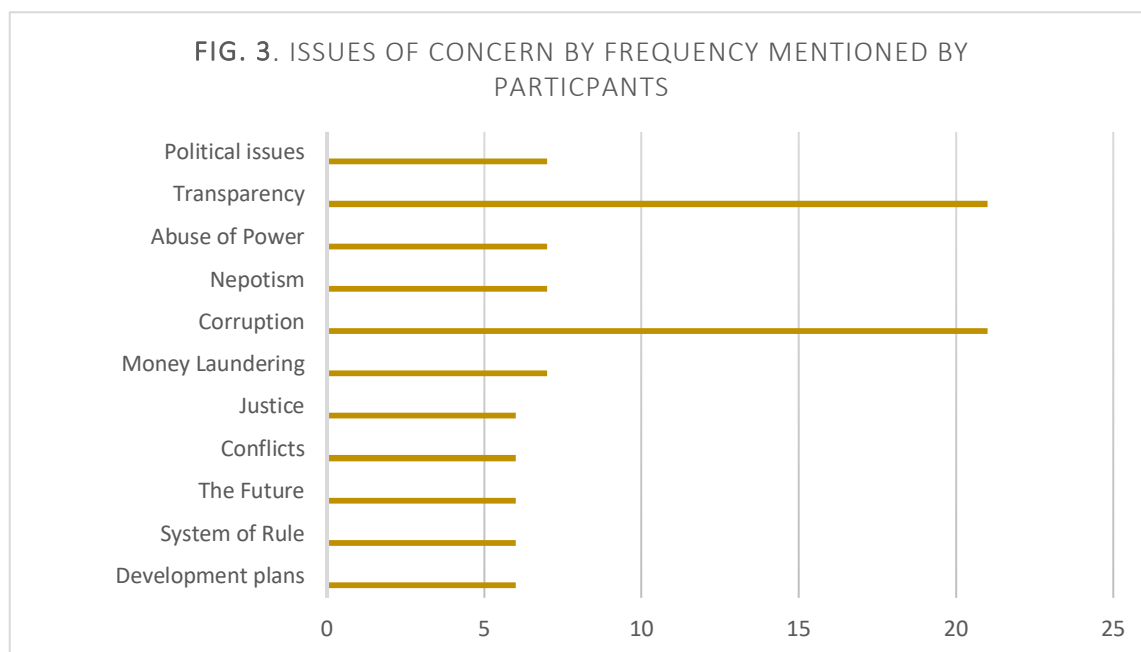
*Survey Method – Questionnaires and Focus Discussion Groups*

*Age Group – 18 to 30 years*

Overall voting experience:

All participants taking part in the survey had voted in the 2023 Presidential Elections and knew correctly which political party the president represented. Apart from one, all respondents correctly described the role of “democracy”. Of the participants, 30% supported a particular political party and 20% were involved in campaign activities, while all were in agreement that candidate manifestoes played a crucial role in their voting decisions.

On the voting process, almost half the respondents said the physical act of voting was time-consuming due to long queues, but almost all declared that polling stations were well organized. One respondent in particular highlighted the lengthy process of re-registering to vote. 80% of respondents believed the voting process to be fair while 20% believed it to be corrupt. 100% of the respondents believed that corruption was rampant during elections.



Opinion of the electoral system:

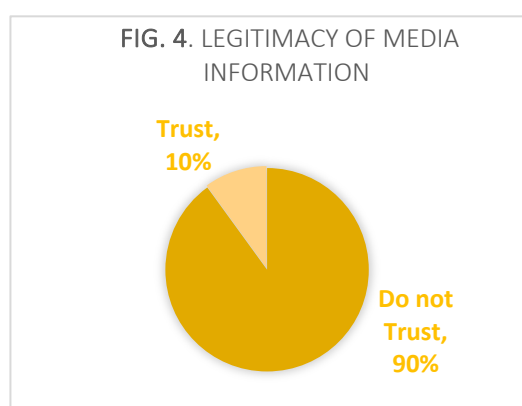
While all participants believed the electoral system to be corrupt, several also raised concerns about the transparency of the electoral process, particularly in regards to unavailability of information on campaign finances and corruption issues regarding candidates. *Figure 3.* shows which issues youth felt were most concerning. Some respondents highlighted the importance of strict enforcement of legislation to combat corruption. Notably, many did not have concerns about the logistical management of the elections by the Election Commission.

