

# IFES PRE-ELECTION SURVEY IN MYANMAR



**May 2015**

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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Methodology.....	1
Overall Findings and Recommendations .....	2
I. Information on Elections and Politics .....	4
Low Levels of Interest in Politics, but Adequate Information on Political Matters.....	4
A General Lack of Information on Elections .....	6
Television is Most-used Mass Media Source .....	8
Official and Informal Sources are Important for Information Dissemination .....	10
II. Views on Elections .....	12
Generally Positive Views on Elections .....	13
Majority Not Aware of UEC.....	14
Likelihood of Voting in 2015 General Elections .....	15
Electoral Profile of Demographic Groups .....	18
III. Views on Electoral Participation of Traditionally Marginalized Groups .....	20
Participation of Marginalized Groups in Elections in Myanmar .....	20
Views on Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities.....	21
Views on Political Participation of Women.....	23



## Introduction

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) fielded a national survey in Myanmar from April through May 2015 to gain greater understanding of opinions and attitudes of citizens of Myanmar toward the election process in the country. The survey was specifically directed at determining the level of knowledge about the election process among the overall population and major population sub-groups in the country, as well as the ways and means through which Myanmar people obtain information about the political and electoral process in the country. This data will aid the Union Election Commission (UEC), IFES and other electoral stakeholders in the design and implementation of voter education and motivation programs in the period leading up to the 2015 general elections. The data will also allow electoral stakeholders to understand attitudes toward the electoral process and electoral institutions. IFES will also conduct a post-election survey to measure shifts in knowledge and attitudes due to voter education efforts and the experience of the election itself. The findings of this survey will help design future voter and civic education programs for electoral events in the next cycle.

## Methodology

The key findings detailed below are developed based on data from a national survey IFES fielded in Myanmar. The fieldwork for this survey was conducted from April 30 to May 29, 2015. A total of 3,466 interviews were conducted throughout Myanmar for the national sample. This national sample consisted of two different elements:

- A base national sample of 2,000 respondents with interviews throughout Myanmar proportional to population distribution in the country; and
- 1,466 over-sample interviews conducted in ethnic state in Myanmar (Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan).

Data from these two elements of the sample were combined for analysis. This data was weighted to ensure that it is representative of the national population of Myanmar. The margin of error for a survey of this size is plus/minus 2 percent.

In addition to the national sample, a sample of 400 internally displaced persons (IDPs) was also implemented. Due to the difficulties inherent in locating and interviewing IDPs, this sample is not representative of the IDP population in Myanmar. The sample design was purposive and provides indicative, not representative, data on the opinions and attitudes of IDPs in Myanmar. Interviews were conducted both in established camps and in communities where a large number of IDPs have settled. Interviews were conducted in Kachin, Kayah and Tanintharyi. In Kachin, interviews were conducted in established camps, whereas they were conducted in self-settled camps or communities in Kayah and Tanintharyi.

A preliminary analysis with recommendations and graphs was presented in early July 2015 to the UEC, national stakeholders, implementers and donors. It was published on [www.merin-online.org](http://www.merin-online.org) and helped shape UEC's mass media voter education program. The final full report was published in October 2015 before the elections.

## **Overall Findings and Recommendations**

This survey was primarily designed to support voter education efforts in Myanmar leading up to the upcoming general elections. Data from the survey provides several key findings about the level of information about the election process and preferred information sources in Myanmar:

- Most Myanmar people say that they have little information about the upcoming general elections, and that they need more information on many aspects of the electoral process in the country. This extends to information about electoral institutions themselves. There is a general lack of information on the electoral process even among those parts of the populations that would typically be expected to have information on electoral processes: those interested in politics and those likely to take part in the general elections. The combination of findings from several questions focused on election information indicates that there is a need for sustained and rigorous voter education for most segments of the voting-age population in Myanmar leading up to the general elections.
- While television is the most used information source in Myanmar, the survey data indicates that any voter education effort in Myanmar should not focus on using television or other mass media sources exclusively. Significant portions of the Myanmar electorate tend to rely on and trust information sources others than mass media for information on political affairs; and the survey data suggests that these informal and official sources should also be utilized for voter education. These sources of information include official channels at the local level and other sources such as community meetings, community-level workshops and word of mouth. Non-media sources such as loudspeakers are also utilized by a significant percentage of the population.
- The information sources should be tailored to specific populations. Young people (aged 18-29) are heavy users of the Internet and social media and voter education messaging for this group should be tailored to involve significant use of these information sources. Television is less likely to be as effective in rural areas and ethnic states as in urban areas and regions, and voter education strategies for rural areas and ethnic states should consider that a significant percentage of the population in these areas trust local leadership and informal sources for information on the political and electoral process.
- Exercising rights and development of the country are the two most common types of responses given when asked why it is important for citizens of Myanmar to vote, and these themes should be prominent in voter motivation campaigns. The survey data finds that there is a significant percentage of the voting-age population that only becomes interested in political affairs around elections, and that these voters need to be motivated in order to take part in the election process. The survey also finds that populations in specific ethnic states (Shan, Rakhine, and Kachin) are less



likely to be engaged in the electoral process and may need to be more effectively targeted through voter education and motivation efforts.

IFES has considered these findings to make the following recommendations for voter education programs:

- Voter education efforts should start at least three months before Election Day, but not too early, and cover: a) the voter list update; b) reasons to vote; c) how many ballots to expect and how to mark with a stamp; and d) how results translate into seat allocation.
- Very few people are aware of the role of the UEC, so the commission needs to market itself better, including providing information on what it does and does not do and address doubts about its impartiality and independence head-on.
- A multi-media strategy should be implemented. Within this strategy, television is an important component, but this should be mixed with the use of local officials and authorities.
- Many voters especially in rural areas rely on township and village authorities for election information, but these authorities need encouragement to be more motivated and engaged.
- Internet and social media tools should be used to engage younger voters, especially urban young women who need to be more engaged.
- The voter motivation strategy should focus on the development of the country and emphasize rights and freedoms as key themes for messaging.
- Extra voter education efforts are needed in Shan State, Rakhine State and Kachin State. One third of Shan State respondents are disengaged so tapping in to trusted local authorities is important in order to reach these groups, as is providing information in ethnic languages.
- IDPs have limited access to participation so camps will need polling stations; polling stations should be made as accessible as possible before Election Day.

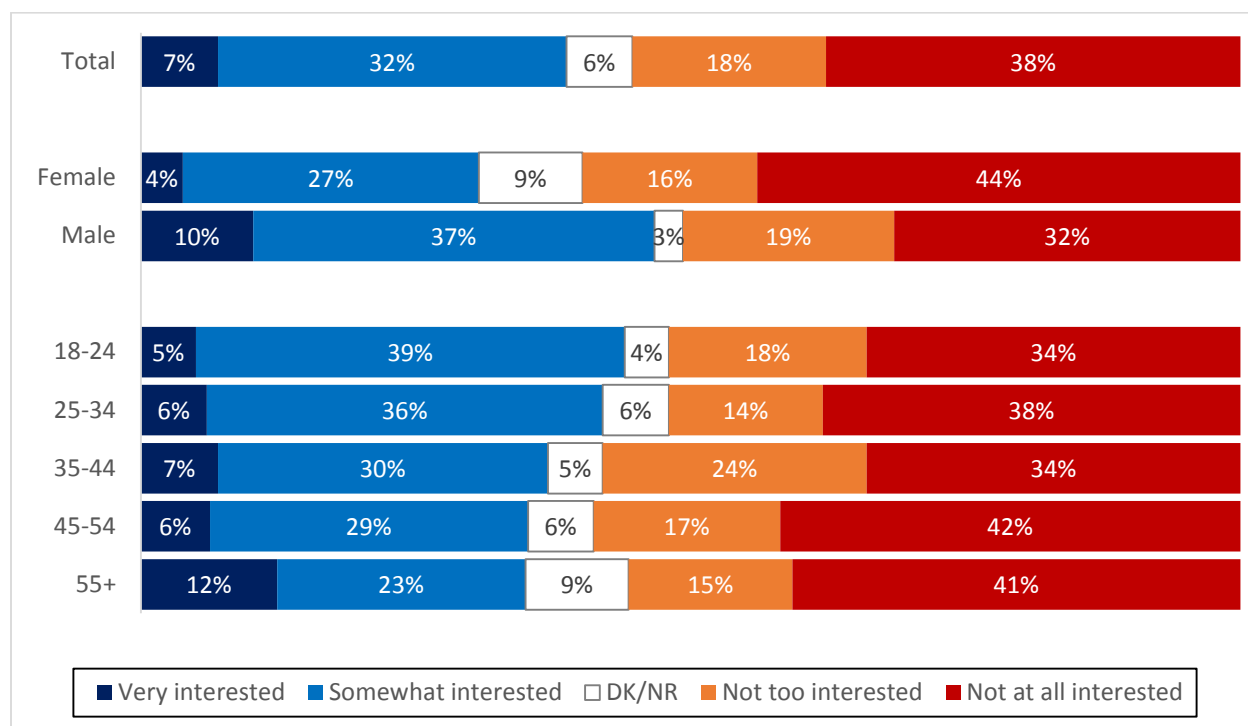
## I. Information on Elections and Politics

The survey finds that while a majority of Myanmar people say that they have sufficient information about matters of politics and government, comparatively fewer have the same levels of information about the election process for the upcoming 2015 general elections. The vast majority of respondents also lack enough information on several important aspects of the election process, and would like more information. The survey data shows that voter education efforts should equally utilize both mass media and informal, community-based sources for disseminating information about the election process. There are distinct differences in media consumption and preferred information sources between different age groups and rural and urban residents that should be considered in the design of voter education campaigns.

### Low Levels of Interest in Politics, but Adequate Information on Political Matters

The survey finds that most Myanmar people have little or no interest in politics, even though the majority do indicate that they have at least a fair amount of information on political affairs. Less than four-in-ten respondents are either very (7%) or somewhat interested (32%) in matters of politics and government, with more than half being either not too (18%) or not at all interested (38%) in matters of politics and government (Figure 1).

Figure 1. “How interested would you say you are in matters of politics and government?”



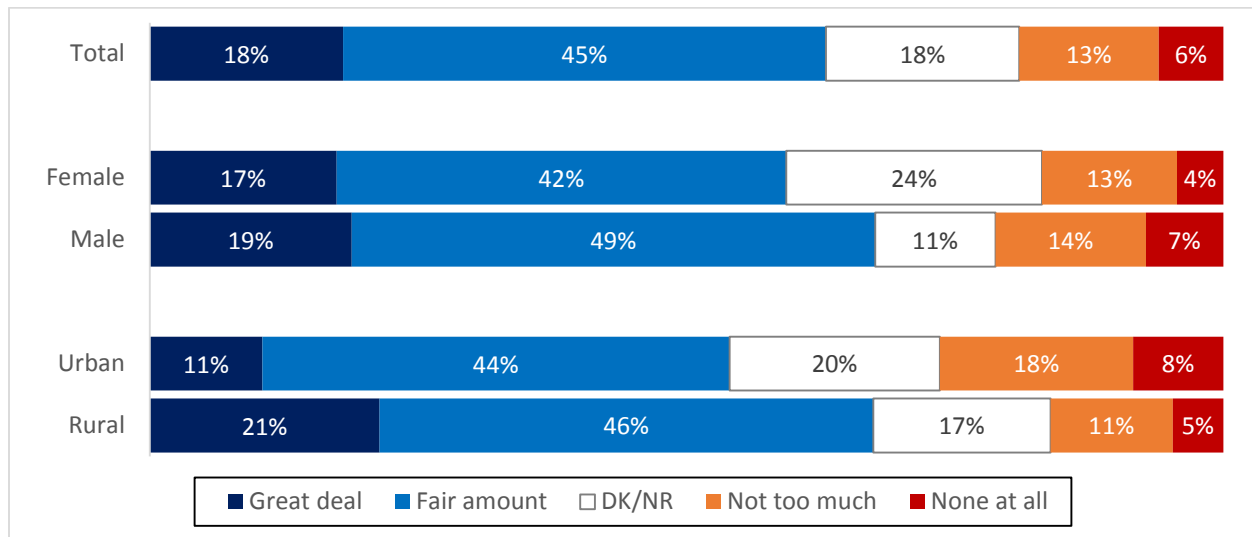
Men tend to be more interested in politics, with 47 percent expressing interest, compared to only 31 percent of women. In addition, younger Myanmar people tend to express more interest in politics, with

43 percent between the ages of 18-34 expressing interest, compared to 36 percent of those over the age of 35.

