



Yemen Polling Center
المركز اليمني لقياس الرأي العام

Addressing Life Issues & Voicing Public Opinion

In Collaboration with



Advancing Political Participation in Yemen

Yemeni Political Parties

Images, Attitudes & Societal Demands

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About the Advancing Political Participation in Yemen Project

The Yemen Polling Center (YPC) is currently implementing the Advancing Political Participation in Yemen project. This project entails five workshops and a public opinion survey.

This project is funded through the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). MEPI is a unique program designed to engage directly with and invest in the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI works to create vibrant partnerships with citizens to foster the development of pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous societies throughout the MENA region. MEPI partners with local, regional and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and governments. More information about MEPI can be found at: mepi.state.gov

The main goals of this project are to enhance the public's trust in political parties, the political process, and to advance citizens' political participation ultimately as a source of sustainable political development in Yemen..

The beneficiaries of this project are the main political parties in Yemen, selected civil society organizations, selected media organizations, and Yemeni citizens and society at large.

Yemeni citizens perceive political parties as interested only in personal gain and in what compromises each side could get from the other. Political parties continuously fail to address the issues and concerns of greatest importance to average citizens. This has led citizens to distrust political parties and raised concerns that Yemeni citizens may have begun to lose faith in the political process in the country.

To address this issue, YPC undertook to conduct a public opinion survey to provide political parties with valuable data and information on the issues, concerns and priorities of citizens, and on the means to communicate effectively and more efficiently with citizens and vice versa. This poll provides the parties with the necessary information to allow them to address the issues of greatest concern to their constituents, thereby enhancing their legitimacy and popularity.

In preparation for this opinion survey, YPC organized two separate workshops for members of political parties and members of civil society organizations in February 2010. The main objectives of the two workshops were threefold: (a) the workshops were designed to incorporate the opinions of political parties and civil society organizations into the questionnaire thereby insuring that the findings would be of the greatest utility to these stakeholders; b) to bring political parties and CSOs together in order to provide a forum for interaction and collaboration; and c) to instill within the political parties a sense of ownership of the survey. This final objective aimed to insure that political parties would not be reluctant to implement any obligations they would commit to during the workshops and to

insure the parties would use the data to increase their responsiveness to citizens' demands.

The project provides citizens with a role in the decision-making process and in the development of democracy, as well as a genuine opportunity for citizens' political participation in Yemen.

Key General Results

Democracy, Freedom, and Political Awareness

- When asked what democracy means a majority (54.4 percent) of Yemenis polled stated that democracy means the freedom of expression.
- More than three-quarter (76 percent) of Yemenis, believe that democracy is important for the development of the country.
- A sizable majority (61 percent) of Yemenis believe that democracy is or will be part of the solution to Yemen's problems.
- A majority of respondents (54 percent) of the respondents noted that it is difficult for a group of people to establish a political party without any interference from the government,
- Nearly 60 percent of the respondents said that they can elect their choice of candidates freely.
- Roughly one-third (35.3 percent) of respondents agreed that people are able to criticize the government without any fear, while a similar proportion (33.1 percent) disagreed.

Party Public Image

- While 39.6 percent of citizens, particularly men, consider political parties to be important to Yemen, 33.4 percent of the citizens believe that political parties are unimportant. The rest of Yemeni citizens do not know whether or not political parties are important to Yemen.
- Nearly half (47.9 percent) of the respondents who considered political parties to be unimportant, especially women respondent,s perceive parties to break up and create enmities among the people. A further 37.2 percent of the respondents consider political parties to be unimportant because the parties do not perform their functions and do not address citizens' concerns.
- Only 11.4 percent of citizens, most of whom were male, always follow party news in while to 65.1 percent of citizens do not follow party news at all.
- Almost half (48.9 percent) of the respondents said that they did not know what the main function of political parties is while only 2.5 percent of the respondents said the main function of a political party is to present political and economic programs to run the country.
- Only 12.3 percent of citizens have total confidence in political parties in comparison to

47.9 percent of citizens who do not have confidence in political parties at all.

- *More than a quarter (27.6 percent) of the respondents, mostly male respondents said that they are affiliated with political parties, but only 12.5 percent of them had been informed about party platforms and literatures.*
- *Only 13.3 of the respondents stated that they had heard of an activity, inside or outside their regions which was organized by a political party.*

Assessment of Party Performance

- *Nearly two-fifths (38.4 percent) of the respondents said that there are clear differences in platforms of political parties or in what parties advocate.*
- *About one-third (32.7 percent) of respondents said that they do not know whether any party proposes adequate solutions to the country's problems and 19.4 percent of the respondents said no party proposes adequate solutions.*
- *While 32.1 percent of the respondents agreed that opposition parties possess the capacity to influence government policies, 25.7 percent disagreed. Further, more than one-third (34.3 percent) of respondents said that they do not know whether or not opposition parties possess the capacity to influence government policies.*

Political Parties and Citizens' Priorities

- *Living conditions, the economic situation, and creating job opportunities are the most important issues for politicians, political parties and elected officials to give priority to and to focus on the most, according to a plurality of respondents (38.7 percent).*
- *Security issues in general and local crises such as Sa'ada war and the Southern Movement ought to be the top priority for politicians, political parties and elected officials according to 23.7 of the respondents.*
- *While 28.3 percent of the respondents noted that there is a political party currently in existence which adopts and expresses the interests of citizens, 58.4 percent said there is no such political party currently in Yemen.*
- *A majority (57.5 percent) of respondents said that party leaders do not care about the interests of citizens.*
- *More than three-quarters (77.7 percent) of respondents said that political parties and candidates only address issues important to citizens during elections.*
- *While 16 percent of the respondents said that political parties offer excellent plans to develop the country, 41.4 percent of them believe that they do not do that.*

Communication Methods

- *About half (48.4 percent) of respondents who follow news about political parties said that they follow party news through TV while 31.9 percent of them through magazines and newspapers.*
- *While 32 percent of party-informed respondents said that they had received the party platform and literatures from party leaders in the region, 20 percent of them said that they had obtained party platform and literatures from family members- relatives- friends.*

This Opinion Survey

Goals and Objectives

The main objectives of the survey are to measure the opinion and attitudes of the Yemeni public towards: a) the image of political parties in society; b) obstacles facing citizens in communicating with political parties and vice versa; c) effective communication mechanisms between political parties and citizens; d) important issues and priorities to citizens; e) causes of low political participation among citizens; f) actions, activities, and motivations to increase citizens' political participation; and g) necessary measures for political and electoral reforms.

Study Community

This opinion survey was implemented during the period 5-15 March 2010 in 12 governorates spanning most of the country: Sana' city, Taiz, Ibb, Al-Hodeidah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Aden, Hadhramout, Mareb, Lahj, Abyan, and Amran. The survey targeted 1000 respondents from the 12 governorates. The distribution of the respondents was proportional to the population of each governorate. Males constituted 50.2% and the females constituted 49.8% of the respondents. The interviews were conducted by 38 male and female field researchers and 6 field coordinators. The interviewers were trained for 6 days on the selection of respondents and how to conduct the interviews. Below are the study community characteristics.

Geographic Representation

The interviews were conducted in 102 neighborhoods and quarters scattered in 94 districts in the 12 governorates. The neighborhoods, quarters, districts and governorates were selected based on a random sample determined through a multi-phase process. The first phase was choosing 12 governorates out of 19. Sa'ada governorate was not included for security reasons. Al-Mahara was not included because its population does not exceed 0.05% of the general population, the population is highly dispersed, and very poor transportation infrastructure make the costs far exceed the benefits. The 12 governorates were selected as follows:

- 1. Aden and Sana'a city were selected purposefully for several demographic, social and population factors such as both of them are having an amalgam of citizens from the other governorates as well as of all social and demographic classes. Furthermore, Sana'a is the both the country's capitol and largest city. Aden was the capitol of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and remains an important port city.*
- 2. The remaining 10 governorates were divided into four regions based on a number of geographic and population characteristics in order to ensure the sample was as representative as possible. These regions are:*
 - a. Governorates in the central areas*
 - b. The distant mountainous governorates in the north*

- c. *The arid governorates in the east and the south east*
- d. *The western and coastal governorates.*

The governorates in each region were selected based on a systematic sample. The sample was categorized based on its population according to the 2004 population census. The number of interviews in each governorate was proportionate its population distribution.