A respondent noted that some individuals were being influenced to vote on behalf of those with psychological disabilities – cases were mentioned where visibly mentally unwell individuals being brought to vote, but their caregiver cast votes on their behalf, even when the individuals with disabilities were seemingly not in a mental state to understand what was happening.

Sources of information and voting behavior by gender:

As referenced in *Figure 4.*, 90% of respondents expressed a lack of confidence in news media for legitimate information during election cycles.

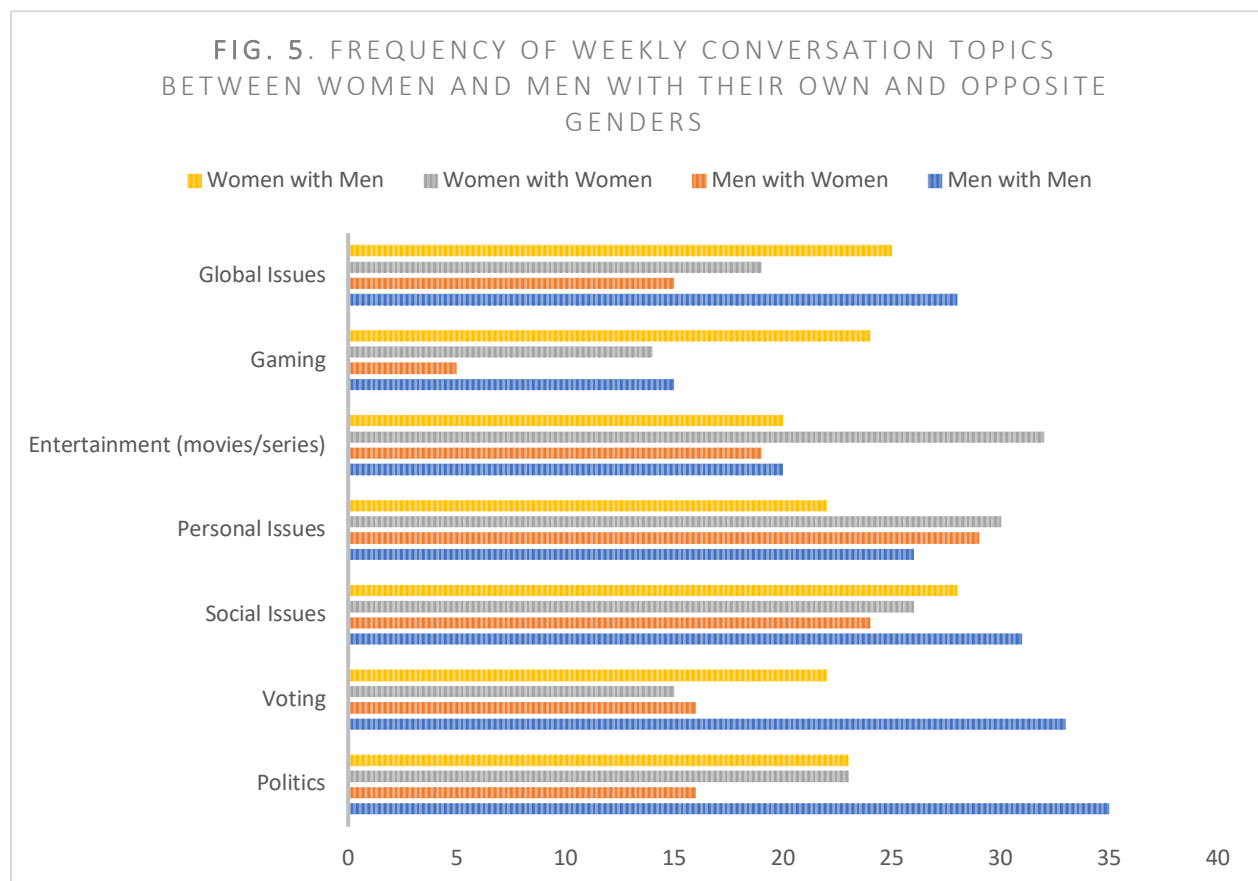
Both male and female respondents regarded news, campaign posters and manifestoes as equally influential with manifestoes having the strongest impact. Social media, trust in the opinions of friends and family had a greater influence on male respondents than women who posited greater trust in campaign posters.