Among those expressing not much or no interest at all in matters of politics and government, the main reasons for disinterest tend to be that people are busy with day-to-day life (56%) or do not understand issues related to politics and government (55%). Meanwhile, only 4 percent cite a lack of information as their reason for not being interested, a fact which is supported by data on another question on perceived levels of information on political affairs in Myanmar.

When asked about their level of information about political affairs in Myanmar, almost two-thirds of respondents said that they have either a great deal (18%) or fair amount of information (45%) on matters of politics and government, while significantly fewer say that they either do not have much (13%) or any information (6%) on matters of politics and government (Figure 2). As mentioned, a lack of information does not seem to be a reason for the lack of interest in politics among a significant percentage of citizens of Myanmar.

Figure 2. “How much information do you believe you have on matters of politics and government?”



Fifty-six percent of those not interested in politics say that they have at least a fair amount of information on matters of politics and government, with 78 percent among those interested in politics indicating that they have enough information. Rural respondents tend to have greater access to information on politics than those in urban areas. Sixty-seven percent of those living in rural areas say they have either a great deal or fair amount of access to information, compared to 54 percent of those living in urban areas. Men are also slightly more likely to say they have at least a fair amount of information than women.

Respondents to the survey were also asked how often they discuss politics with family and friends. Overall, a majority (66%) say that they never discuss political developments with their family or friends. Only 1 percent say they discuss politics with family and friends every day, 7 percent discuss it a few times a week

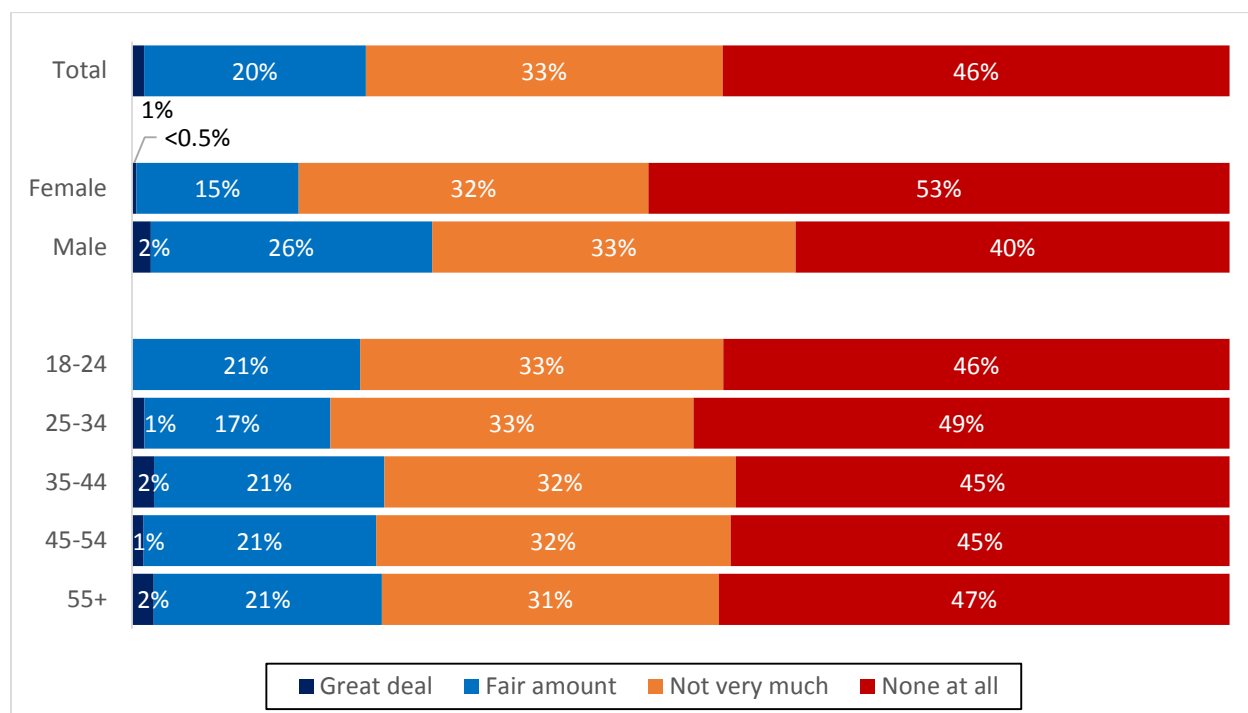
and 6 percent discuss it at least once a week. Furthermore, 9 percent say they discuss this at least once a month, and 10 percent say they discuss it less than once a month. Discussion of political developments takes place more frequently the higher the interest in politics. Almost half (48%) of those who are very interested in politics and government report discussing political developments with family and friends at least once a week, compared to 25 percent of those who are somewhat interested, nine percent of those who are not too interested and only 3 percent of those who are not interested at all. Men are more likely to discuss politics than women, with 20 percent saying they discuss this with family and friends at least once a week, compared to 9 percent of women. On the other hand, 73 percent of women say they never discuss political developments, compared to 60 percent of men.

### A General Lack of Information on Elections

The survey data shows that while a majority of Myanmar citizens say that they have at least a fair amount of information on political matters, the vast majority say they do not have much information on the upcoming elections. The majority of Myanmar people also lack information on many key aspects of the election process, including where to vote and how many ballots they will be asked to fill out.

When asked how much information they have on the upcoming 2015 general elections, only about one in five say that they have either a great deal (1%) or a fair amount (20%) of information about the upcoming elections, compared to 33 percent who do not have much information and 46 percent who have no information at all (Figure 3).

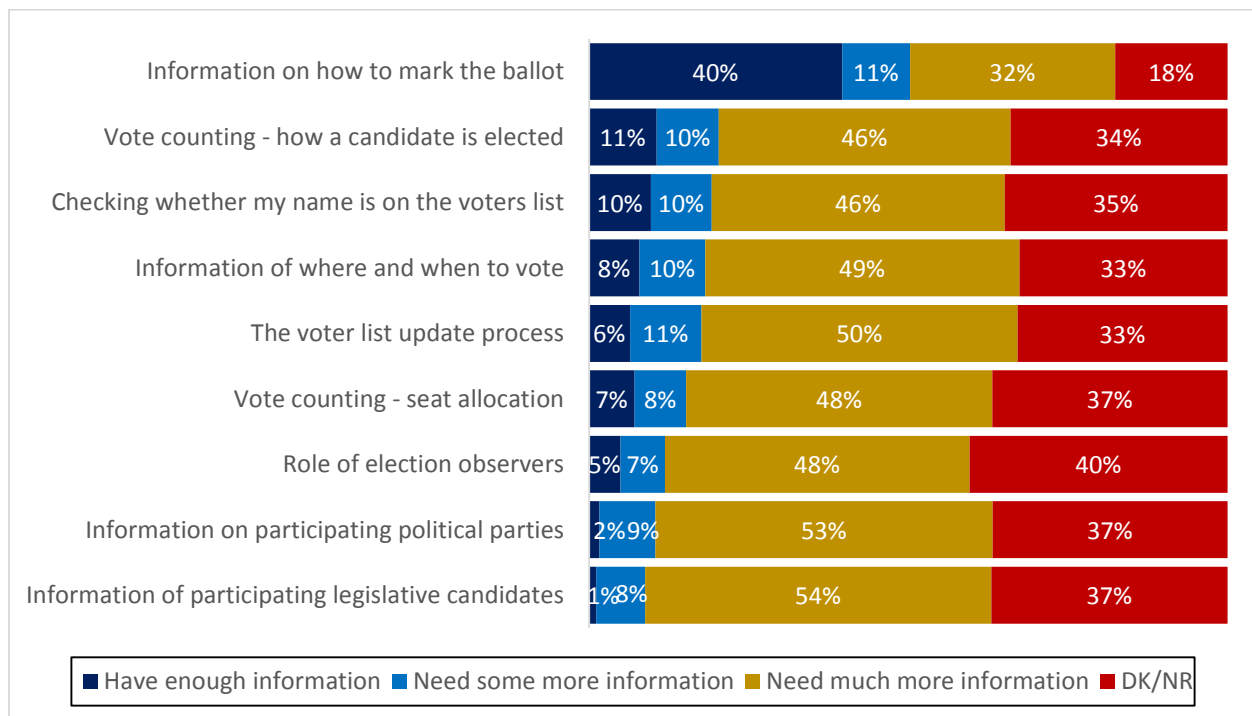
Figure 3. “As you may know, in 2015 there will be general elections in Myanmar. How much information do you feel you have about these elections?”



Men tend to have more information on the upcoming general elections (27%) than women do (15%), but the vast majority of men and women lack sufficient information on the elections. Information levels also vary across Myanmar, but a majority in each state or region lacks sufficient levels of information. The states or regions where residents have relatively more information include Tanintharyi Region (41%), Mon State (33%), Kachin State (32%), Bago Region (30%), Sagaing Region (28%) and Kayin State (26%). Conversely, residents of Mandalay Region (16%), Kayah State (16%), Shan State (15%), Rakhine State (10%) and Magway Region (8%) report the lowest levels of information on the upcoming elections. The lack of sufficient information on the upcoming elections extends to most major population sub-groups in Myanmar.

Given the generally insufficient levels of information about elections, it is not surprising that self-reported levels of knowledge about specific aspects of the elections process are also low, with very few individuals saying they have enough information about the various aspects of the election (Figure 4).

Figure 4. “Please tell me whether you have enough information or need more information on the following aspects of the election process.”