In the second phase, the primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected randomly in neighborhoods and quarters using the smallest administrative division available for each governorate and based on the governorate's population. No replacement of the selected sample was needed except for one respondent in Lahj governorate for security reasons.

Table 1: Sample per governorates

Governorate	Population	Weight%	PSUs	Interviews
Sana'a City	2,006,619	12.1	12	120
Aden	654,099	3.9	4	40
Taiz	2,589,769	15.6	16	156
Ibb	2,306,919	13.9	14	139
Lahj	784,412	4.7	5	47
Abyan	468,420	2.8	3	28
Hajjah	1,618,858	9.8	10	98
Hadhramout	1,126,355	6.8	7	68
Al-Hodeidah	2,370,444	14.3	14	143
Dhamar	1,455,280	8.8	9	88
Amran	937,791	5.7	6	57
Mareb	259,356	1.6	2	16
Total	16,578,322	100	102	1000

It is important to mention that 29 percent of the interviews were conducted in urban areas and 71 percent in rural areas. This reflects the distribution of the Yemeni population.

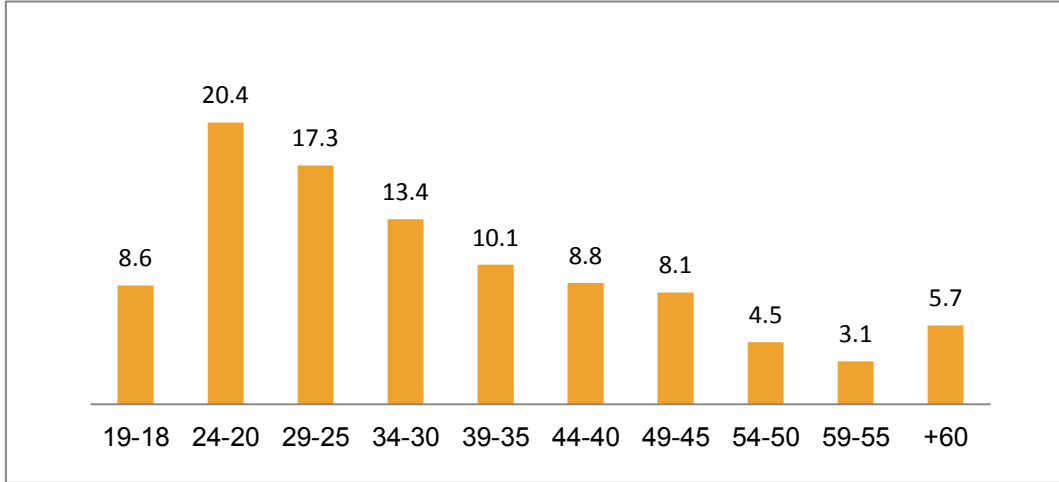
Gender Representation

The sample was divided equally between males and females with the exception of two cases in an area in Amran governorate. It was difficult to conduct the interview with two females. Therefore, the sample consists of 498 females and 502 males.

Age Group

The sample targeted respondents 18 years of age and above. Within each household, the eligible respondent was selected via Kish Grid. Kish Grid is a process which insures random selection of respondents. No significant difference was recorded in the distribution of the age group between the male respondents and the female respondents.

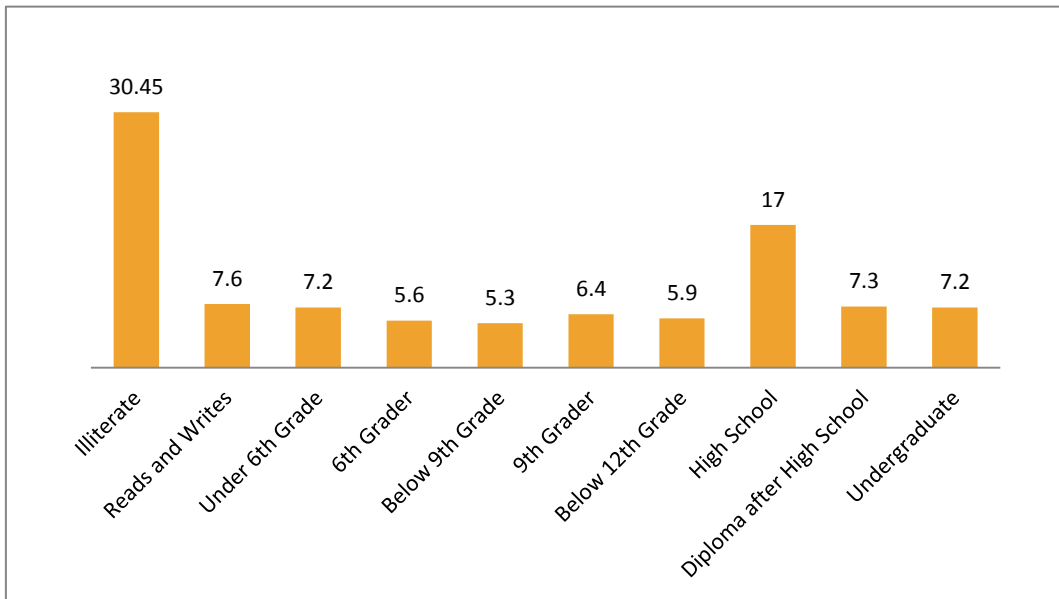
Diagram 1: Respondents’ age groups



Level of Education

Nearly one-third of respondents (31.5 percent) had at least completed high school. A similar proportion of respondents were illiterate (30.45 percent). In general, male respondents tended to be literate more often than female respondents

Diagram 2: Level of Education



Professional Status

Within the group of the male respondents, 63.9 percent stated that they work (have jobs) compared to only 8.8 percent of the female respondents. As reflected in Table 2, 22.7 percent of the working males noted they work in the public sector, 8.2 percent work in the private sector and 33.1 percent as freelancers (daily workers, owners of businesses, vocational work). And 36.1 percent of the male respondents noted that they did not work.

Within the group of the female respondents, 4.6 percent work in the public sector, 1.4 percent work in the private sector, and 2.8 percent have a private business. More than ninety one percent of female respondents noted that they did not work.

Table 2: Professions of respondents, based on gender

Work Sector	Men	Women	All
Public Job	22.7	4.6	13.7
Private Sector	8.2	1.4	4.8
Freelancer	33.1	2.8	18
Not Working	36.1	91.2	63.5

Overall Results

Political Interest and Knowledge

Public Interest in Political Parties

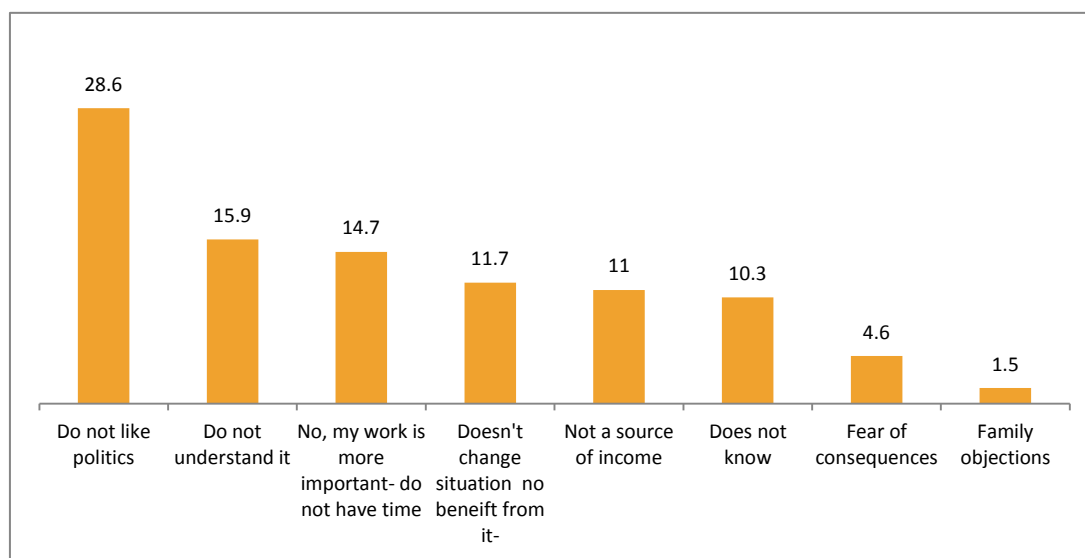
Disconcertingly, more than 40 percent of the respondents, said that they were not interested in politics. About one-fifth of the respondents (20.2 percent) affirmed that they had an interest in politics. Importantly, more than one third of the respondents (35.1 percent) said they are sometimes interested in politics. Thus more than half of Yemenis (55.3 percent) are at least somewhat interested in politics. Men tended to be more interested in politics than women.