The findings indicated that both genders dedicated similar amounts of time to education, social life, social media, and keeping up with daily news.

Male respondents exhibited a noticeable bias (40%) towards preferring male candidates in elections, while female respondents showed no particular preference in gender type. The study indicated that women engaged more in domestic work and childcare compared to men, which can indirectly affect their availability and interest in political and leisure activities. Approximately 91% of women with children reported spending at least an hour per day on housework, compared to 30% of men with children.

Figure 5 shows how men and women engage in political discussions differently in social settings, particularly around election periods. Male respondents indicated that politics is a frequent topic of conversation, regardless of timing. In contrast, female respondents reported engaging in political discussions mainly during election period. This suggests that men may have more consistent engagement with political discourses, while women’s discussions are more event-driven, possibly influenced by the prominent of politics as a trending topic during elections, when it becomes a dominant subject in public conversations or mainstream and social media.



Suggested changes:

- Some participants recommended additional measures to improve security and privacy for the elderly and People with Disabilities (PWDs) to ensure their voter confidentiality, while others raised concerns about voting rights for individuals with disabilities, suggesting that only those of sound mind should be allowed to vote.
- Some emphasized the need for increased privacy at voting booths, as they felt too exposed to cameras.

- Strict enforcement of laws to reduce electoral corruption, and heightening the criteria to run for office
- Making voting a mandatory civic duty as well as raising the bar of qualifications required for candidates running for office.
- When asked about desired changes to the electoral process, most respondents suggested the inclusion of a “None of The Above” (NOTA) option on ballot papers.

### Target Group 3: Women’s Development Committees and Island Councils

*Survey Sample – 20 (5 male, 15 female)*

*Survey Method – Questionnaires and Focus Discussion Groups*

#### Overall voting experience:

All participants had voted in the 2023 Presidential elections, and all but two were aware of the President’s party affiliation. All respondents claimed that voting procedures such as access and ease on voting day, were convenient.

#### Opinion of the electoral system:

Majority (88%) of the respondents reported that they believed the electoral process in the country was conducted fairly, although all participants agreed that corruption had an influence in the election itself, particularly during campaigning. All agreed that more information on the candidates would help voters make more informed decisions.

Many who agreed that corruption was present in the electoral process, were reluctant to go into detail during the interviews about it. However, some participants mentioned: acts of blatant bribery from parties, candidates, and their campaign teams, and also claimed to witness anti-campaigning, coercion, and abuse of power. There were no reports of coercion or force by family members or spouses in voting for a particular candidate/party. Some expressed disappointment that no meaningful action had taken place against perpetrators during election periods. Some participants alluded to the act of creating job positions at the branches of state-owned companies in the islands, and the mass hiring of personnel during campaign periods, as often reported by local media<sup>28</sup> as examples of malpractice and corruption.

While there is an Elections Commission focal point designated in every island, many residents are unaware of their identity or role<sup>29</sup>.

#### Sources of Information:

Trust in information from friends and general sources ranked higher than trust in news or social media, but responses on this topic were incomplete, with half of the participants leaving this section blank. The most influential factors for voting decisions were general information, manifestoes, televised debates, and social media.

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<sup>28</sup> Newspaper Article: More than 50 employees hired for new RDC office in Hithadhoo,2024: <https://adhadhu.com/article/52842>

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Commission of the Maldives: Monitoring Report of the Parliamentary Elections, 2024. <https://hrcm.org.mv/storage/uploads/nxqmp5Yy/qaeonyer.pdf>

Notably, candidate manifestoes played a significant role in participants' decision-making, with 81% affirming its importance. Participants believed that manifestoes held candidates accountable, offering insight into their plans and enabling the public to evaluate their performance. However, many expressed disappointments with candidates' failure to fulfill their manifestoes once in power. This led to a general lack of trust in the materialization of campaign pledges, with participants voting with a sense of skepticism and limited confidence in their choices.