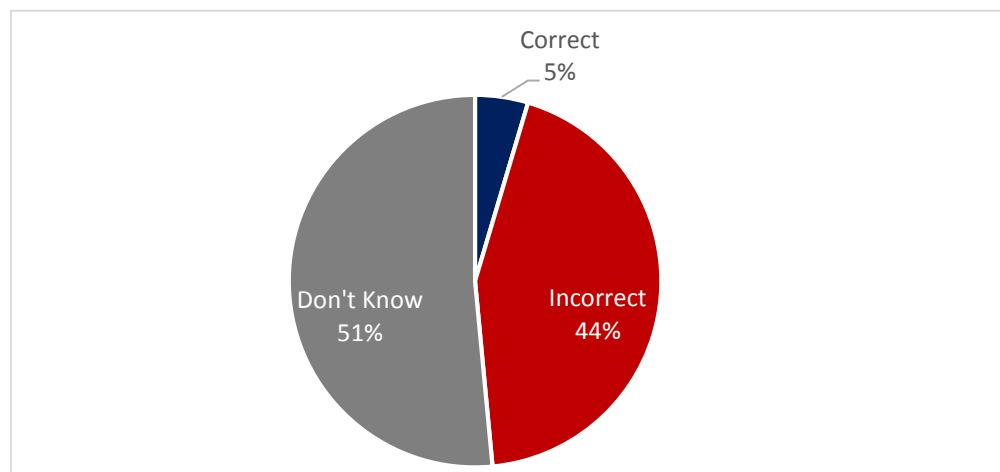


Only in the case of marking the ballot do a significant percentage of individuals (40%) say that they have enough information, compared to those who say they need some more (11%) or much more information (32%). In all other aspects of the electoral process, a substantial majority say that they need some or much more information. In addition, for the upcoming elections, the proper way to mark the ballot will be changed, meaning that those who are confident they know how to mark the ballot may have the wrong information.

On other aspects of the electoral process, only 11 percent say that they have enough information on vote counting, with 56 percent saying they need either some more information (10%) or much more information (46%). Similarly, only 10 percent say they have enough information on checking whether their name is the voter list, 8 percent have enough information on where and when to vote, 7 percent have enough information on vote counting, 6 percent have enough information on the voter list update process and 5 percent have enough information on the role of election observers. Post-election tensions sometimes stem from the misunderstanding of electoral procedures, therefore the more people know the fewer chances for misunderstanding. Very few citizens have enough information on participating political parties (2%) or participating legislative candidates (1%). The lack of information on these aspects of the electoral process is widespread across all major population sub-groups in Myanmar and suggests that robust voter education will be needed in the run-up to the 2015 general elections.

The survey also finds that very few Myanmar people know the correct number of ballots they will receive on Election Day. Voters will be asked to fill out three or four ballot papers on Election Day depending on if they were electing an Ethnic Affairs Minister, but only 5 percent were correctly able to identify the number of ballots they would receive (Figure 5). A majority of citizens (51%) say they do not know how many ballots they will fill out, while the remaining 44 percent provided incorrect responses.

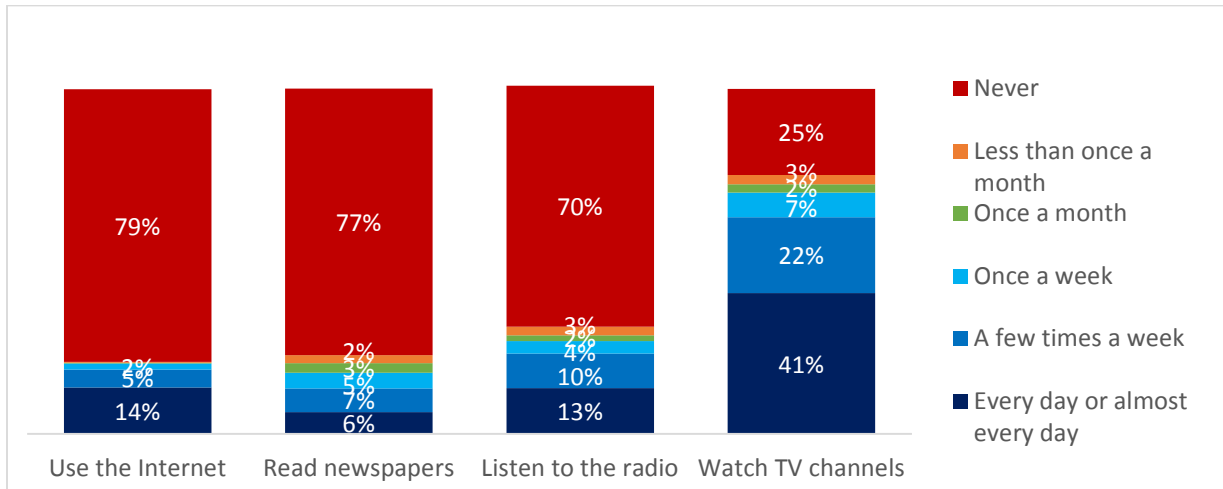
*Figure 5. “How many ballots will voters be asked to fill out in the general election?”*



### **Television is Most-used Mass Media Source**

Given the lack of information on the electoral process cited by the vast majority of respondents, a critical factor for election turnout will be to provide information to voters through the appropriate means. The survey provides insights into the types of mass media information sources used and preferred in Myanmar (Figure 6). Among mass media sources, television is by far the most-used media source in the country and the only source that a majority of Myanmar people use on a regular basis. Radio is the second-most mass media source used in Myanmar, with newspapers and the Internet also used by a significant percentage of people.

Figure 6. “How often do you \_\_\_\_\_?”



Television channels are the most used source of information for citizens of Myanmar. Forty-one percent watch TV channels almost every day, with a further 22 percent watching at least a few times a week and 7 percent watching at least once a week. Only 25 percent of respondents say they never watch TV channels. Among those who watch television, the most-watched TV channels include MRTV (38 percent), MRTV 4 (35%), MWD (27%) and Channel 7 (15%).

Radio is the second most-used media source, with a little more than a quarter of citizens saying that they use it almost every day (13%), a few times a week (10%) or once a week (4%). However, the scale of use for radio is far lower than that for television with a majority of individuals (70%) reporting that they never use the radio. The variety of radio stations used by radio listeners include Shwe FM (19%), Myanmar Radio-National (17%), BBC (16%), Cherry FM (13 percent), Padamyar FM (11%), Mandalay FM (10%), RFA (7%), VOA (7%) and Thazin FM (6%).

Twenty-two percent of respondents use Internet at least once a week. Overall, 14 percent use it almost every day, 5 percent use it a few times a week and 2 percent use it at least once a week. Internet use is higher in urban areas where 35 percent use at least once a week, compared to rural areas where 15 percent use at least once a week. Seventy-nine percent of the country’s citizens say that they never use the Internet for news, a figure higher among those older than 35 (92%, compared to 61% among those ages 18-34). The Internet sites most used by Myanmar people to learn about news include Thithtoolwin (31%), Eleven (12%), Irrawaddy (10%), 7 Days News (8%), TZ (7%) and BBC (6%).

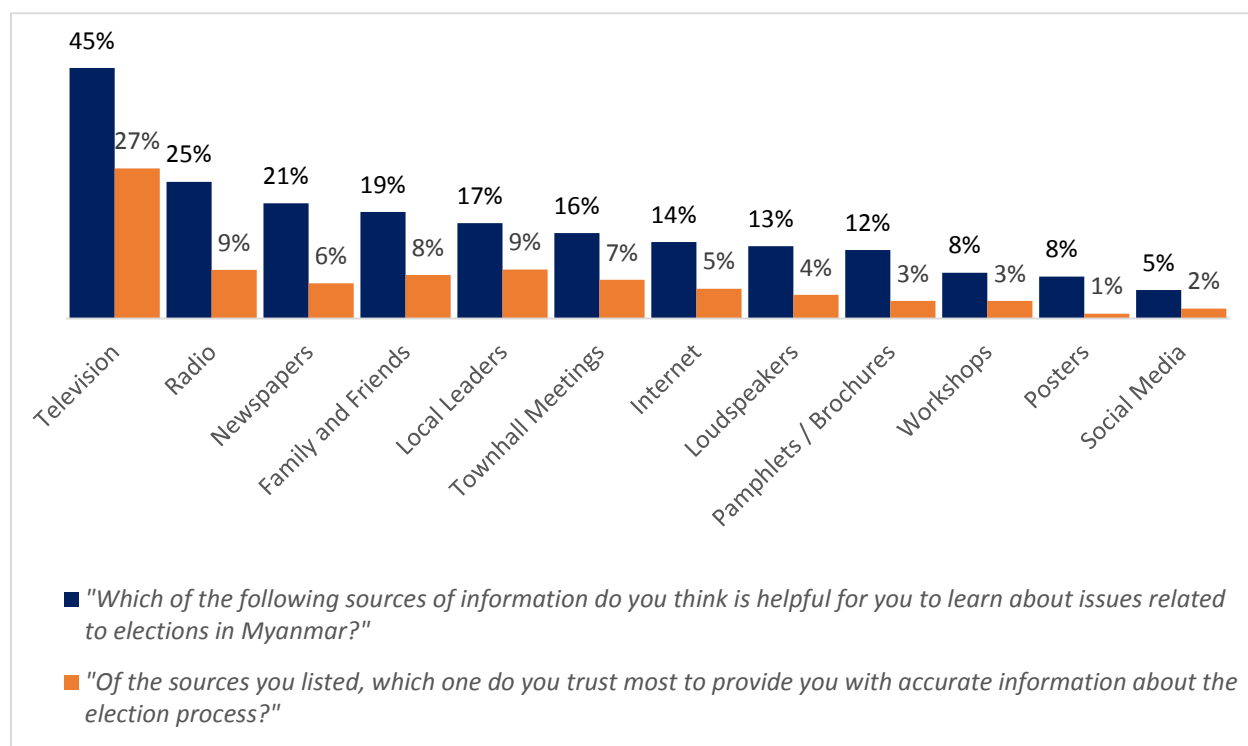
As for newspaper use, 6 percent of individuals read newspapers every day, 7 percent a few times a week and 5 percent at least once a week. Seventy-seven percent do not read newspapers at all. Among newspaper users, the most read newspapers include Kyemon (27%), Myanma Alin (26%), 7 Days News (15%), Daily Eleven (14%), Democracy Today (10%) and Yadanabon Daily (7%).

With the exception of television, only a minority of respondents use other mass media sources. This is especially true for residents of rural Myanmar who are far more likely than urban residents to say that they never use television (28% versus 14%), newspapers (85% versus 60%) and the Internet (85% versus 65%). Radio is the only media source for which a higher percentage of urban residents say they never use the source than do rural residents (79% versus 65%). Young people (aged 18-29) are more likely to use each of the media sources than older age cohorts.

### Official and Informal Sources are Important for Information Dissemination

Data on mass media use indicates that television is the only information source that is used by a majority of respondents, and thus, it is not surprising that other sources of information beside mass media are regularly used by a significant percentage of individuals and would be preferred sources of information on the election process. When asked to list the most useful sources of information for elections, almost half (45%) mentioned television, followed by radio (25%), newspapers (21%) and the Internet (14%), but significant percentages of individuals also listed informal and official sources. These include friends and family (19%), local leaders (17%), town hall meetings (16%), loudspeakers (13%) and pamphlets or brochures (12%) (Figure 7). This data indicates that official and informal sources are just as important for disseminating information about elections as mass media sources.