Table 3: Are you interested in politics?

	Male	Female	All
Yes	28.3	12.0	20.2
Sometimes/little	32.3	38.0	35.1
No	37.3	44.6	40.9
Do not know	1.8	5.4	3.6
Refused to answer	0.4	0.0	0.2

A plurality among those who stated they are not interested in politics identified a general dislike for politics as the reason. Sixteen percent of stated they do not understand politics. Not having time or being preoccupied with work was the third most prominent cause for not being interested in politics (14.7 percent). More than one in ten (11.7 percent) respondents said that they are not interested in politics because they do not believe the political system will change.

Diagram 3: Causes behind lack of interest in politics*



*Percentages do not add to 100 because "Refuse to Answer" are not included in the diagram.

Democracy Awareness

When asked what democracy means to them, more than half of the respondents identified freedom of expression with democracy. Other ideas regarding the meaning of democracy were the power of the people, equality before the law, general human rights, and improving living conditions. Nonetheless, none of these responses reached even the 10 percent threshold while roughly one in ten respondents stated they did not know what democracy was.

Table 4: Citizens' perception of democracy

	Male	Female	All
Freedom of expression	55.2	53.6	54.4
Power of people	9.8	4.6	7.2
All equal before law	5.8	3.6	4.7
Human rights in general	2.6	5.8	4.2
Improving living conditions	2.4	4.2	3.3
Honest elections	2.8	1.8	2.3
No unemployment	1.4	3.0	2.2
No corruption	1.4	2.2	1.8
All the above	8.0	3.6	5.8
Do not know	4.8	14.3	9.5
Others	4.8	2.4	3.6

Assessing the Current State of Democracy

A plurality of respondents (38.9 percent) agree that the state of democracy in Yemen is acceptable at the current time. A further 25.2 percent somewhat agree, while 27.4 percent disagree that the state of democracy in Yemen is acceptable. Men and women differ markedly on this question with almost twice as many men stating that they did not feel the situation of democracy in Yemen is acceptable.

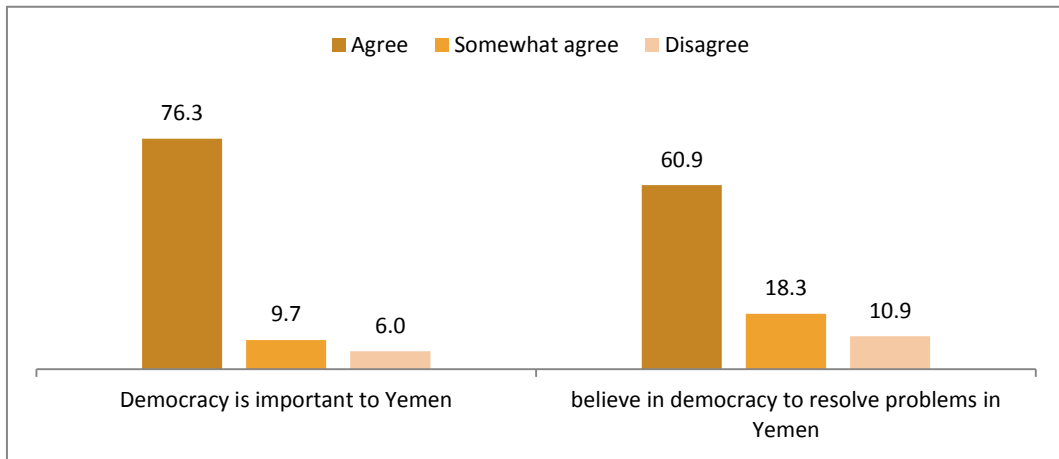
Table 5: The situation of democracy in Yemen is acceptable?

	Male	Female	All
Agree	37.8	40.0	38.9
Somewhat agree	22.3	28.1	25.2
Disagree	35.5	19.3	27.4
Do not know	4.4	12.7	8.5

The Importance of Democracy

It is clear that democracy is important to Yemenis. When the respondents were asked about whether or not democracy is important to Yemen, 76 percent, equally distributed between males and females, replied positively. Furthermore, in a different question, a strong majority (61 percent) of the respondents said that democracy is part of the solution for Yemen's problems.

Diagram 4: Importance of democracy & belief in democracy as a way to resolve Yemen’s problems*

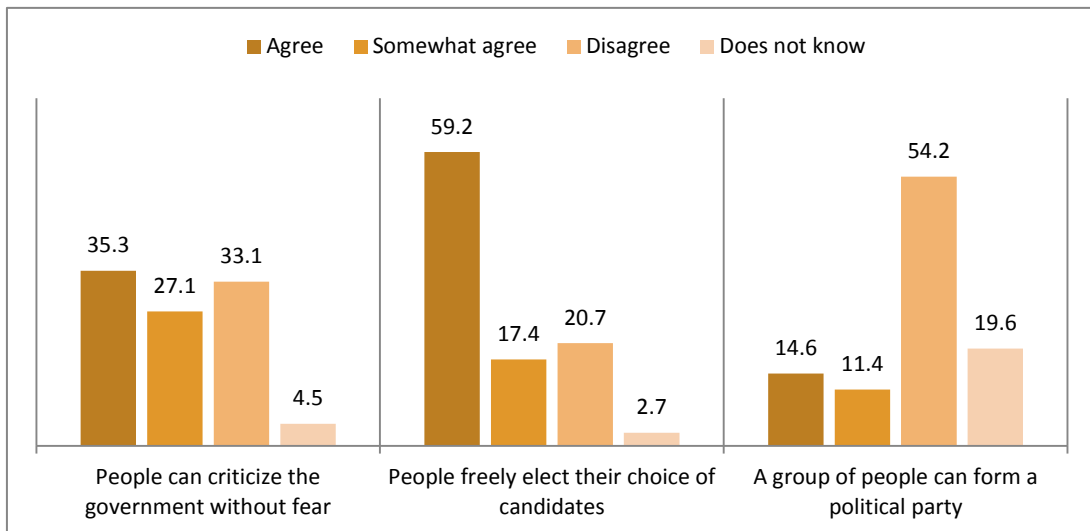


*Percentages do not add to 100 percent because the Don’t know and Refuse to Answer categories were not included.

Feeling of Freedom

While the majority of respondents understand democracy to mean freedom of expression, Yemenis’ evaluation of various forms of political expression demonstrate that people feel these freedoms are limited. According to 54 percent of the respondents, it would be very difficult for a group of people to establish a political party without the interference of the government. While nearly 60 percent of the respondents said that they can elect the candidate of their choice very freely, more than one-fifth stated they could not do this. Finally, respondents were quite divided over whether they agreed that one can criticize the government with a full third stating they did not feel they could.