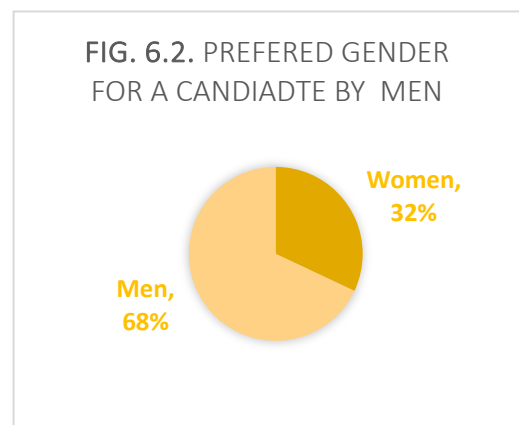
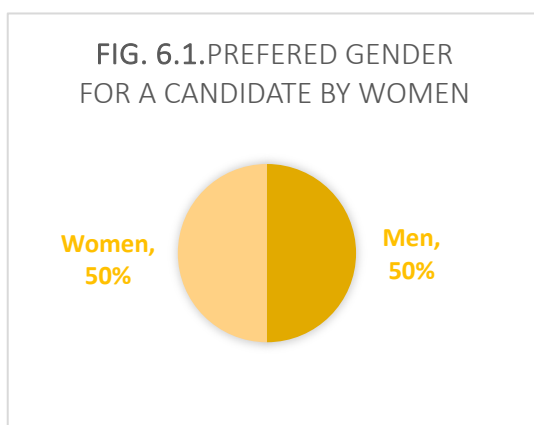
#### Voting behavior by gender:

Most respondents reported to having participated in campaign events or rallies at some point in their lives in some form—as an attendant, or as a team member in a campaign organization.

Women in the group expressed that their interest in politics usually peaked during election cycles, a sentiment not echoed by the male participants.

In terms of gender preference for a choice of candidate, most women indicated no particular preference, while men explicitly noted a preference for male candidates (refer *Figures 6.1 & 6.2*).

Time constraints were also a recurring issue with the electoral process, particularly for women. Some women expressed voting as an inconvenience due to their household responsibilities and childcare. Although election day is a public holiday for government offices, women, particularly mothers, still face the challenge of managing household tasks and childcare (one participant suggested online voting as an easier option, especially for mothers). Some male participants admitted they were less involved in household work compared to women. This highlights the gendered burden of home responsibilities that affect women's voting experience.



## VI. Additional Findings

### Voter education

Respondents of the survey highlighted insignificant efforts in voter education on the part of the Elections Commission. Although the Maldives is well connected by mobile connectivity<sup>30</sup> and internet, most election awareness information disseminated by the Elections Commission becomes lost in the

<sup>30</sup> The Maldives has an extensive mobile network and internet coverage, and high internet usage: Telecom Statistics, Communications Authority of the Maldives, August 2024: <https://www.cam.gov.mv/stats.htm>

overwhelming flow of information on social media and other platforms. This underscores the need for more targeted approaches, such as a decentralized strategy where Island Councils conduct localized awareness campaigns on behalf of the Commission and provide regular progress reports. Alternatively, direct communication methods like SMS updates from the Commission could ensure that critical electoral information reaches voters more effectively.

Prior to the 2023 Presidential elections, The Election Commission conducted voter education programs in schools located on several islands, to target first-time voters. Important electoral information such as registration deadlines were disseminated by Island Councils through community notice boards and social media groups, in addition but according to the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives,<sup>31</sup> the sessions conducted were insufficient in number and reach. HRC Maldives also noted that social media, as a means of information dissemination, while effective, did leave out groups that may not use digital devices such as the elderly and PWDs, highlighting the need for more inclusive information dissemination efforts.

All islands in the Maldives have access to televised news and internet. Almost all participants cited the Public Service Media Channel as their primary news source, followed by Raajje TV and social media for election-related information. While these sources played a crucial role, many participants recognized that these media outlets were affiliated to specific political parties, and raised concerns about impartiality.

Participants demonstrated awareness of how information can be leveraged to sway votes based on the quality of information received, and recognized that media coverage can be biased in favor of certain parties or candidates. This perception was not new to them, as most individuals tended to engage with media outlets that align with their political preferences. While misinformation was not explicitly mentioned by participants, they easily identified content that presented favorable information about specific parties or candidates. According to journalists, constraints arise from media sponsorship by influential figures, which raises ethical concerns regarding coverage that may be critical of their sponsors.