Figure 7. Useful and Trusted Sources of Information



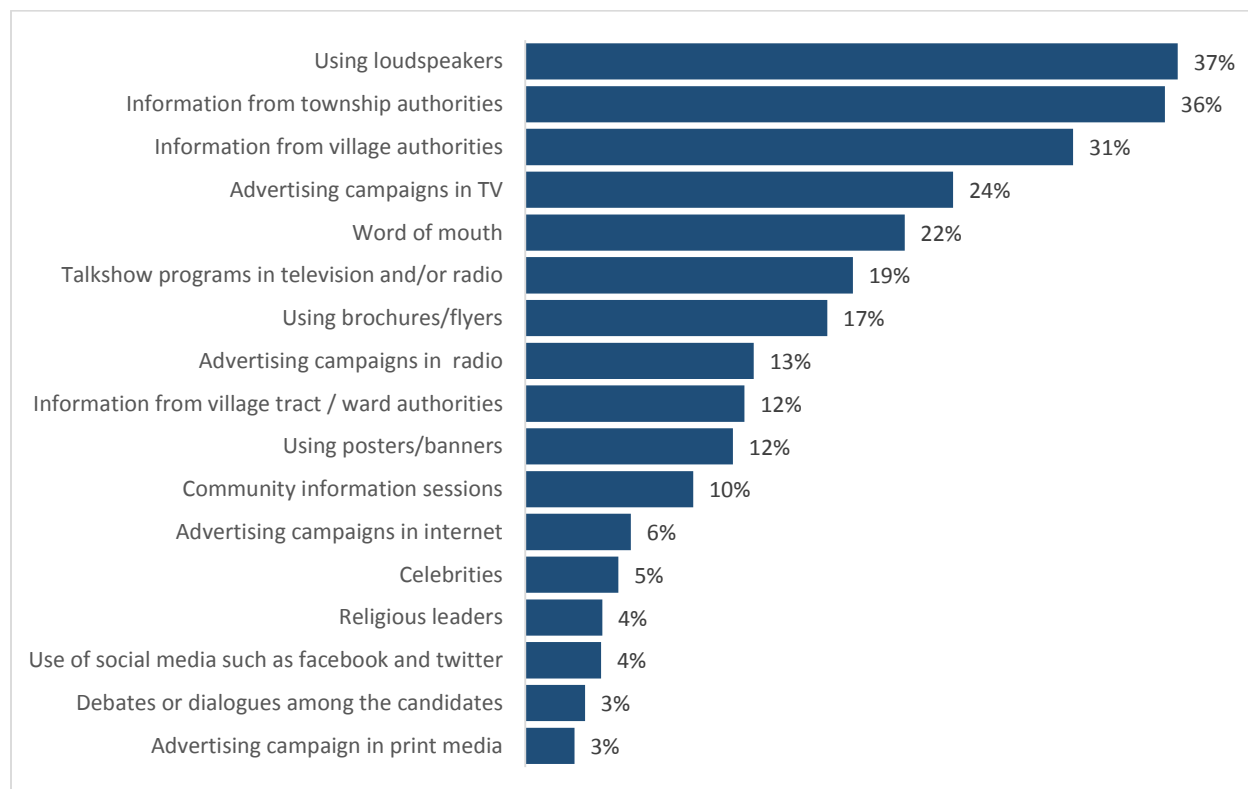


There are some small differences between men and women on the most useful communication methods with more men mentioning radio (28% compared to 22% for women) and newspapers (24% compared to 17% of women) as being useful. Women are more likely to say that family and friends are helpful (23% compared to 16% of men). There are more significant gaps between citizens in rural and urban Myanmar. Urban voters are much more likely to cite television as a helpful source (52% compared to 43% in rural areas), as well as newspapers (33% compared to 16% in rural areas), the Internet (23% compared to 10% in rural areas), and pamphlets or brochures (20% compared to 9% in rural areas). Conversely, those in rural areas tend to see radio as being more helpful (28% compared to 18% in urban areas), along with local leaders (19% compared to 12% in urban areas). Rural residents are also more likely to cite the helpfulness of town hall meetings (17% versus 12% urban).

The importance of using information sources other than mass media sources is further amplified by the trust placed in many official institutions and leaders, as well as informal sources, by a significant percentage of individuals. Respondents to the survey were also asked to list the source they would trust the most out of all that they had listed as being helpful (orange bar in Figure 7 above). Overall, 27 percent of individuals trust television the most, followed by radio (9%), local leaders (9%), friends and family (8%), town hall meetings (7%), newspapers (6%), and the Internet (5%). Combining these into categories shows that 42 percent trust media sources, 27 percent trust community sources, 9 percent trust non-media publicity sources such as billboards and 7 percent trust Internet or social media sources. Rural residents are more likely to trust community sources than urban residents (30% versus 19%), while young people aged 18-34 are much more likely to trust Internet and social media than other age groups (13% compared to four percent for ages 35-54, and 1% for 55+).

The need to employ a multi-faceted voter education approach utilizing different sources of information is also highlighted when analyzing responses to what specific types of activities respondents thought were effective in encouraging people to get out and vote on Election Day. Official institutions at the local level were mentioned as conduits for information, with 36 percent choosing information from township authorities, 31 percent information from village authorities, and 12 percent information from village tract and ward authorities (Figure 8). Word of mouth was mentioned by 22 percent. As for mass media, 24 percent recommended TV advertising campaigns while 19 percent mentioned talk show programs on television or radio, and 13 percent mentioned advertising campaigns on radio. Thirty-seven percent believe that using loudspeakers would be an effective means to encourage voting, 17 percent mention using brochures or flyers, and 12 percent mention posters or banners.

Figure 8. “Which of the following do you think is most effective in encouraging people like you to get out and vote on Election Day?”



Several notable sub-group differences can help to effectively motivate people to vote:

- Urban residents are far more likely to prefer mass media-based strategies, and a significant percentage (around 20%) also cite Internet and social media. The use of Internet and social media is especially notable for those 18-34 year olds in urban areas.
- Urban residents are also more likely to value brochures and posters than rural residents.
- Rural residents are significantly more likely to prefer information from their local authorities than from television or other mass media (although 20% still mentioned television advertisements). This is especially the case in states when compared to regions.

## II. Views on Elections

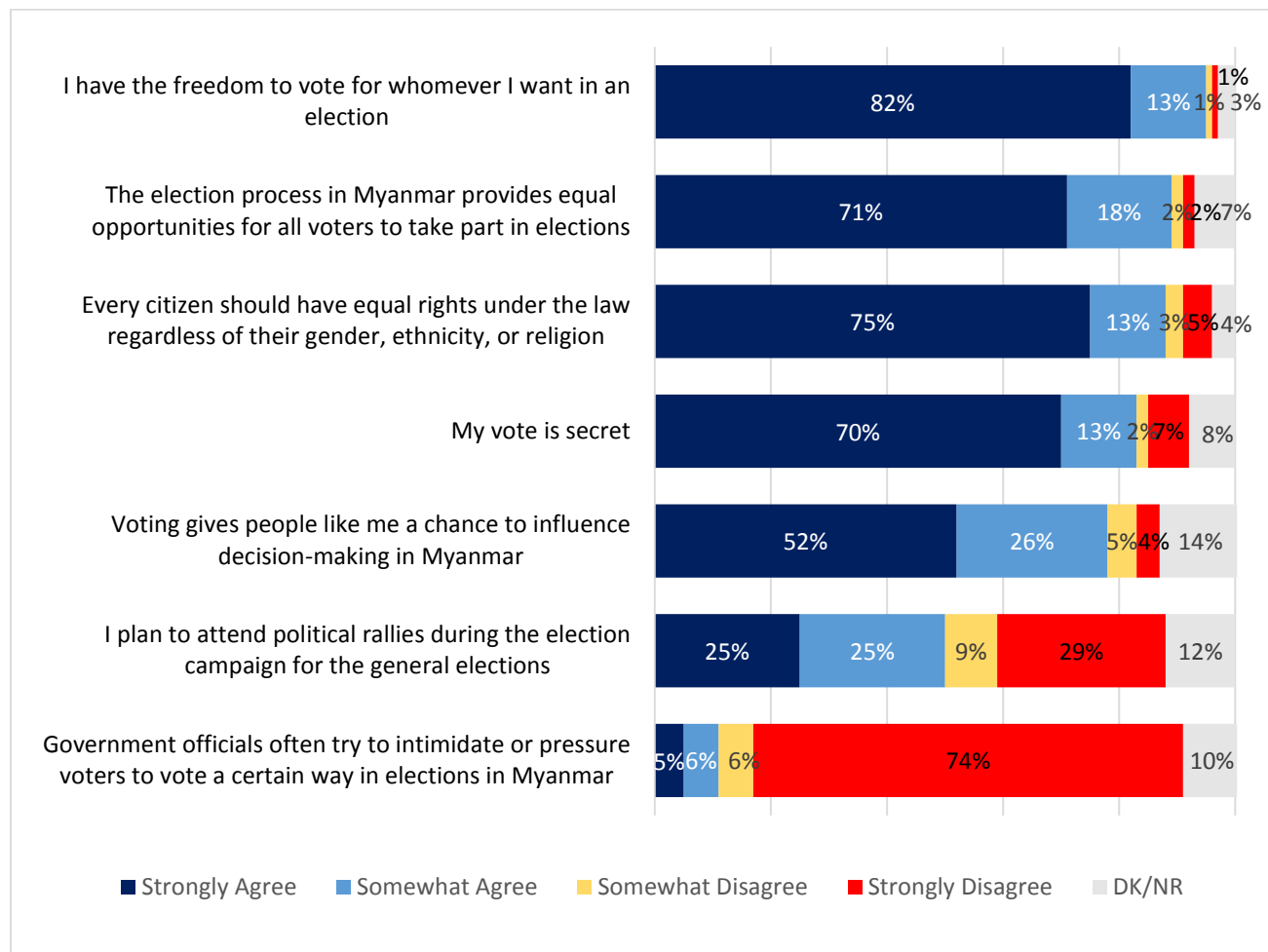
*Most individuals of Myanmar positively evaluated key areas of the electoral process. This was especially true when it came to the opportunity to take part in the electoral process and to influence decision-making in the country through electoral participation. However, very few are aware of the UEC and the survey data suggests that the UEC should reach out more effectively leading up to the general elections. Most individuals said that they are likely to vote in the upcoming general elections, but a significant percentage said they will not start paying attention to the elections until a few months before Election Day. Most of*

those likely to vote say they do not have much information about the upcoming elections. The survey data also indicates that voter motivation campaigns should emphasize the rights of citizens and the development of Myanmar. Targeted voter education and motivation efforts are especially needed for Shan State, Rakhine State and Kayah State, as some groups in these states tend to be less engaged in the electoral process than members of other major ethnic groups.

### Generally Positive Views on Elections

Most individuals surveyed have positive opinions about the election process in Myanmar. The vast majority agree that they have the freedom to vote for whomever they want in an election (82% strongly agree, 13% somewhat agree), that the electoral process in Myanmar provides equal opportunities for all votes (71% strongly agree, 18% somewhat agree), and that their vote is secret (70% strongly agree, 8% somewhat agree). A large majority also disagree (74% strongly disagree, 6% somewhat) that officials in Myanmar try to intimidate or pressure voters to vote a certain way in elections (Figure 9).

Figure 9. “Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.”



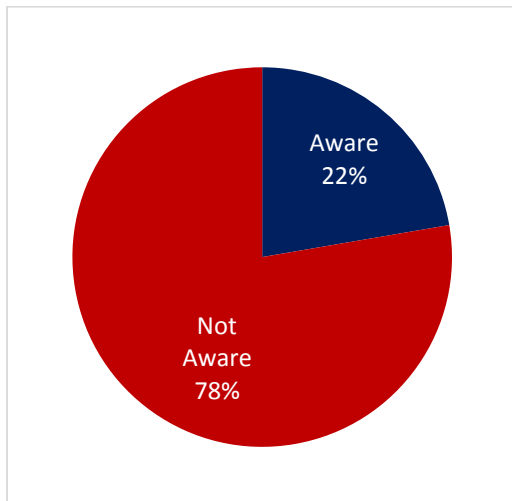
The data also shows that most respondents believe that they can influence decision making by voting. Over three-quarters either strongly agree (52%) or somewhat agree (26%) that voting gives them influence over decision making. Findings from IFES surveys in other countries shows that agreement with this statement is positively correlated with the likelihood of voting in elections. A similar pattern is observed in Myanmar, with those who agree that voting gives them influence much more likely to say they will vote than those who disagree (60% versus 40%).