Diagram 5: The freedoms to form parties, elect freely, and criticize the government

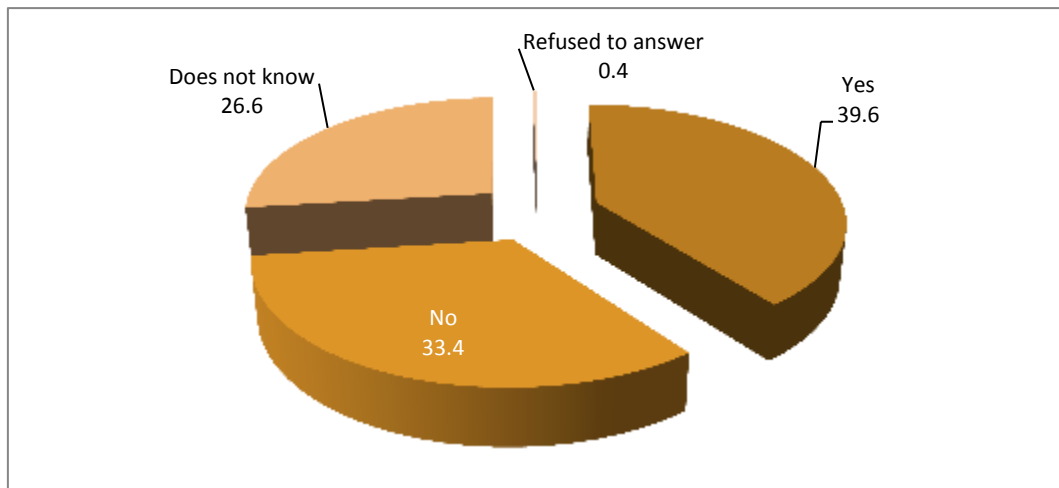


Public Image of Political Parties

Importance of Political Parties

Political Parties are important to Yemen according to 39.6 percent of respondents, a majority of whom were men. In contrast, 33.4 percent believed that political parties are not important. Furthermore, 26.6 percent of the respondents noted that they did not know whether or not political parties are important to Yemen.

Diagram 6: Are political parties important to Yemen?



The importance of political parties, according to 29.1 percent of the respondents, a majority of whom were women, is in helping to address and resolve citizens' issues. Also, according to 12.1 percent of the respondents, the existence of political parties makes the government perform better.

Table 6: Why do you believe political parties are important?

	Male	Female	All
To address and resolve citizens issues	22.1	38.8	29.3
To make the government perform better	14.2	9.4	12.1
Political pluralism and peaceful transition of power	14.1	8.8	11.9
To eliminate tyranny and to enhance democracy	16.4	5.3	11.6
Oversee the government	10.2	3.5	7.3
Defend human rights	7.1	7.6	7.3
A tool for development	4.4	5.3	4.8
Involve people in decision making	3.1	7.1	4.8
Various causes	4.4	5.3	4.8
Do not know	2.7	7.6	4.8
Increase awareness among citizens of their rights	1.3	1.2	1.3

On the other hand, 47.9 percent of the respondents who stated that political parties were not important justified their opinion by claiming that parties have created enmities and hostilities

among people. The failure of political parties to perform their functions contributed to 22.8 percent of the respondents to believe that political parties are not important. In addition, the failure of political parties to address citizens’ issues and priorities led 14.4 percent of the respondents to believe that political parties are not important.

The notion that political parties are not important to Yemenis because they are a Western concept receives little support. Thus while roughly one third of respondents do not believe political parties are important to Yemen, this is largely due to issues related to the performance of parties.

Table 7: Why do you believe political parties are not important?

	Male	Female	All
Create enmity/hostility among citizens	43.8	51.7	47.9
Do nothing/ not doing the functions	22.8	22.7	22.8
Do not adopt citizens’ issues	18.5	10.5	14.4
Western concept	7.4	3.5	5.4
Various causes	4.9	4.7	4.8
Do not know	1.2	4.7	3.0
Most of them belong to authority	0.6	1.2	0.9
Political decoration	0.6	1.2	0.9

Attention to Party News

The proportion of citizens who follow party news and activities is much lower than the proportion of citizens who believe political parties are important to Yemen. The lack of interest among citizens to follow party news and activities is due to the lack of the attention by political parties to community’s needs and citizens’

priorities. Additionally, as this report demonstrates below, poor party communication strategies are also to blame.

Table 8: Do you follow party news?

	Male	Female	All
Yes	17.5	5.2	11.4
Often	21.5	16.5	19.0
No	56.6	73.7	65.1
Do not know	4.2	4.6	4.4
Refused to answer	0.2	0.0	0.1

Functions of Political Parties

The results of the opinion survey point to a low awareness level among the general public about the functions of political parties, especially among Yemeni women.

Although a high proportion of the respondents believed in the importance of political parties, for various causes as previously noted, 48.9 percent of the respondents, a majority of whom were women, stated that they did not know what the main function of a political party was. Only 8.7 percent of the respondents said that the function of a political party is to adopt citizens’ issues and opinions and 3.1 percent said that the function of political parties is to compete to come to power.

Table 9: What is the main function of political parties, in your opinion?

	Male	Female	All
Do not know	41.4	56.4	48.9
Adopt citizens' issues and opinions	10.4	7.0	8.7
Present services to people	7.4	9.4	8.4
Reform the country	8.4	5.2	6.8
Oversee the performance of government	9.6	1.2	5.4
No functions for them	2.0	5.0	3.5
Compete to reach power	4.0	2.2	3.1
Sabotage- wars- enmities	1.0	5.0	3.0
Present platforms and programs to run the country	2.8	2.2	2.5
Defend rights	3.0	1.2	2.1
Follow up the state to provide services	1.8	1.8	1.8
Maintain security	1.4	1.4	1.4
Informing citizens of their rights	2.2	0.2	1.2
Enhance democracy	1.8	0.4	1.1
Others	2.8	1.1	2.1

Despite almost half of the respondents indicating that they did not know the main functions of political parties, a similar proportion also felt that political parties are or may be the best means for addressing citizens' issues, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Political parties are the best mean to address citizens' issues?

	Male	Female	All
Yes	24.9	16.1	20.5
Maybe	22.5	28.1	25.3
No	38.0	34.7	36.4
Do not know	13.7	20.7	17.2
Refused to answer	0.8	0.4	0.6

Party Representation in Parliament

A strong majority of respondents (68.2 percent) said that they knew which political parties are represented in the Parliament while to 31.8 percent said that they did not know. Men were much more likely to say they knew which parties were represented in Parliament.

Table 11: Do you know which parties are represented in Parliament?

	Male	Female	All
Yes	77.3	59.0	68.2
No	22.7	40.9	31.8

Table 12: Which parties are represented in the Parliament?

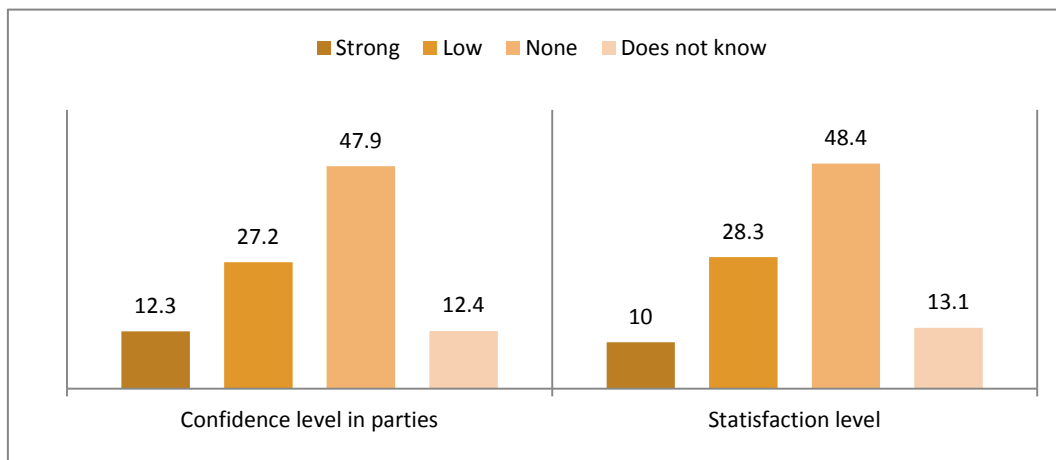
Political party	Male	Female	All
GPC	99.5	100.0	99.7
Islah	93.3	97.3	95.3
Yemen Socialist Party	78.1	72.1	75.1
Nasserite	49.2	42.2	45.7
Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party	32.5	24.5	28.5
JMPs	0	0.4	0.2
National Ba'ath	0.4	0	0.2
RAY	1.0	0.2	0.6

Satisfaction and Confidence Level

The majority of Yemeni citizens do not have confidence in political parties. The results of the opinion survey indicate that only 12.3 percent of citizens have confidence in political parties. In contrast, 47.9 percent do not have any confidence in political parties and 27.2 percent have little confidence..