## VII. Recommendations

The recommendations are divided into two categories: recommendations directly related to the electoral voting process and those that indirectly but significantly affect the electoral process's integrity, particularly for marginalized groups.

### Direct implications to the electoral process

1. The voter's right to express their dissatisfaction of candidates through 'NOTA'

Introduce a "None of the above" option on ballots to provide voters with a formal mechanism to indicate their dissatisfaction. This option would empower voters to express their stance transparently while ensuring their participation in the electoral process.

*The findings from the data analysis show that a significant percentage of voters (1.71% in the first round and 2.79% in the runoff) cast invalid votes, suggesting frustration or dissatisfaction with the available candidates. Implementing a NOTA option could help increase voter confidence in the process.*

2. A collaborative information dissemination effort

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<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Commission Maldives, Report in local language, <https://hrcm.org.mv/storage/uploads/nxqmp5Yy/qaeonver.pdf>



Have the Election Commission and other stakeholders such as media, civil society, and educational institutions collaborate to strengthen public education on the electoral process.

*The research indicates that educating voters on the importance of their vote could boost participation and awareness, particularly in a context where some voters may feel disconnected from the electoral process. More targeted outreach could ensure that voters are informed, reducing the number of invalid votes and increasing meaningful participation.*

### 3. Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation

Introduce stricter regulations and penalties for spreading misinformation and disinformation to safeguard electoral integrity. Concurrently, establish a fact-checking coalition and promote public education on identifying legitimate sources of information. Strengthening these mechanisms will help voters access accurate and reliable information, ensuring informed electoral participation as well as trust in the electoral process.

*Misinformation is a widespread concern affecting both voter behavior and trust in electoral institutions. Strengthening penalties for spreading false information, particularly related to electoral candidates, would ensure voters have access to accurate, reliable information when making their decisions.*

### 4. Strengthen internal accountability measures in political parties

Political parties should strengthen their internal accountability mechanisms or code of conduct to ensure candidates for office can be held accountable by their peers/members and by those who vote them in.

*Given the trust deficit in candidate election promises and the prevalence of unmet campaign pledges as indicated in the findings, this recommendation aims to provide the Election Commission with leverage to hold political parties accountable.*

### 5. Strengthen coordination and management of anti-corruption frameworks

Improve coordination between relevant authorities to address corruption and other electoral malpractices.

*Participants have expressed concerns about corruption and malpractice that undermine the integrity of the overall electoral process. Effective enforcement of laws and transparent investigations into electoral malpractice and complaints made through official anti-corruption mechanisms would help build public trust and ensure fairness and legitimacy of electoral outcomes.*

## Indirect implications to the electoral process

### 1. Transparent campaign-related news coverage

Amend laws and media regulations to mandate the disclosure of sponsored campaign content published or broadcasted by media outlets.

*Journalists who responded to this research expressed concerns of a culture of harassment from political parties for news media coverage of their opposition, especially during election time. Amending laws and media regulations to mandate disclosure of sponsored campaign content published or broadcasted on media platforms will help the public understand the origin, intent, and biases behind the content they consume during elections.*

## 2. Trainings for media personnel

Develop and implement training programs for journalists, with a focus on political ethics, election reporting, and combatting misinformation.

*Given the role of media in shaping public perception particularly around elections, investing in the professional development of journalists could help create a more informed media landscape - reducing the spread of false or misleading information and enhancing media integrity, accountability and ethics.*

## 3. Deeper research into political hurdles faced by women

Promote research into the challenges women face in pursuing politics in the Maldives to create more tailored solutions for increasing their participation.

*The findings of this research stress the need for a more nuanced, gender-specific research to understand how best to support women in the political sphere, particularly in terms of balancing home and political duties.*

## 4. Protection against slander and disinformation

Establish legal frameworks that protect against slander and disinformation targeting political candidates in order to create a less hostile political environment

*The findings of this research highlight the hostile political environment in the Maldives which discourage many qualified individuals, especially women and youth, from entering politics. Legal protections would mitigate the personal and social damage that could be caused by defamation and support a healthier political climate.*

## VIII. Conclusion

The desk review identifies significant systemic vulnerabilities within the Maldivian electoral process, including vote buying, limited participation of marginalized groups, and the spread of misinformation. The findings and the desk review provide an understanding of the current electoral landscape in the Maldives while the recommendations highlight a targeted plan of action to improve identified challenges.