While most respondents have positive expectations of voting and taking part in elections, they are far less likely to take part in the electoral process in other ways. Only 25 percent strongly agree that they plan to attend political rallies during the election campaign, and 25 percent somewhat agree. This data seems to indicate that voting in the general elections is the primary means for electoral participation for most residents of Myanmar.

### Majority Not Aware of UEC

While the majority of Myanmar people have positive views on key issues related to the electoral process, the general lack of information on the electoral process discussed earlier is further reflected in the fact that few Myanmar people are aware of the body that manages elections in Myanmar, the UEC. Just 22 percent say that they are aware of the UEC (Figure 10).

*Figure 10. “Would you please tell me if you are aware or not aware of the following institutions: UEC?”*



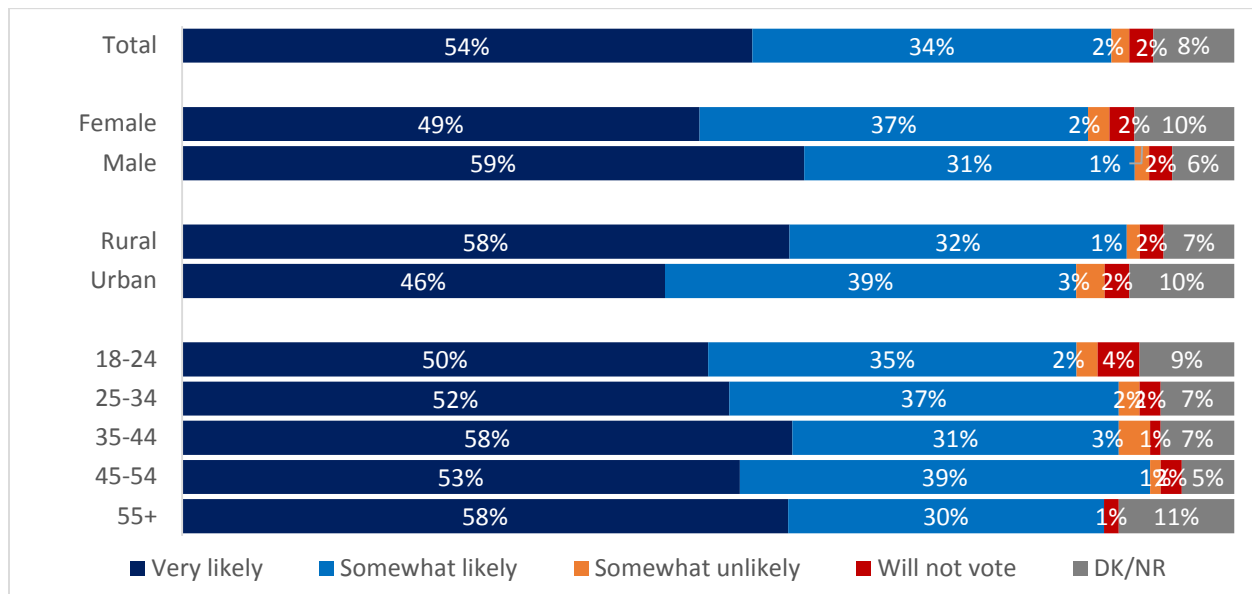
Awareness of UEC is generally limited to those who are keenly interested in politics and follow electoral issues beyond just the election process. The majority of respondents in all major demographic sub-groups are not aware of the UEC. As the general elections approach, it is important for the UEC to use its voter education and outreach efforts to inform individuals about its role in the electoral process, especially its efforts to ensure credible elections in the country, as it may influence awareness and perceptions of the UEC. In this survey, 22 percent of those aware of the UEC have a great deal of confidence in the institution

and 54 percent have a fair amount of confidence, while only 15 percent lack much or any confidence. Through more focused outreach, the UEC could increase the positive perceptions of the institution. .

### Likelihood of Voting in 2015 General Elections

A majority of Myanmar people are likely to vote in the upcoming general elections, with some important differences in the likelihood of voting between specific sub-groups in society based on ethnic and geographical orientation. Over 54 percent of respondents say that they are very likely to vote in the 2015 general elections. A further 34 percent say that they are somewhat likely to vote, while 2 percent say they are somewhat unlikely to vote, and a further 2 percent say that they will not vote in the elections (Figure 11).

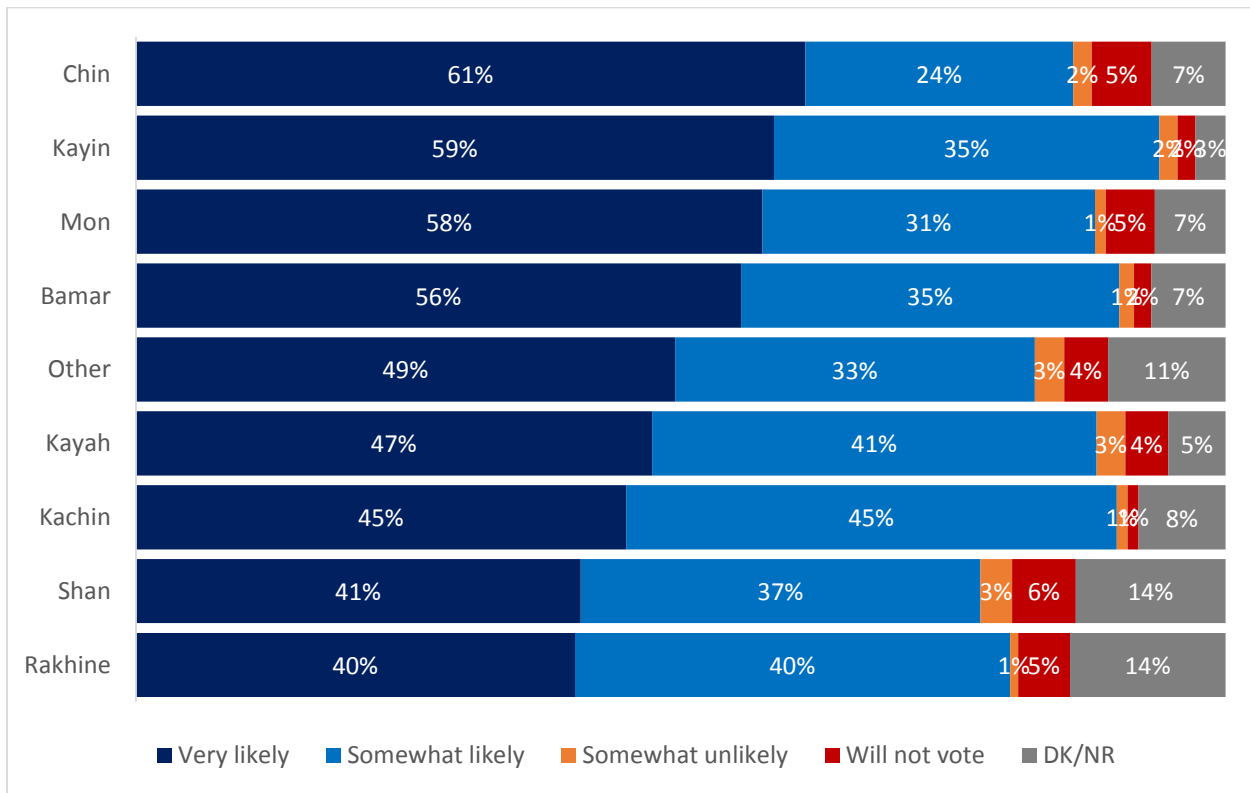
Figure 11. “How likely are you to vote in the 2015 general elections scheduled for later this year?”



The percentage of men who say that they are very likely to vote in the 2015 general elections is higher (59%) than the percentage of women who say they are very likely to vote (49%). Rural residents also said that that they are very likely to vote (58%) compared to those in urban areas (46%).

The percentage of respondents saying that they are very likely to vote in the 2015 general elections varies greatly across the states and regions of Myanmar. The percentage saying they are very likely to vote is highest in Ayeryawaddy (87%), Mandalay (65%), Chin (61%), Sagaing (57%) and Mon (57%). This percentage is comparatively lower in Shan (44%), Kachin (43%), Yangon (43%), Rakhine (40%) and Bago (40%). This data suggests that there should be targeted efforts in these specific states and regions to increase the percentage of people likely to vote in the elections. This is also the case for specific ethnicities (Figure 12).

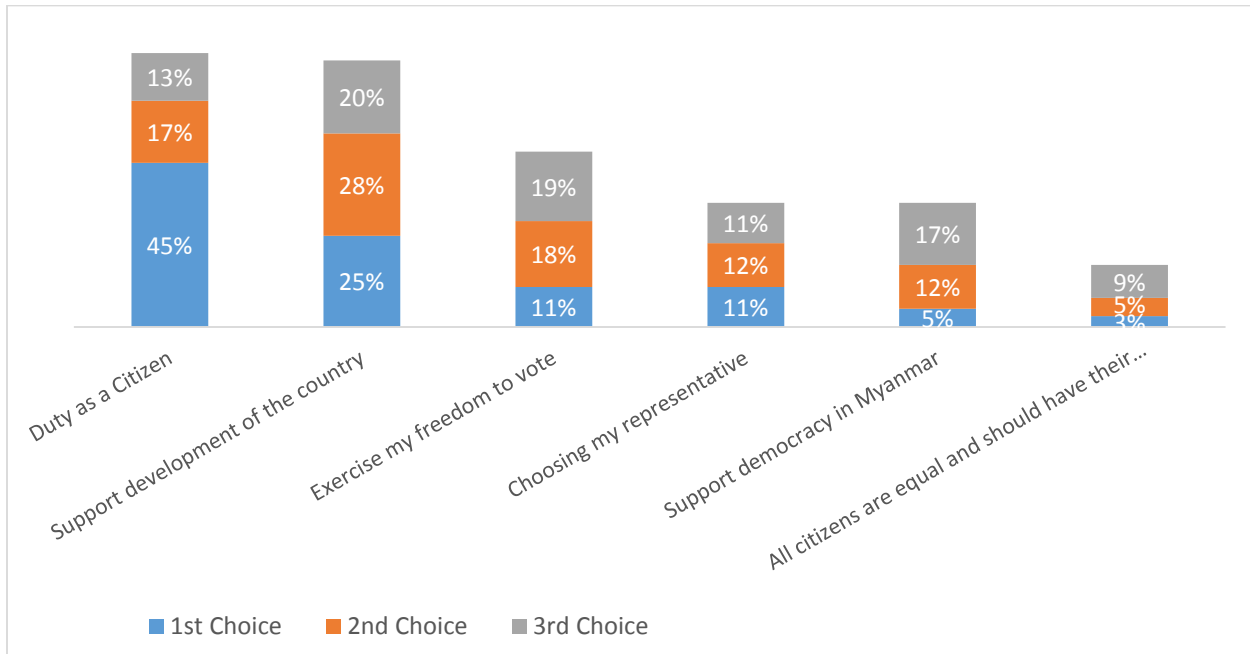
Figure 12. Likelihood of Voting by Ethnicity



Respondents in Rakhine (40%), Shan (41%), Kachin (45%), and Kayah (47%) indicated that they were less likely to vote when compared with other areas in the country. Conversely Chin, Mon, Kayin and Bamar respondents were more likely to say they are very likely to vote.