The majority of Yemeni citizens are not satisfied with the performance of political parties as well. Only 10 percent of Yemeni citizens are satisfied with the performance of political parties while nearly half of the respondents stated they were not satisfied and 28.3 were satisfied sometimes .It is worth mentioning that the majority of those who have confidence in political parties and who are satisfied with their current performance are women.

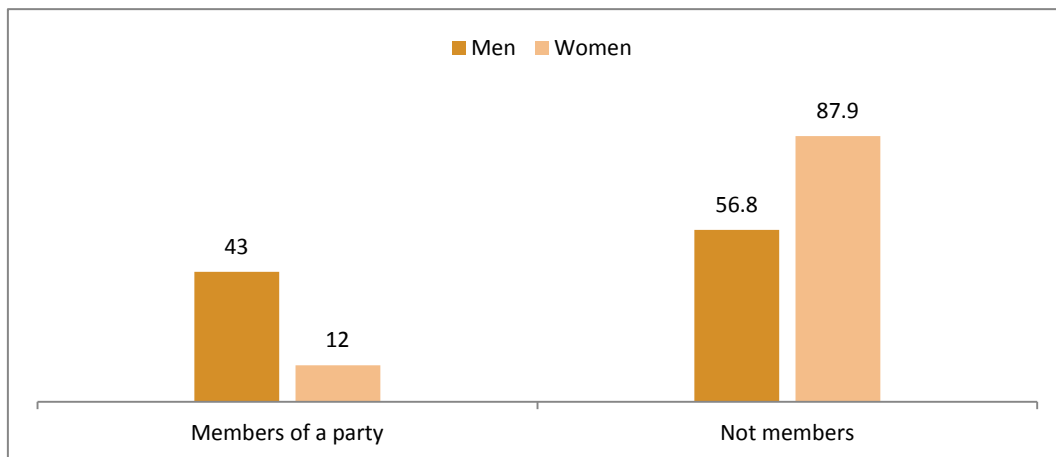
Diagram 7: Confidence level in parties and of their current performance



Party Membership

While membership differs greatly by gender, 27.6 percent of all respondents said that they are affiliated with political parties. Among the male respondents, 43 percent said that they are members of political parties, while only 12 percent of women identified themselves as party members.

Diagram 8: Are you a member of a political party?



When the respondents were asked about whether they believe that many people are affiliated with political parties, 28.1 of the respondents stated that many people are affiliated with political parties. In contrast, 26.5 percent of the respondents said that they did not believe that many people are affiliated with political parties.

Table 13: Many people are members of political parties?

	Male	Female	All
Agree	32.1	24.1	28.1
Somewhat agree	26.1	28.5	27.3
Disagree	26.7	26.3	26.5
Do not know	14.7	21.1	17.9
Refused to answer	0.4	0.0	0.2

In addition to men far outnumbering women as party members, rural respondents were nearly 10 percent more likely to belong to a party. It is important to note, however, that citizens may consider themselves to be a member of a political party simply because they voted for the party, even if he/she does not hold an official membership card.

Table 14: Are you a member of a political party?

	Urban	Rural	All
Yes	21.4	30.1	27.6
No	78.6	69.7	72.3
Refused to answer	0.0	.1	.1

Participating in Party Activities

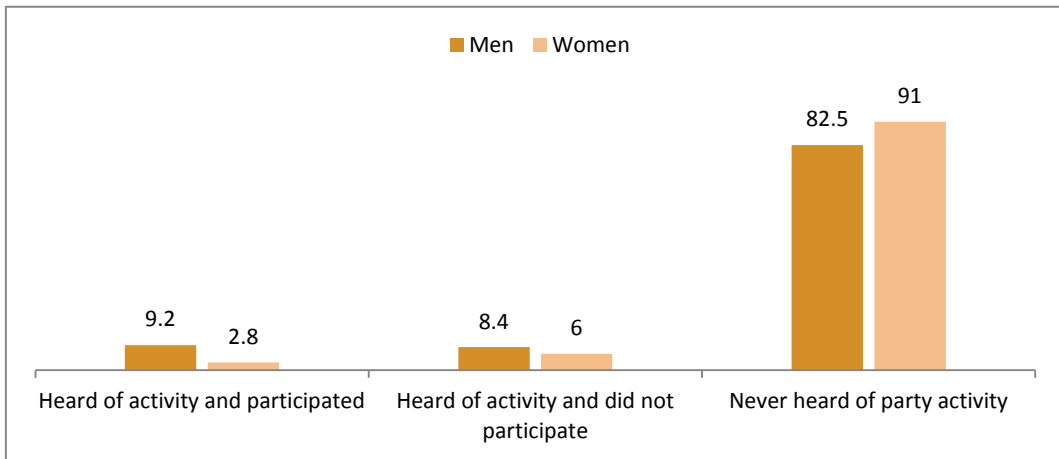
Despite 27.6 percent of the respondents stating that they were members of political parties, only 13.3 percent of respondents had heard of party activities inside or outside their region. The remaining 86.6 percent of the respondents stated that they did not hear of a political party having an activity in their areas.

The high proportion of citizens who did not hear of any party activity likely indicates of the low presence of political parties in the communities. This indication is reinforced by the low proportion of participation by those who had heard of party activities.

Table 15: Have you heard of an activity organized by a political party?

	Male	Female	All
Yes	17.5	9.0	13.3
No	82.3	91.0	86.6
Refused to answer	0.2	0.0	0.1

Diagram 9: Attending and participating in party’s activities?



Party Platforms and Literature

Despite 27.6 percent of the respondents noting that they are members of political parties, only 12.5 percent of respondent had been informed about party platforms and literature while 84.6 percent of them have not read party platforms and literature.

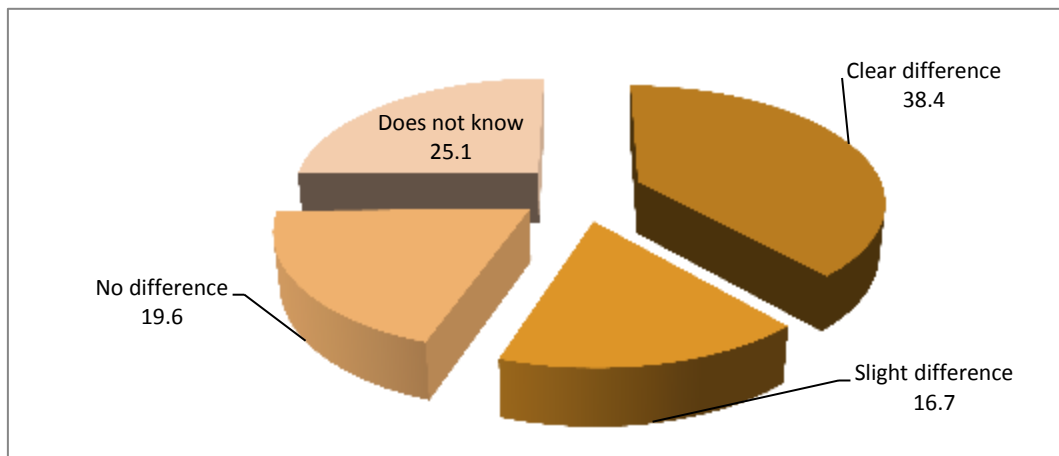
Table 16: Have you read a party’s platforms and literature?