Through surveys and focus group discussions with journalists, youth, island councils, and women's groups, the reviewed findings from primary data illustrate how systemic issues identified in the desk review and country context sections are experienced by the target groups in reality. From harassment of journalists, to public distrust in media and political institutions, to limited participation of marginalized groups in the electoral process, to the issues that most concern Maldivian youth, to the helplessness felt at not being able to act against corruption and malpractice by the respondents –the findings validate the need for further action by civil society and government.

By proposing targeted measures such as the "None of the Above" (NOTA) option, collaborative information dissemination, stricter regulations against misinformation, and enhanced accountability within political parties, the EIA recommendations directly address the most significant issues highlighted in the findings.

In response to findings showing how issues such as of negative media practices and social barriers contribute to or worsen the problems within the electoral system, the indirect recommendations offer

the following solutions: Transparency in campaign coverage and legal frameworks that protect against slander, and the need for more tailored solutions to overcome systemic and societal biases that impede women's political participation.

It is the hope of the assessment team that the EIA offers an evidence-based case for electoral reform in the Maldives while reaching its aim to effectively identify gaps in information in order to better understand the scope of participation by marginalized groups in the electoral process. It is also hoped that the assessment provides a deeper understanding on how information is disseminated during elections and the parts misinformation and disinformation play in influencing voter engagement.



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Interview Questions  
Journalists

Age: 20 – 30  30 – 40  40 – 50  50 & Above   
Gender: Male  Female   
Marital Status: Single  Married  Divorced   
Employment Status: Employed  Self-employed

YES OR NO Answers

- 1. Which news outlet/ channel do you belong to? (can decide not to answer)
- 2. Do you belong to a Political Party?.....
- 3. Did you Vote in the last Presidential election?.....
- 4. Do you Trust the information provided by the Media on whom to vote for?
- 5. If you could, would you change the way voting is conducted in this country?
- 6. Do you believe the voting process is implemented in a just fair method?
- 7. Do you believe the election process is transparent?
- 8. Did you take part in any campaign, poster distribution or attend a rally or meeting with regard to a political party or candidate?
- 9. As a journalist did you cover campaign rallies, poster distribution events or attend a meeting with regards to a political party or candidate?
- 10. As a journalists do you have the freedom to choose which political event you can and cannot cover?
- 11. Do you believe there is enough information given to journalists before an election?
- 12. Do you believe the government is just in how information is provided to journalists?
- 13. Do you feel politics needs to be a subject that needs to be taught in higher secondary?
- 14. Where do you find policies a candidate or party is presenting to their electorate?
- 15. Did the Newspaper you work for help any electoral candidate circulate sponsored content during the campaign period? (articles, features, photo stories, video interviews)

**Between 1 to 10 SCORING (1 being the lowest, 10 the highest)**

1. How much was your decision to vote influenced by below:
  - Friends.....
  - Family.....
  - General Information.....
  - News.....
  - Social Media.....
  - Campaign Posters.....
  - Work/ Office.....
  - Manifestos.....
  - Televised Debates.....
2. Which Local Channels do you watch the most, give a score from highest to lowest:
  - TVM/ PSM
  - Raajje TV
  - DHi TV
  - Yes TV
  - Majlis TV
  - VTV
  - Magey Raajje
  - Sun TV
  - Dhaaris TV
3. What are the types of information or entertainment mostly watched in a week:
  - News
  - Documentary
  - Majlis
  - Movies
  - Drama
4. How much would you rate your general knowledge and interest in politics?.....
5. Give a score on how much time is consumed in your life in a day by the following:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work/ Office.....</li> <li>• Housework (ironing/Cleaning)</li> <li>• Cooking.....</li> <li>• Child Care.....</li> <li>• School/ Tuition – Pick, drop off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socializing (friends)...</li> <li>• Education (studying).....</li> <li>• Reading/ Watching news (Online news/ TV) ...</li> <li>• Social Media.....</li> </ul>
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6. Between the two Genders give a score on topics of conversation with people in General (family, friends, coworkers):
 

<p>Man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics.....</li> <li>• Voting.....</li> <li>• Social Issues.....</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Issues.....</li> <li>• Entertainment (movies/Drama/ Celebrities).....</li> <li>• Gaming.....</li> </ul>
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- Global Issues.....