Those that are very or somewhat likely to vote indicate they will do so because it is their duty as a citizen (52%), to support the development of the country (35%), to choose their representative (24%), to exercise their freedom to vote (18%) and to support democracy in Myanmar (11%). These responses are similar to the pattern of responses given when all respondents to the survey were asked to state reasons why it is important for citizens of Myanmar to vote in elections (Figure 13).

Figure 13. “Which of the following reasons do you think is the most important reason for voting?”



The first, second, and third choices for this question are similar to the reasons given by individuals who are likely to vote. This data suggests that exercising of individual rights and choice, and supporting development of the country are two themes that can be utilized in voter motivation efforts leading up to the general elections.

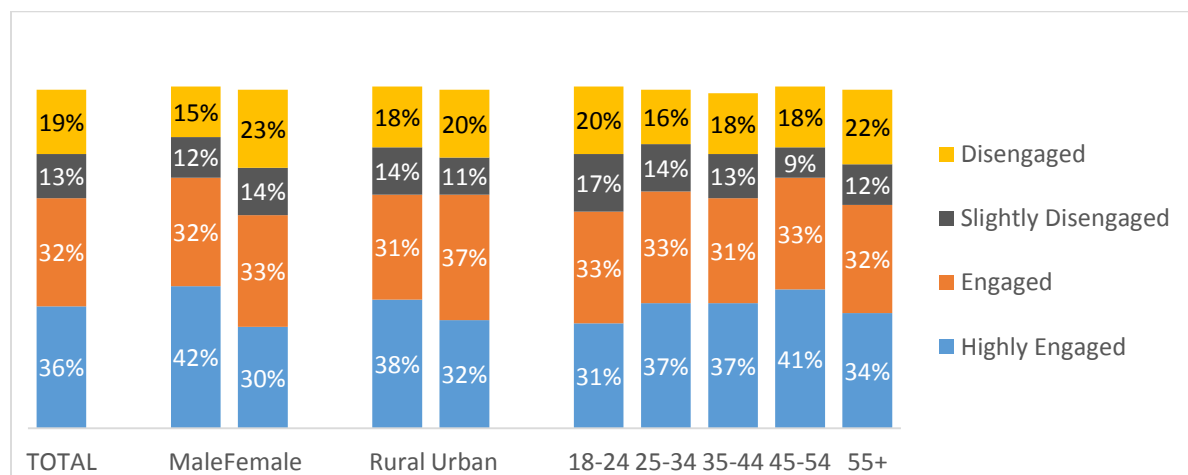
The survey data also shows that it will be important for electoral authorities and others to focus voter motivation efforts on IDPs. The survey data shows that only 38 percent of IDPs sampled say that they are very likely to participate in the general elections while 45 percent are somewhat likely to participate. Among IDPs in established camps, 37 percent say they are very likely to vote while this percentage is 43 percent for IDPs outside established camps.

It is also important to note that the majority of those saying they are very or somewhat likely to vote also say that they do not have much (34 percent) or any information (43 percent) on the upcoming elections. Even among those very likely to vote, close to three-quarters lack much or any information on the elections. The lack of information reported by respondents is most likely because few Myanmar people pay attention to elections on a continual basis. When asked how long before an election they start to pay attention to the elections, only three percent say that they continually pay attention to elections in the country, almost half (45 percent) say that they start paying attention more than three months before the election. Furthermore, 11 percent start paying attention between two to three months before, 10 percent between one and two months and 4 percent in the last month before the election, and another 4 percent say that they begin to pay attention in only the weeks leading up to the election, while 4 percent also say they are not interested at all in the election. Nineteen percent don't give a response, most likely because they lack interest in elections.

## Electoral Profile of Demographic Groups

Using data from the four elections-focused questions, an electoral profile of the electorate can be created. This profile groups individuals of Myanmar in one of four groups: highly engaged, engaged, elections-focused and disengaged. Of these, those **highly engaged** and **engaged** are most likely to vote in the upcoming general election because they tend to follow the election process and believe that voting gives them influence over decision-making. Those categorized as **slightly disengaged** do not generally follow the election process, but they do believe that voting gives them influence over decision-making and they are only moderately likely to vote in the upcoming elections. Those categorized as **disengaged** do not follow elections or believe that voting gives them influence and they have very low likelihood of voting in the upcoming elections. According to this scale, around a third of the adult population in Myanmar is highly engaged with the electoral process and a large percentage of this group is likely to participate in the elections. Another third is engaged but not as highly likely to participate as the first group. Still, a majority of those who categorized as engaged are likely to take part in the election. Around a sixth is generally disengaged from the political process but is elections-focused and a significant percentage of this population could take part in the election if enough information and motivation is provided. Around a fifth of the population is disengaged and only a small percentage of this population is likely to take part in the election. Figure 14 provides a breakdown of the population and certain demographic groups according to this profile.

Figure 14. Electoral Profile, by population sub-groups

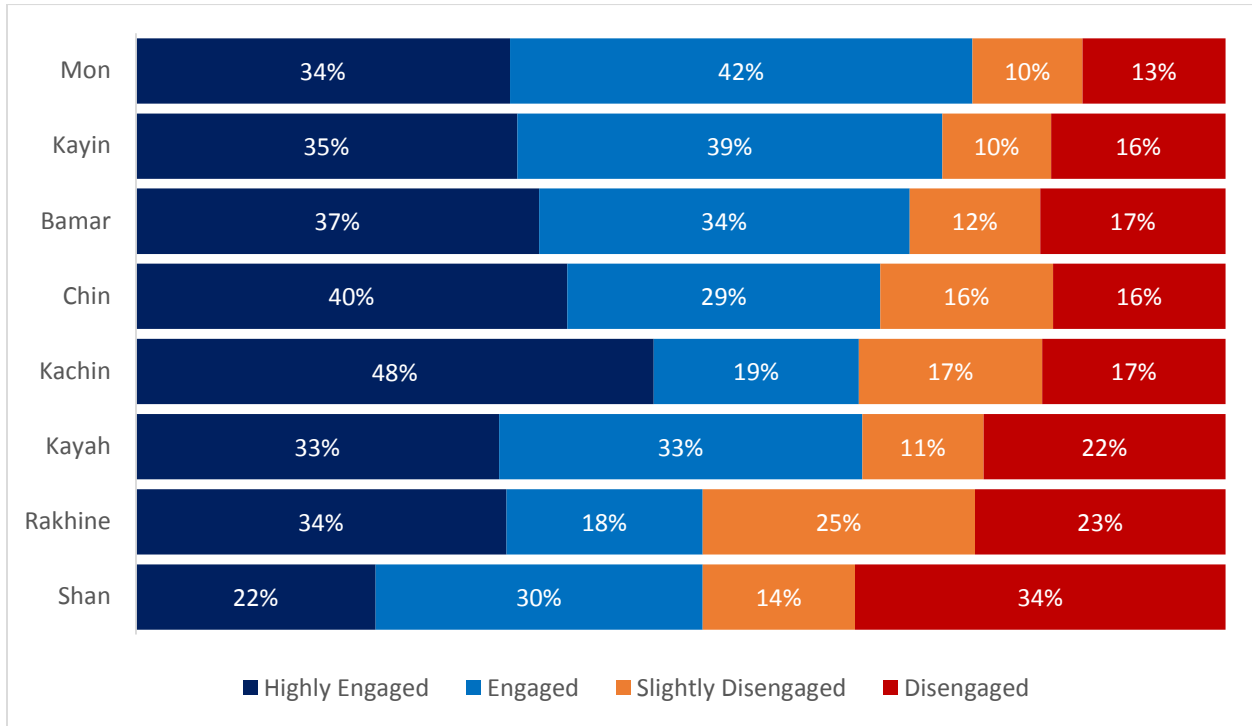


The figure above indicates that there are some significant differences in engagement. Men are more likely to be highly engaged than women while women are more likely to be disengaged. Engagement is higher among the middle part of the population than in youngest or oldest age categories. Because the youngest age group is not as highly engaged as other age groups, and because members of this age group also tend to lack experience with elections, voter education and motivation efforts may be especially important for this age group.



The data also shows that there are significant differences in engagement by ethnicity (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Electoral Profile, by Ethnicity



It is clear from the profile that there is significantly less engagement among populations in Shan, Rakhine and Kayah than among other states with large populations of ethnic minority groups. Shan State has the highest percentage of individuals who are disengaged from the electoral process, and this may mean that even focused voter education and motivation efforts may not lead to high turnout among this group.

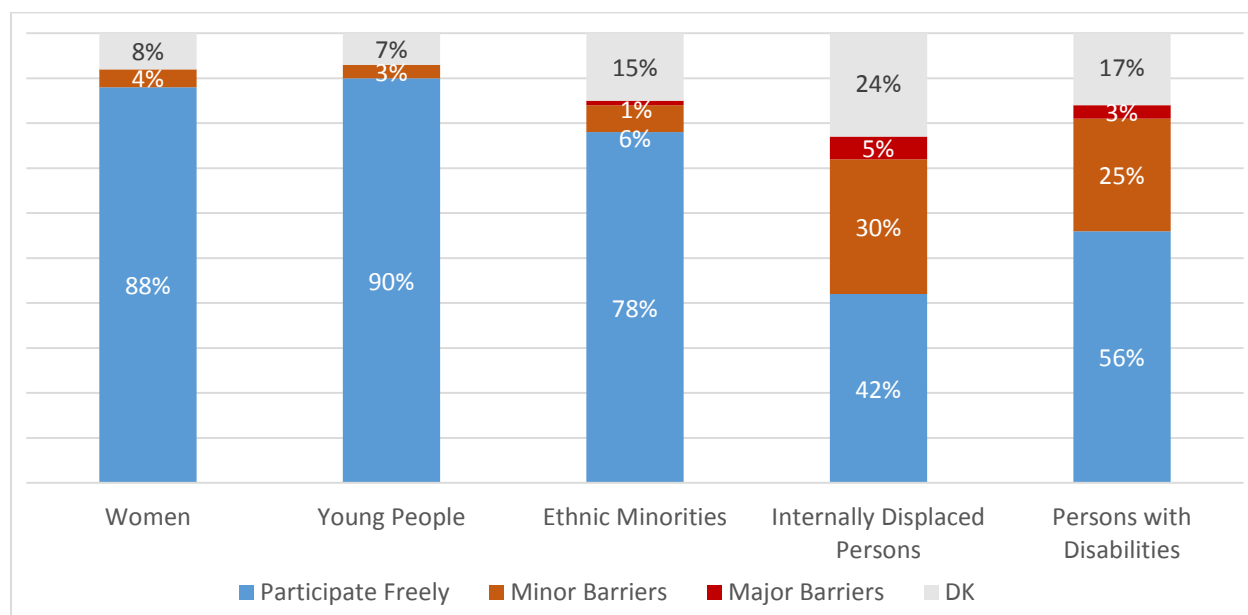
### III. Views on Electoral Participation of Traditionally Marginalized Groups

Most respondents do not think that traditionally marginalized groups such as women or ethnic minorities face barriers to participation in elections, but a significant percentage does believe that barriers to electoral participation exist for IDPs and persons with disabilities. The majority of Myanmar individuals are generally supportive of efforts to increase access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities. A majority is also supportive of electoral and political roles for women, but a significant percentage is still reluctant to support female candidates against male candidates.