	Male	Female	All
Yes	19.7	5.2	12.5
No	78.3	91.0	84.6
Do not recall	1.8	3.8	2.8

Difference in Political Parties’ Platforms

According to 38.4 percent of the respondents there are clear differences between political parties’ platforms. Almost 20 percent of the respondents said that there were no differences between parties’ platforms and slightly more than one quarter of the respondents said that they did not know whether or not there were any differences between parties’ platforms.

Diagram 10: The difference between political parties’ platforms?



Assessment of Opposition Political Parties

The opinions of the respondents varied on the question of whether or not the opposition parties were competent to influence the government's policies. Whereas 32.1 percent of the respondents agreed that opposition parties can influence the government, 25.7 percent disagreed, and 34.3 percent of the respondents said that they did not know whether or not the opposition parties can influence the government's policies.

Table 17: Can opposition parties influence government policies?

	Male	Female	All
Little	5.6	5.0	5.3
No, they can't	24.9	26.5	25.7
Can, but do not do that	3.6	1.0	2.3
Yes, they can	37.5	26.7	32.1
Do not know	28.3	40.4	34.3
Refused to answer	0.2	0.4	0.3

The respondents justified the causes behind the inability of the opposition parties to influence the government's policies to two main factors. The first is that opposition parties are weak and do not possess the necessary power according to 39.6 percent. Second, according to 27 percent of the respondents, the opposition faces oppression.

Table 18: Why opposition parties can't influence government policies?

	Male	Female	All
Weak	38.6	40.7	39.6
Face oppression	20.5	34.0	27.0
No credibility	7.6	7.4	7.5
Not serious	10.5	2.5	6.6
Preoccupied with other issues	8.2	1.9	5.1
Affiliated with gov	6.4	3.1	4.8
Not interested in making an impact	3.5	3.7	3.6
Do not want to influence	1.8	2.5	2.1
Do not know	1.2	3.1	2.1

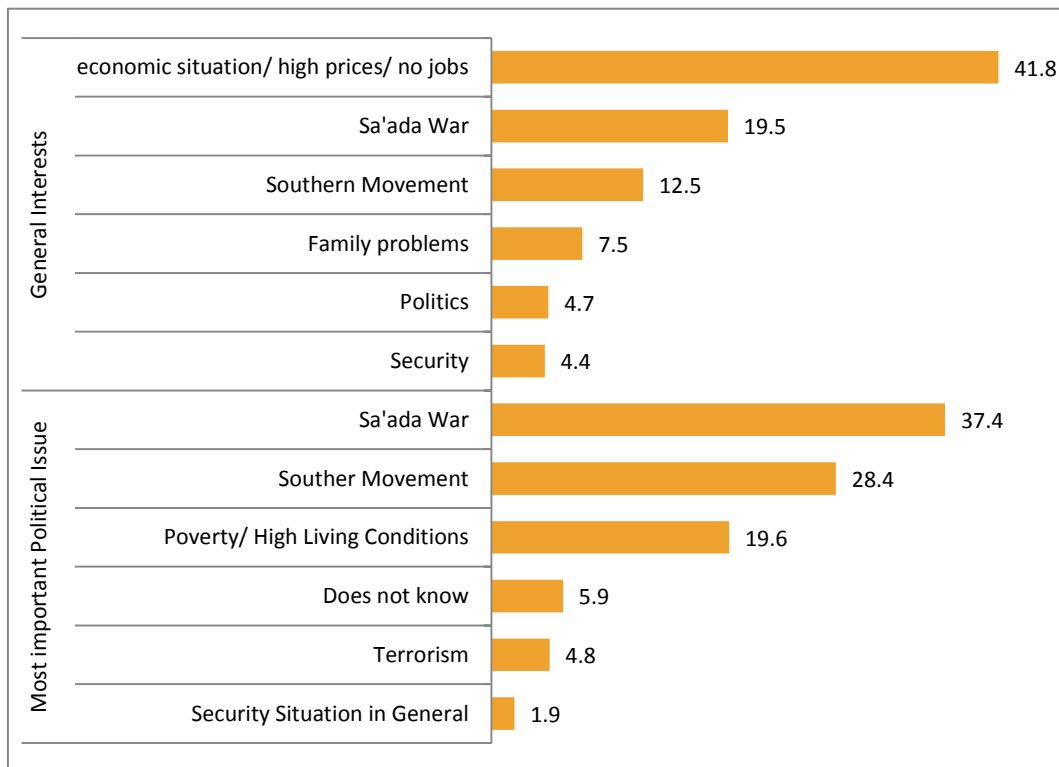
Political Parties and Citizens' Needs and Priorities

Citizens' Priorities

When the respondents were asked about what the most important issues facing them were in general, 41.8 percent stated that high living expense (high prices) and the economic situation, and the lack of job opportunities was the highest priority. The Sa'ada War was the next highest priority for citizens with nearly one-fifth identifying it. Notably, the shaky February 2010 truce ending the sixth round of fighting between the Houthis and the government had only been in effect for one month at the time of data collection. The third priority identified was the Southern Movement which 12.5 percent of respondents ranked as the highest priority.

When the respondents were asked about the most important political issue, the Sa'ada War ranked at the top according to 37.4 percent. The Southern Movement followed with 28.4 percent. Despite the question being about the political issue of greatest interest, poverty, high living expense, and lack of job opportunities came in third place, with 19.6 percent of the respondents ranking this as their greatest concern.

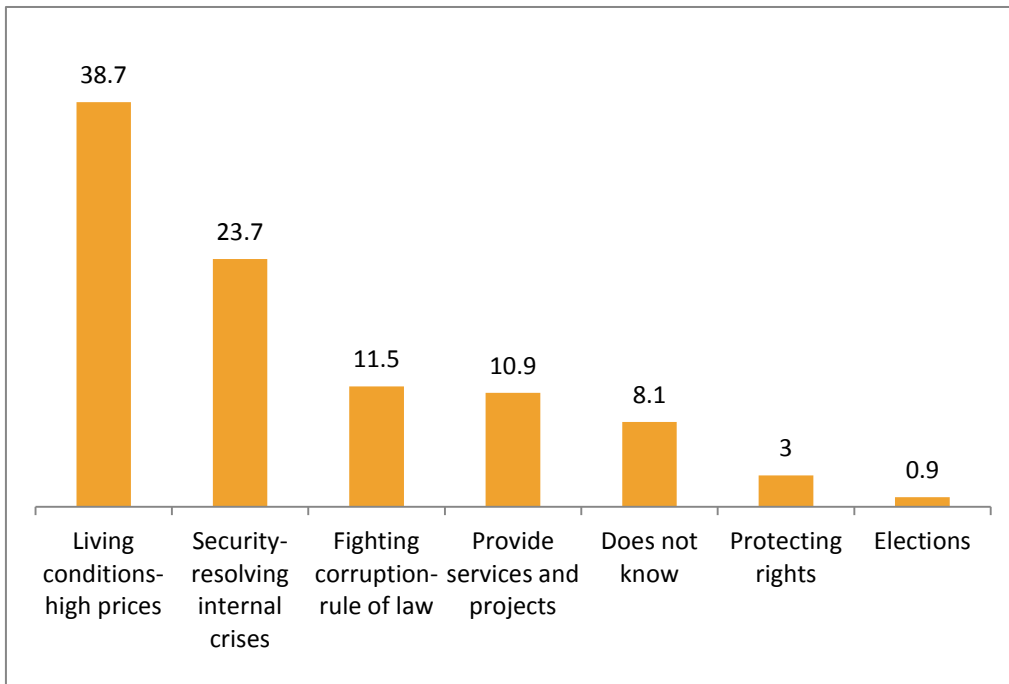
Diagram 11: Citizens' priorities and political interests?*



*Percentages do not add to 100 percent because answers in the "Other" category were not included

When the respondents were asked about what they think the most important issue should be for politicians, political parties, and elected officials to give priority and to pay attention to, 38.7 percent stated the living conditions/economic situation and providing job opportunities. The security issues in general and the internal crises such as the Sad'a War and the southern crisis were the area receiving the next highest amount of support at 23.7 percent. Fighting corruption and the rule of law and justice came in third place and providing services and projects in the fourth place.