Women

- Politics.....
- Voting.....
- Social Issues.....

- Personal Issues.....
- Entertainment (movies/Drama/Celebrities).....
- Gaming.....
- Global Issues.....

**General Information**

1. Which Political issue do you find yourself most passionate about?.....
2. How convenient or difficult would you say the voting process was for you?
3. Do you believe the information received is adequate before voting?
4. Do you feel journalists have the freedom to question on election matters?
5. How satisfied are you with regard to the information received for your inquiries?
6. Where and which sources do you mostly rely on for government announcements?
7. How much of valid or misinformation do you feel is received from such sources?
8. Do the information journalists receive given in a timely manner?
9. How much effort from the side of journalists are required to access information for the public knowledge?
10. Do you have the freedom to write or are there limitations? And by which sources?
11. Do you feel a loyalty or bias in your writing due to the source of news you represent?
12. How are media invited to the government press conferences before an election and voting information? What are the sources? And what are the limitations?
13. Are you given adequate time to prepare for a Press conference on election and voting?
14. Are you able to differentiate between misinformation and propaganda from the truth?
15. Explain the challenges and difficulties as journalists that you have faced during the Campaign period?
16. Do you feel journalists have good representation in giving their thoughts on policymaking concerning information, and misinformation?
17. During Campaigns, did you have to go through electoral manifestos of candidates and parties?
18. Do you believe manifestos are important? And why?



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Interview Questions

20-30 women (including island women development committee members), 10-15 youth

Age: 20 – 30 [radio] 30 – 40 [radio] 40 – 50 [radio] 50 & Above [radio]
Gender: Male [radio] Female [radio]
Marital Status: Single [radio] Married [radio] Divorced [radio]
Employment Status: Employed [radio] Unemployed [radio] Self-employed [radio]

YES OR NO Answers

- 1. Do you belong to a Political Party?.....
2. Did you Vote in the last Presidential election?.....
3. Who conducted the election Process?.....
4. Which Party does the current President of Maldives belong to?.....
5. Who has the power in a democracy, the leader or the people?.....
6. Do you Trust the information provided by the Media on whom to vote for:...
7. If you could, would you change the way voting is conducted in this country?.
8. Do you believe the voting process is implemented in a just fair method?.....
9. Do you believe the election process is influenced by corruption?.....
10. Are you a supporter of a specific Political Party?.....
11. Did you take part in any campaign, poster distribution or attend a rally or meeting with regards to a political party or candidate? .....
12. Do you believe the government needs to provide more information so the public can make a more informed decision? .....

**Between 1 to 10 SCORING (1 being the lowest, 10 the highest)**

1. How much was your decision to vote influenced by below:
  - Friends.....
  - Family.....
  - General Information.....
  - News.....
  - Social Media.....
  - Campaign Posters.....
  - Manifestos.....
  - Televised Debates.....
2. How much do you trust the information provided by below concerning Political and Voting:
  - Friends.....
  - Family.....
  - General Information.....
  - News.....
  - Social Media.....
  - Campaign Posters.....
3. As per scoring how much would you trust the candidates as per their Gender:
  - Male
  - Female
4. How much would you say the voting was as per its:
  - Convenience.....
  - Time-consuming.....
  - Difficult.....
  - Unnecessary.....
5. How much would you rate your general knowledge and interest in politics?.....
6. Give a score on how much time is consumed in your life in a day by the following:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work/ Office.....</li> <li>• Housework (ironing/Cleaning)</li> <li>• Cooking.....</li> <li>• Child Care.....</li> <li>• School/ Tuition – Pick, drop off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socializing (friends)...</li> <li>• Education (studying).....</li> <li>• Reading/ Watching news (Online news/ TV) ...</li> <li>• Social Media.....</li> </ul>
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7. Between the two Genders give a score for more likely topics of conversation with people in General (family, friends, coworkers):
 

<p>Man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics.....</li> <li>• Voting.....</li> <li>• Social Issues.....</li> <li>• Personal Issues.....</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment (movies/Drama/ Celebrities).....</li> <li>• Gaming.....</li> <li>• Global Issues.....</li> </ul>
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Women

- Politics.....
- Voting.....
- Social Issues.....
- Personal Issues.....
- Entertainment (movies/Drama/Celebrities).....
- Gaming.....
- Global Issues.....