#### Participation of Marginalized Groups in Elections in Myanmar

When asked whether certain groups in society face barriers to participation in the election process, most respondents say that there are no barriers to electoral participation for women, young voters, first-time voters and ethnic minorities. A significant percentage, however, do see barriers for electoral participation by IDPs and persons with disabilities (Figure 16).

Figure 16. “What is your perception on the ability of the following groups to participate in elections in Myanmar?”



Overall, 90 percent of Myanmar people say that people under the age of 25 are able to participate freely, 88 percent say that women in Myanmar are able to participate freely, 83 percent say that first-time voters are able to participate freely and 78 percent say that ethnic minorities are able to participate freely in elections in Myanmar. In the case of ethnic minorities, 6 percent say that ethnic minorities face minor barriers to participation and 1 percent say they face major barriers.

In the case of IDPs, 30 percent of individuals believe that IDPs face minor barriers to political participation and 5 percent believe that they face major barriers. In the case of persons with disabilities, 25 percent believe they face minor barriers and 3 percent major barriers. Those respondents who think that these groups face either minor or major barriers were asked to list the types of barriers the groups face.

In the case of IDPs, the primary barriers named were lack of access to polling stations (57%), lack of appropriate identification (21%), lack of information on the election process (19%), pressure exerted on IDPs by authorities and their own communities to not vote or vote a certain way (13%), lack of security or personal safety (9%) and lack of registration as a voter (7%).

Some of the issues cited as barriers for IDPs are also evident in responses on election-related questions from the IDP sample. Some of the key findings from the sample of IDPs include the following:

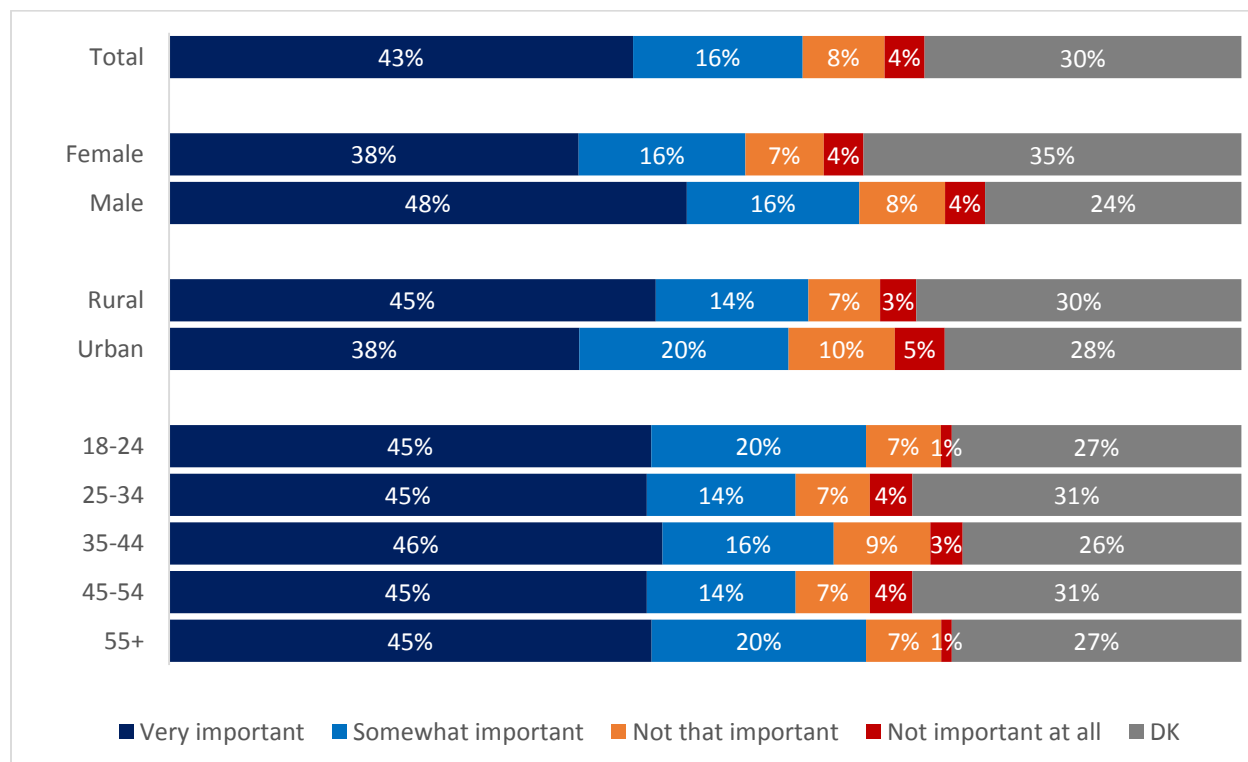
- In general, IDPs tend to have lower levels of information about elections than the general population. Only 17 percent say that they have a great deal or fair amount of information on the upcoming elections, and information on various aspects of the election, ranging from marking a ballot to the voter list update process, is also lower among IDPs than among the general population.
- It is clear, however, from the IDP sample that any voter education focused on this community should have a significant mix of community-level outreach and less emphasis on media outreach. When asked about effective methods of communications for voter information, local authorities are much more likely to be cited than media sources. Information from township or village authorities is mentioned by close to four in 10 individuals, while community discussions, word of mouth and religious leaders are mentioned by a quarter. Media campaigns on television and radio are mentioned by less than two in 10 IDPs. Interestingly, as far as media is concerned, IDPs prefer radio over television as a trusted source of information about the election process.

Among those who say that persons with disabilities face barriers to participation, the barriers most often listed were inability of persons with disabilities to travel to polling stations (79%), the lack of accessibility of polling stations (46%), inability of persons with disabilities to go out alone in public (26%), lack of assistance at the polling station (10%), families that do not allow participation (8%) and general lack of information and education among persons with disabilities (7%).

### **Views on Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities**

In addition to asking about possible barriers to electoral participation for persons with disabilities, respondents to the survey were also asked about the importance of electoral participation for this population. There is generally strong support for the electoral participation of persons with disabilities, with a majority of Myanmar people saying that it is either very important or somewhat important for persons with disabilities to participate in elections (Figure 17).

Figure 17. "How important or unimportant do you think it is for persons with disabilities to participate in elections?"



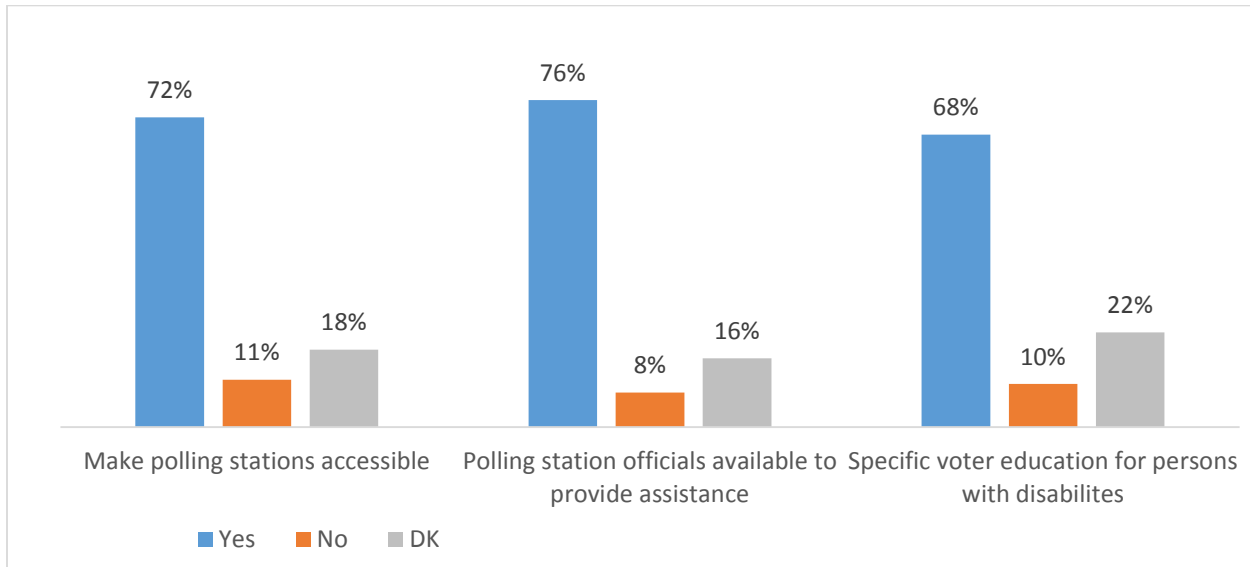
Nearly six in ten say that it is either very (43%) or somewhat important (16%) that persons with disabilities are able to participate in elections in Myanmar. Few respondents say that it is either not that important (8%) or not important at all (4%) for persons with disabilities to participate in elections. The majority of each major sub-group believes that is important for persons with disabilities to participate in the elections.

Among those that think it is important for persons with disabilities to participate in elections in Myanmar, 45 percent say it is important because they are viewed as citizens and no different from anyone else, 10 percent say everyone eligible has the right to participate, 8 percent say their vote contributes to democracy and the country’s development, 6 percent say that they are still able despite their disability, 6 percent say that every vote counts, 4 percent say that persons with disabilities are able to represent their interests by voting and 3 percent say there should not be discrimination against anyone. Conversely, a small minority that does not think it is important for persons with disabilities to participate in elections think that their vote is not important and would not have any effect (36%), that they are not capable of participating (16%), and that they have difficulty moving and traveling to participate (14%).

Given the strong support for the participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral process, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents support initiatives to increase opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in the electoral process. Seventy-six percent support having polling station officials available to provide assistance upon request for persons with disabilities in polling stations, 72

percent support an initiative to make polling stations accessible for persons with disabilities and 68 percent support specific voter education for persons with disabilities (Figure 18).