Diagram 12: What citizens want politicians and political parties to focus on*



*Percentages do not add to 100 percent because answers in the "Other" category were not included

Parties and Public Interest

A strong majority (58.4 percent) of respondents said there was no political party which expressed their interests and reflected citizens' priorities. A little less than half that number (28.3 percent) disagreed stating that there was a party that expresses their interest. Almost 13 percent did not know if there was a political party which expressed their interests.

Table 19: Is there a political party which expresses your interests?

	Male	Female	All
Yes	33.9	22.7	28.3
No	52.0	64.9	58.4
Do not know	12.9	12.4	12.7
Refused to answer	1.2	0.0	0.6

The majority of the respondents believe that political parties care only about their own interests and the interest of party leaders (30.6 percent) or that they only care about the interest of party members (21.8 percent; cumulatively 52.4 percent). Only 13.4 percent of the respondents believed that parties care about people's priorities and interests.

Table 20: Whose interests do political parties care about, in your opinion?

	Male	Female	All
Party leaders/ president	41.0	20.1	30.6
Party Members	16.5	27.1	21.8
Do not know	12.5	16.3	14.4
General public	12.2	14.7	13.4
Government /authority	4.6	11.0	7.8
Influential figures	5.0	4.2	4.6
Specific groups in society	4.0	3.8	3.9
Businessmen and merchants	1.8	1.8	1.8
Other	2.4	1.0	1.7

Regarding party leaders in particular, most respondents (57.5 percent) feel the leadership does not care about the opinions of people. Only 14.6 percent of the respondents fully agreed that party leaders care about people's opinions, while 17.6 somewhat agreed to the statement that party leaders care about the opinions of people.

Table 21: Party leaders care about the opinions of people like yourself?

	Male	Female	All
Agree	15.1	14.1	14.6
Somewhat agree	17.5	17.7	17.6
Disagree	58.0	57.0	57.5
Do not know	9.2	11.2	10.2
Refused to answer	0.2	0.0	0.1

Despite the general assessment that political parties do not care about common people or their priorities, more than three-quarters of respondents (77.7 percent) said this changes during elections. An additional 11 percent somewhat agreed that political parties discuss citizen's issues during elections while 5-6 percent of respondents either disagreed or did not know.

Table 22: Political parties discuss citizens' issues during elections periods?

	Male	Female	All
Agree	78.1	77.3	77.7
Somewhat agree	11.0	11.0	11.0
Disagree	7.0	4.8	5.9
Do not know	3.6	6.8	5.2
Refused to answer	0.4	0.0	0.2

Handling Existing Problems

Sixteen percent of the respondents believe that political parties provide excellent plans to develop the country and 23.4 percent somewhat agree as well (cumulative 39.4 percent) in comparison to 41.4 percent who disagree and 18.6 percent did not know.

Table 23: Political parties present excellent plans to develop the country?

	Male	Female	All
Agree	18.7	13.3	16.0
Somewhat agree	21.9	24.9	23.4
Disagree	42.0	40.8	41.4
Do not know	16.7	20.5	18.6
Refused to answer	0.6	0.6	0.6

When the respondents were asked if political parties exacerbate and complicate problems more than they providing solutions, 38.1 percent expressed their agreement, a further 23.5 percent somewhat agree (cumulatively 61.6 percent). In contrast, 21.1 percent disagreed. Also, 16.7 percent of the respondents stated that they did not know whether or not political parties exacerbate and complicate the problems.

Table 24: Parties exacerbate problems more than resolve them?

	Male	Female	All
Agree	37.3	39.0	38.1
Somewhat agree	23.5	23.5	23.5
Disagree	23.5	18.7	21.1
Do not know	15.1	18.3	16.7
Refused to answer	0.6	0.6	0.6

Channels of Communication between Political Parties and Society

Methods to Follow news about Political Parties

Television, magazines, and newspapers are the most common sources for news on political parties according to the respondents. More specifically, 48.4 percent and 39.9 percent of respondents noted that they follow news of political parties from television and magazines & newspapers, respectively. All other sources of information on political party news are used marginally.

Based on gender, 45.4 percent of the male respondents (among those who follow party news) prefer magazines and newspapers, while 75.9 percent of female respondents (among those who follow party news) prefer TV to follow news about political parties. It is likely that this pattern is due to the higher illiteracy rates among women.

Table 25: Most important source of news on political parties?

	Male	Female	All
TV	33.2	75.9	48.4
Magazines and newspapers	45.4	7.4	31.9
Family/relatives/friends	5.1	9.3	6.6
Social meetings and qat chews	7.7	0.9	5.3
MP, Party leaders, dignitaries in area	4.0	1.8	3.4
Radio	1.5	1.9	1.6
Do not know	0.5	1.9	1.0
Others	2.6	0.9	1.8

Direct Contact with Political Parties

Direct contact of citizens by party leaders was the primary communication method to disseminate party platforms and party literature to 20 percent of men and 5 percent of women according to 32 percent of the respondents noting having obtained such documents from party leaders in their regions (table16) . Obtaining party platforms and literature through friends and relatives was the second most likely communication method between political parties and citizens with to 20 percent reporting this as having occurred. Obtaining party platforms and literature through party headquarters and branch offices was the third communication channel according to just over 19 percent of the informed respondents. Newspapers and magazines was the fourth method to become acquainted with party platforms and party literature with 10.4 percent of the informed respondents reporting having received information through this method.

Table 26: Sources of party's platform and literature (for those who obtained them)?

	Male	Female	All
Party leaders in area	39.4	3.8	32.0
Friends, relatives, etc	12.1	50.0	20.0
Party Headquarters, office	23.2	3.8	19.2
Newspapers and magazines	8.1	19.2	10.4
Others	10.2	7.9	9.6
Member of Parliament	3.0	7.7	4.0
TV	2.0	3.8	2.4
Important dignitaries in area	2.0	3.8	2.4

Party and Political Activities

Public rallies and election activities are the high up party political activities which attract attendance of people according to 38.3 percent of the respondents participating in the party activities taking into consideration that they don't exceed 9.2 percent of the total men participating in the polling and 2.8 percent of women (Diagram 9). Regarding seasonal activities such as those organized during elections periods, the stances of 18.3 percent of the respondent point out that social and sports activities organized by parties are the second most attractive type of party activities. 10 percent of the respondents participated in activities related to the public situations and 6.7 percent of the respondents reported to participate in party meetings.

Table 27: Do you recall which party activity you participated in?

	Male	Female	All
Private party meeting	8.7	0.0	6.7
Unification of country	8.7	0.0	6.7
Religious activity	10.9	0.0	8.3
Youth-sports-social activity	17.4	21.4	18.3
Protest / sit-in	8.7	0	6.7
Campaign/political activity	32.6	57.1	38.3
About public situations	10.9	7.1	10.0
Other	2.1	14.4	5.0

The political affiliation prompted 33.3 percent of the respondents to participate in the party activities, while the interest in the political activates prompted only 15 percent to participate in these activities. The percent of 13.3 of the respondents participated in the political activities expecting the issue of the activity to be important, and the same percent 13.3 attended the activity for other reasons such as curiosity, patriotism, respecting the lecturer and wasting time. 11.7 percent of the respondents said that they attended the party activities just because they found other people around them participating and 6.7 percent of the respondents reported to be persuaded by the party representative to participate in the party activity.

Table 28: causes prompted citizens to participate in party activity

	Male	Female	All
I'm a party member	34.8	28.6	33.3
I am interested in the activity	17.4	7.1	15.0
Expected issue to be important	13.0	14.3	13.3
others	13.0	14.3	13.3
All people participated	10.9	14.3	11.7
Persuaded by party representative	8.7	0.0	6.7
sheikh asked to participate	2.2	7.1	3.3
Received money / received foodstuff	0.0	14.3	3.3

Preferred Ways to Contact Political Parties

Television is the communication method respondents prefer political parties to use (18.3 percent). The only other potential response to get more than 10 percent support was for political parties not to contact the respondent (14.8 percent) and Do Not Know (13.6 percent).