**General Information**

1. Which Political issue do you find yourself most passionate about?.....
2. How often is Voting and Politics a topic among your friends?
  - Often
  - Twice
  - Once
  - Rarely
  - Never
3. How convenient or difficult would you say the voting process was for you?
4. Are you able to differentiate between misinformation and propaganda from the truth?
5. Do you personally believe the candidates are up to the standard for running in for office?
6. Do you believe manifestos are important? And why?



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Interview Questions

Island Council Members

Age: 20 – 30  30 – 40  40 – 50  50 & Above

Gender: Male  Female

Marital Status: Single  Married  Divorced

Employment Status: Employed  Self-employed

YES OR NO Answers

1. Do you belong to a Political Party?.....
2. Did you Vote in the last Presidential election?.....
3. Do you Trust the information provided by the Media on whom to vote for?
4. Do you believe the voting process is implemented in a just fair method?.....
5. Do you believe the election process is transparent?.....
6. Did you take part in any campaign, poster distribution or attend a rally or meeting with regards to a political party or candidate? .....
7. Do you believe there is enough information given to public before an election?
8. Do you know where to find the policies presented by a candidate during an election?

Between 1 to 10 SCORING (1 being the lowest, 10 the highest)

1. How much was your decision to vote influenced by below:
  - Friends.....
  - Family.....
  - General Information.....
  - News.....
  - Social Media.....
  - Campaign Posters.....
  - Work/ Office.....
  - Manifestos.....
  - Televised Debates.....

2. Which Local Channels do you watch the most, give a score from highest to lowest:
  - TVM/ PSM
  - Raajje TV
  - DHi TV
  - Yes TV
  - Majlis TV
  - VTV
  - Magey Raajje
  - Sun TV
  - Dhaaris TV
  
3. What are the types of information or entertainment mostly watched in a week:
  - News
  - Documentary
  - Majlis
  - Movies
  - Drama
  
4. How much do you trust the information provided by below, concerning Political and Voting:
  - Friends.....
  - Family.....
  - General Information.....
  - News.....
  - Social Media.....
  - Campaign Posters.....
  - Work/ Office.....
  
5. How much would you rate your general knowledge and interest in politics?.....
  
6. Give a score on how much time is consumed in your life in a day by the following:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work/ Office.....</li> <li>• Housework (ironing/Cleaning)</li> <li>• Cooking.....</li> <li>• Child Care.....</li> <li>• School/ Tuition – Pick, drop off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socializing (friends)...</li> <li>• Education (studying).....</li> <li>• Reading/ Watching news (Online news/ TV) ...</li> <li>• Social Media.....</li> </ul>
--	--
  
7. Between the two Genders give a score on topics of conversation with people in General (family, friends, coworkers):
 

<p>Man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics.....</li> <li>• Voting.....</li> <li>• Social Issues.....</li> <li>• Personal Issues.....</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment (movies/Drama/ Celebrities).....</li> <li>• Gaming.....</li> <li>• Global Issues.....</li> </ul>
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Women

- Politics.....
- Voting.....
- Social Issues.....
- Personal Issues.....
- Entertainment (movies/Drama/Celebrities).....
- Gaming.....
- Global Issues.....

**Open Ended Questions**

1. Are you or have you ever been a political appointee?
2. Being under such a position do you feel influenced to vote for a certain party or candidate?
3. Did you ever feel forced to give your loyalty to a party or candidate?
4. Were there attempts of influence through financial means or career opportunities extended in exchange for loyalty and votes for a specific candidate or party? If so explain which type.
5. How much of this influence do you think has a hold on island council members
6. Do you have the freedom to attend rallies, or campaigns by any political party of your choice?
7. Who has the most influence over the council members?
8. What are the sources of information that influences your decision to vote?
9. How convenient or difficult would you say the voting process was for you?
10. Are you able to differentiate between misinformation and propaganda from the truth?
11. Do you feel Island councils have good representation in policymaking?
12. Do you have access to media outlets, online news from your island?
13. How much is your perception influenced by the channels you watch?
14. How important do you think are policies presented by political candidates running for office?
15. How important is it for voters to go through candidates or parties manifesto before casting a vote?