*Figure 18. "Do you think electoral authorities should undertake the following initiatives during elections?"*

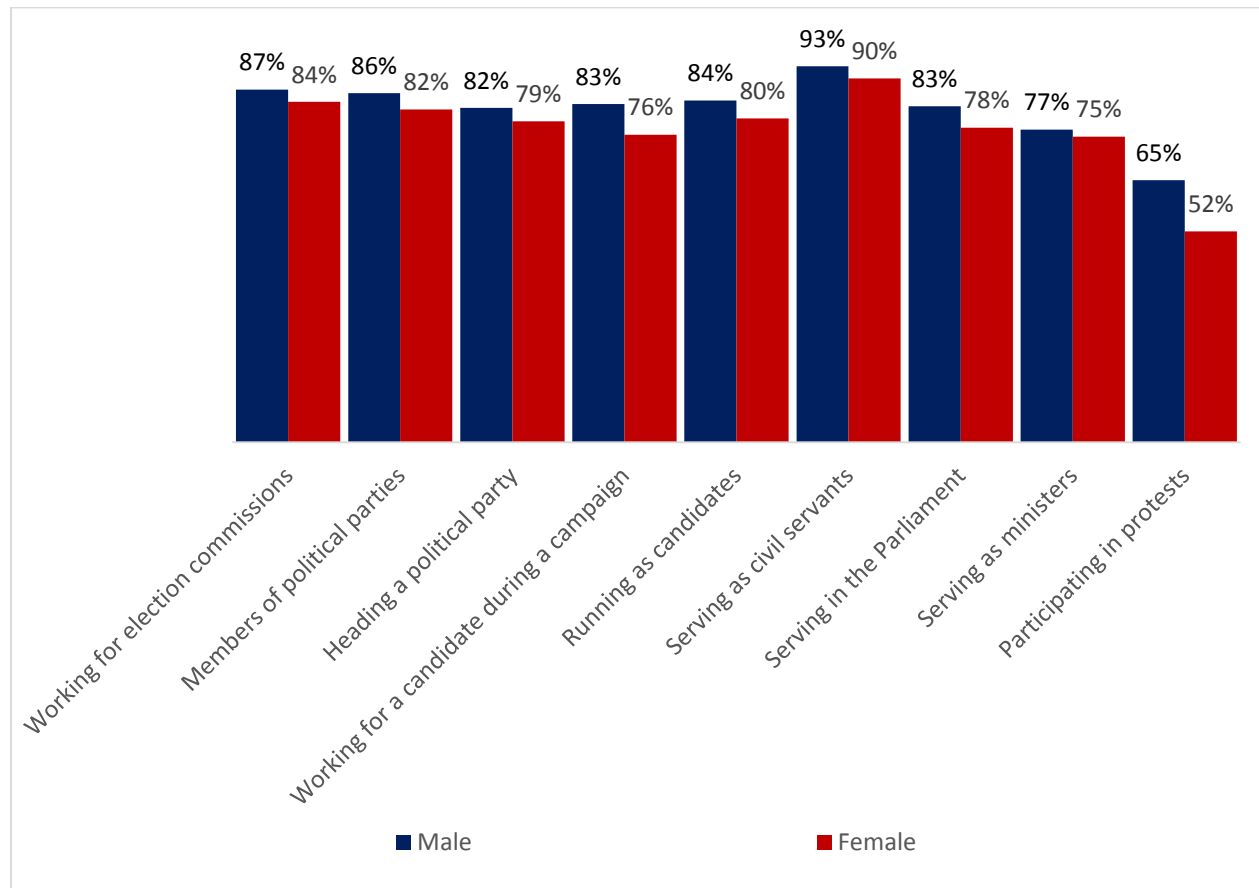


Even though the majority support efforts to increase electoral participation for persons with disabilities, the survey data indicates that this support may be limited to participation of persons with disabilities as voters and not as candidates. A large majority in Myanmar would still have concerns about supporting a political candidate with a disability. Given the choice between two candidates with equal credentials, one with a disability and one without a disability, a vast majority (85%) say that they would vote for the candidate without a disability. Only 8 percent say it does not matter to them whether the candidate has a disability or not, while 3 percent say they would vote for the candidate with a disability.

### **Views on Political Participation of Women**

Respondents to the survey were also asked whether they support women playing various roles in the political and electoral realm. The responses indicate that there is strong support for women in these roles, and that this support is expressed by both men and women (Figure 19).

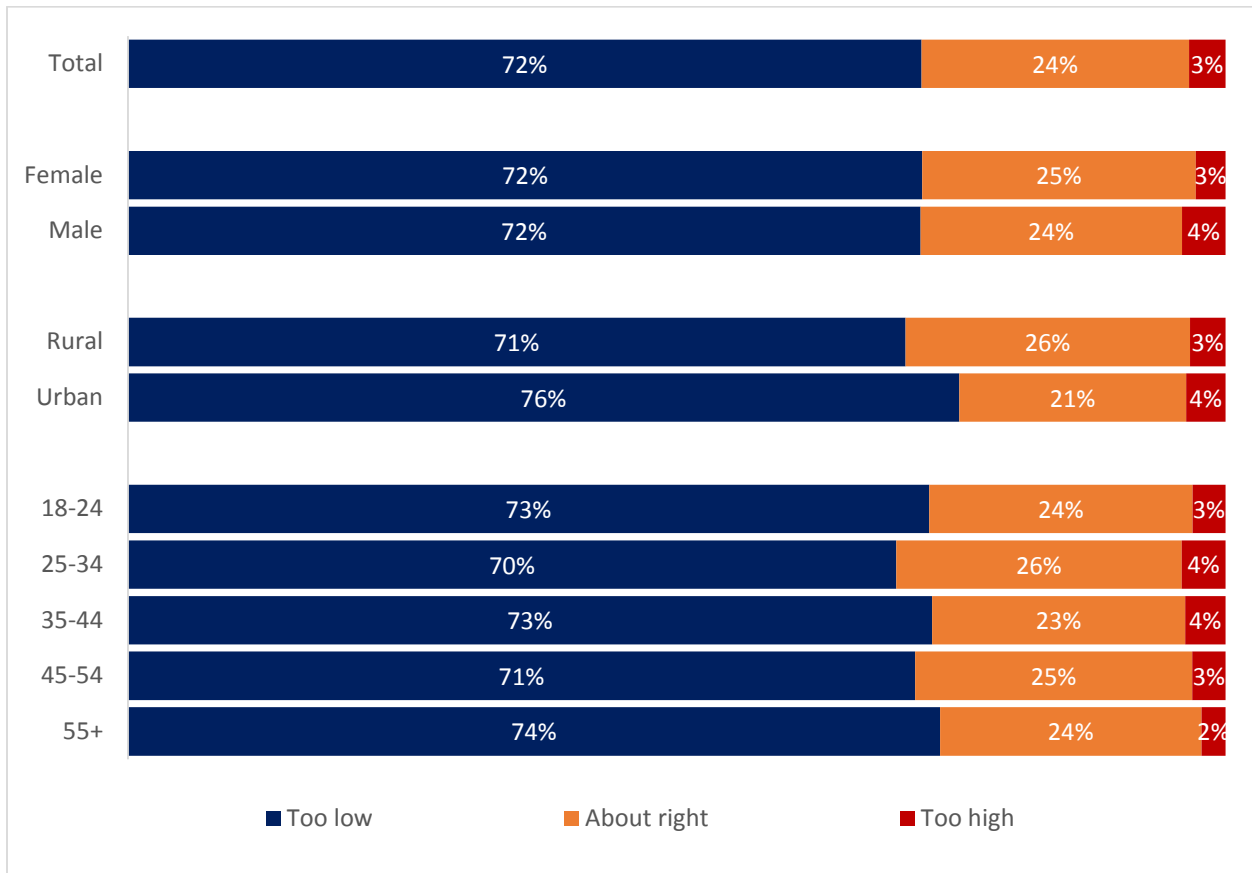
Figure 19. Percent who Strongly or Somewhat Support Women in Various Roles



Overall, 91 percent support women as civil servants, 86 percent support women working for election commissions, 84 percent support women as members of political parties, 82 percent support women running as candidates in elections, 81 percent support women heading a political party, 80 percent support women working for a candidate during a campaign, 80 percent support women serving in the Parliament and 76 percent support women serving as ministers. The only area where support for women is not widespread is women participating in protests, which is supported by 58 percent and opposed by 32 percent. Interestingly, women are less likely to support women taking part in protests than men (52 percent versus 65 percent). On the other issues, women generally have similar opinions as men.

Reflective of this support for political roles for women, the vast majority of Myanmar people believe that there are currently too few women in Parliament. Respondents to the survey were informed that only 4 percent of members of the Assembly of the Union are women, and asked if this is too low a proportion of women in the Assembly, too high, or about right. Seventy-two percent say that this is too low a proportion of women, a further 24 percent say that this proportion is just right, while 3 percent say that it is too high of a proportion. There is little difference between men and women on this question (Figure 20).

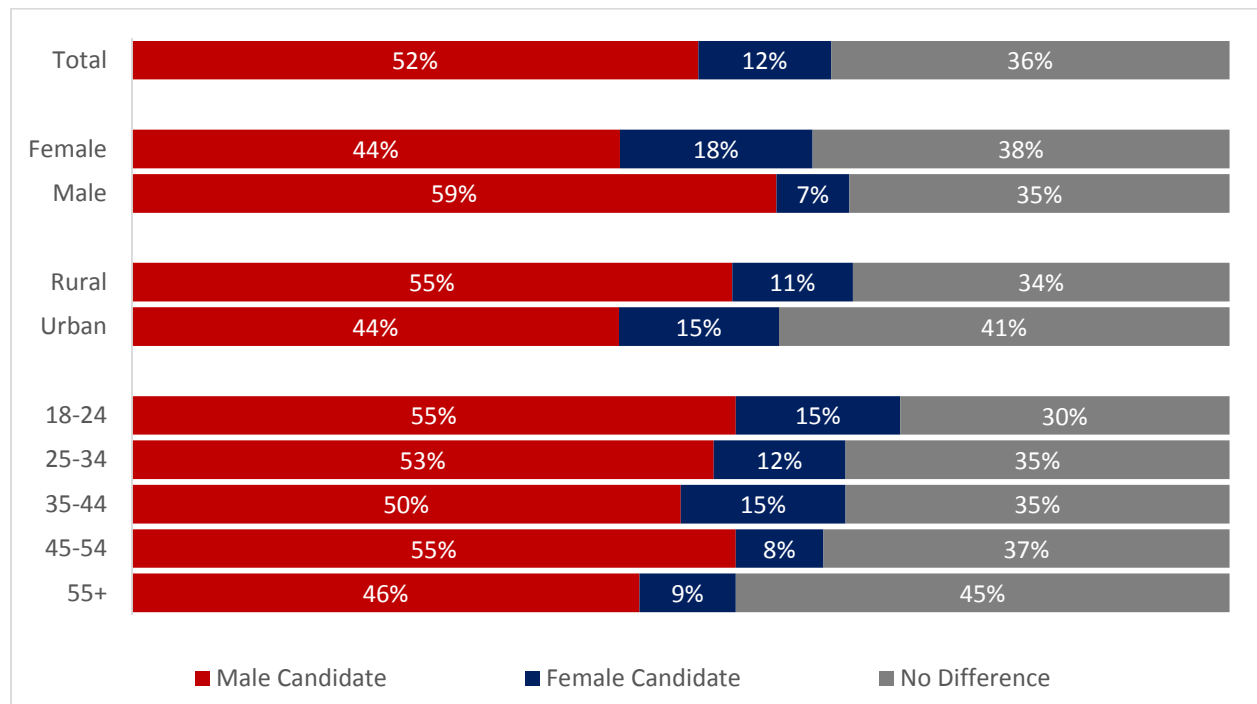
Figure 20. "In your opinion, do you think that this current proportion in Parliament is too low, about right, or too high?"



The belief that the percentage of women in Parliament is too low is strongly supported at all age groups and in both rural and urban areas, and indicates that there may be support for efforts to correct the gender imbalance in parliamentary seats.

While the majority of Myanmar people may be supportive of roles for women in various realms of the electoral and political process, the survey data shows that they are more reluctant to actually give support to women who may run for political office and are pitted against male candidates with equivalent credentials. Respondents to the survey were given a scenario with a choice between two candidates with equal credentials, one a man and one a woman, and asked who they would choose. Overall, 52 percent said they would support the male candidate, 12 percent would support the female candidate and 36 percent say that it does not matter to them based on gender (Figure 21).

Figure 21. "If you have a choice between a female candidate and a male candidate with equal credentials, who would you likely support?"



A majority of men (59%) say they would vote for the male candidate, while 7 percent would vote for the women and for 35 percent the gender of the candidate would not matter. Even among women, a plurality (44%) would vote for the male candidate, 18 percent would vote for the female candidate and for 38 percent the choice would not matter. This data seems to suggest that while there is generalized support for women taking part in the political process as political candidates, female candidates still may have a significant hurdle to overcome in terms of traditional political roles assigned to men and women.





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