Table 29: What is the preferred method for a party to contact you?

	Male	Female	All
TV	10.6	26.1	18.3
Do not want to be contacted	14.7	14.9	14.8
Does not know	12.2	15.1	13.6
Magazine and newspapers	12.2	5.8	9.0
Others	11.0	5.2	8.1
Through party leaders in area	10.2	2.0	6.1
Through dignitaries in area	6.0	5.8	5.9
Social meetings and qat chews	6.2	4.8	5.5
Radio	1.0	10.0	5.5
Rallies	2.4	3.4	2.9
Mosques	3.2	2.0	2.6
Party office/ Headquarters	3.0	1.6	2.3
Social and charitable activities	2.0	1.4	1.7
SMS	2.6	1.0	1.8
Intellectuals and the educated	2.2	0.8	1.5
Refuse to answer	0.8	0.0	0.4

Motives and Obstacles to Political Participation

Causes for Not Participating

We have previously indicated that while 65 percent of the respondents don't follow up the party news at all, only 11.4 percent of the respondents mostly males are interested in following up the party news permanently, and 19 percent of the respondents sometimes follow the party news (Table 8). As noted in Table 30, the most important reason why citizens do not pursue political parties' news and activities is lack of interest (28.9 percent).

While 20.4 percent of the respondents said that they do not have the time to follow news and activities of political parties, 9.7 percent said that news about parties are not transmitted through available communication methods. A further 9.5 percent of the respondents noted that following party news is of no value.

Table 30: Why don't you follow party news

	Male	Female	All
Not interested	23.6	33.0	28.9
No time	24.6	17.2	20.4
Do not receive party news by any method	9.2	10.1	9.7
No value	13.0	6.8	9.5
Do not know	4.6	12.8	9.2
Parties are weak and ineffective	9.5	5.2	7.1
Parties are corrupt/ not honest	9.9	2.2	5.5
Do not understand what parties do	1.4	8.2	5.2
To avoid problems	2.1	2.7	2.5
Others	2.1	1.9	1.1

Party's Activities

Table 31: Why didn't you participate in the party activity?

	Male	Female	All
Not interested in party/political activities	34.9	39.4	36.8
Busy/no free time	30.2	9.1	21.1
Not invited	11.6	9.1	10.5
Not supportive of organizing party	9.3	9.1	9.2
Far away	2.3	9.1	5.3
Not interested in subject of activity	7.0	3.0	5.3
Family not allowed to participate	0.0	12.1	5.3
Do not know	2.3	9.1	5.3
No reason	2.3	0.0	1.3

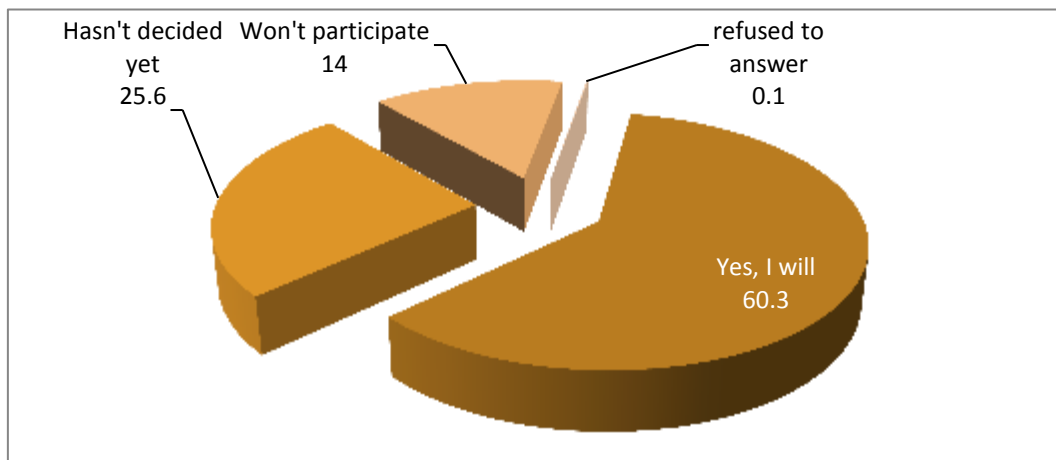
Aside from poor communication channels, not knowing about parties' activities, and the general feeling among the majority of citizens that parties do not adopt citizens' priorities

and needs, respondents identified several other reasons for not participating. Among those who had heard of a political activity but did not participate, 36.8 percent said they simply were not interested in political or party activities. Additionally, more than one-fifth of respondents, predominantly men, said they were too busy to attend.

Participating in Elections

While over 60 percent of the respondents especially men stated that they will participate in the upcoming elections, 25.6 percent of the respondents haven't decided yet whether or not to participate in the upcoming election, and 14 percent of the respondents mostly women stated that they will not participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Diagram 13: stances towards the participation in the coming parliamentary elections



When asked what would hinder participation in the upcoming Parliamentary elections, a large plurality of respondents said that if no acceptable candidate were available, this would be the biggest hindrance. The only two other responses which more than 10 percent of respondents selected were 'not fulfilling electoral promises' (12.1 percent) and 'Do not know' (11.9 percent).

Table 32: What might hinder people in participating in the coming parliamentary elections?

	Men	Women	All
No acceptable candidate	34.5	27.7	31.1
Not fulfilling electoral promises	12.2	12.0	12.1
Do not know	7.6	16.3	11.9
The general situation remain as is	11.2	4.2	7.7
Feeling the elections are useless	4.2	9.8	7.0
Forging the elections	8.0	3.4	5.7
Other	6.0	3.8	4.9
No attention to region's situation	3.6	4.4	4.0
Deterioration of security situation	2.8	3.6	3.2
Personal and special causes	0.8	5.0	2.9
No awareness of democratic rights	1.8	3.6	2.7
No financial gain –reward	2.2	3.0	2.6
No candidate from preferred party	2.6	1.4	2.0
No convincing electoral platform	2.2	1.6	1.9
Refuse to Answer	0.6	0.0	0.3

Potential Incentives to Increase Citizen Participation

The most important motives for participation in elections are connected to evaluations of individual candidates rather than with electoral platforms. According to 27.8 percent of the respondents, a majority of whom are women, believe that people will participate in the upcoming elections to elect a competent person able to serve their areas. People will participate also in the upcoming elections if the candidate enjoys a good reputation, according to 13.8 percent of the respondents. The desire for change would be the motive for people to participate in the upcoming elections according to 8.7 percent of the respondents. Finally, 6.8 percent of the respondents believe that people would participate in the upcoming elections in return for financial rewards.

Table 33: What will motivate you most to participate in the coming parliamentary elections?

	Men	Women	All
A candidate competent to serve the region	24.3	31.3	27.8
A candidate with a good reputation	14.7	12.9	13.8
For change	10.6	6.8	8.7
Reward or financial gain	5.2	8.4	6.8
Improving the economic situation	9.0	4.0	6.5
Practicing democratic rights	6.2	4.8	5.5
Do not know	2.8	6.4	4.6
A new candidate other than the incumbent	4.0	4.4	4.2
A candidate my family, friends and relatives are convinced of and has their confidence	2.6	5.2	3.9
A candidate being from a particular party	3.4	3.6	3.5
A convincing elections platform	3.0	1.2	2.1
It is a national duty	1.4	2.0	1.7
Ensuring the integrity of elections operation	2.4	0.8	1.6
Political or social pressure	2.2	1.0	1.6
To maintain stability and security	1.2	1.4	1.3
The candidate is a friend, relative	1.6	0.8	1.2
The candidate is educated	0.8	1.2	1.0
Others	4.4	3.6	4.0
Refuse to answer	0.4	0.0	0.2

Concerning incorporating the importance of political participation into the school curriculum, a majority of respondents support the idea of including the importance of political participation and elections in school curriculum in order to increase awareness among students. Women tended to support such an initiative more than men.

Diagram 14: Increase political and elections awareness in schools

