Bangladesh's Democracy 2017:
According to Its People

A survey of the Bangladeshi People

The Asia Foundation
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Introduction

The Asia Foundation is pleased to present Bangladesh's Democracy 2017: According to Its People. This survey, conducted in January and February 2017, captures the diverse range of attitudes towards democracy and elections, identity, and violence, and compares them with similar surveys carried out in 2006 and 2015.

Overall, Bangladeshis are more optimistic in 2017 compared to 2015, as reflected in responses across a variety of questions, and significant increases in the number of respondents saying both the country and their local area are heading in the right direction. As in 2015, the acceptance of women's participation in political processes continues to pose a challenge to an inclusive democracy, and highlights that, despite government commitment to and commendable progress toward gender equality, there remains a gender divide in regard to access to information and the use of the Internet.

We are grateful to the Australian High Commission in Dhaka for their support for this survey. We would like to extend special appreciation to our former country representative, Hasan Mazumdar, for his contributions to the refinement and translation of the questionnaire, to Md. Zakaria for his day-to-day support for this effort, and to John Rieger for serving as main editor of the report. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the services provided by the Survey and Research System at each stage of the survey process, and the willingness of respondents across the country who took the time to answer our questions and collectively contributed to a richer understanding of the perspectives of the Bangladeshi people on critical issues.

Sara L. Taylor
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Executive Summary

Key Findings

The National Mood

- The people of Bangladesh are much more optimistic about the future than they were at the time of our last survey in late 2015. In 2017 79% of respondents felt the country was going in the right direction, compared to only 45% in 2015.

- Inflation in the cost of essentials is still seen as the biggest problem in Bangladesh, although it has decreased to 37% from 43% in 2015.

- Bangladeshis are also significantly more optimistic about the direction at the local level in 2017 (82%) than they were in 2015 (56%).

- The poor condition of roads (47%) is by far the biggest problem facing Bangladeshis at the local level, cited four times more than the next biggest problems, unemployment (12%) and law and order (12%).

Democratic Values and Institutions

- Almost all Bangladeshis agree (93%) that democracy requires more than one political party competing, a slight increase from the 90% who agreed with this statement in 2015.

- A very strong majority (90%) also support the premise that people should be free to criticize government.

- The same number of respondents (48%) would accept interreligious marriage as would not, the majority of those who would accept it think it is probably a bad idea).

- When asked if they would allow the construction of a different religion's building in their village most respondents say yes. 73% are okay with a mosque, 65% with a Hindu temple, 64% with a Christian church, and 63% with a Buddhist pagoda.

- Political tolerance has increased substantially since 2015 with 77% of Bangladeshis saying political parties, even the ones

- Most Bangladeshis (84%) believe women should make their own choices when voting, but 16% believe they should be advised by men. most people do not like, should be allowed to hold meetings in their area. In 2015, only 42% agreed with this statement.

- Similarly, 80% of respondents would accept it if a friend of theirs supported a political party that most people did not like, up from only 42% in 2015.

- A strong majority (63%) believe public criticism of one's party can be positive, while a quarter (26%) believe that party loyalty demands that leaders and supporters present a unified front in public; a further 10% are unsure.

- Bangladeshi perceptions about freedom to express political opinions have rebounded somewhat since 2015. A strong majority (70%) feel very or fairly free to express their political opinions, while a quarter (27%) still feel their speech is inhibited.

Political Interest and Efficacy

- Most Bangladeshis do not discuss political affairs with their friends very often or at all; however, the number who say they discuss politics almost all the time or often has increased five points since our 2015 study to 25%.

- Half of all respondents report a change in their interest in politics over the last three years, with significantly more saying their interest has decreased (30%) than increased (20%).

- A majority (55%) of respondents strongly or somewhat agree that members of Parliament care about them, while 42% disagree somewhat or strongly.

- A strong majority (79%) believe that voting in parliamentary elections can improve the country's well-being, a significant increase over the 67% who held this opinion in 2015.

- Although 79% of respondents believe that voting is good for the country's well-being, and 97% say they intend to vote in the next parliamentary elections, feelings of political efficacy continue to decline, with those saying they can have no influence over national government decisions increasing from 33% in 2006, to 50% in 2015, to 63% in 2017.

- Bangladeshis report higher levels of influence over decisions at thelocallevel(23% say some or a lot) than at the national level, but more than half still say they have very little or no influence.

Political Parties

- Just a quarter (26%) of respondents think the party is more important than the individual candidate in deciding how to vote.

- Although only a quarter of respondents say that the political party is more important than the individual candidate in making a voting choice, almost half (48%) say they are somewhat or very unlikely to still vote for a candidate they support if he or she switches parties.

- Personal qualities are still the most important factor for 39% of Bangladeshis when making an electoral choice, but education (12%), accessibility (9%), religious values (9%), and previous record (9%) are also important.

- The history of the party (27%) and the programs and proposals of the party (27%) are the two most important factors in party selection.

- More than half of respondents (51%) see no differences or cannot name any differences between the political parties; this is a significant decrease since the last survey, when the comparable figure was 78%.

- More than half of respondents (55%) agree that their party cares about people like them, while 43% disagree.

- The majority of respondents (65%) say they would be open to switching to a new party that had a platform closer to their views.

Political Representation

- A very large majority (86%) of respondents can correctly name their representative in Parliament, and a majority (56%) can recall their MP visiting the community in the last year. Additionally, 10% of respondents have directly approached their MP for help in solving a personal or local problem.

- Satisfaction with MPs has increased to 69% from 56% in 2015.

- Almost all respondents (94%) know the name of their Union Parishad chairperson, and 51% have contacted their chairperson or a member to seek help with a personal or local problem within the last two years.

- Respondents report greater satisfaction with their Union Parishad elected representatives than with their MPs, with 85% saying they are satisfied.

Voting Expectations

- Almost everyone (97%) plans to vote in the next parliamentary election.

- More than half say they will vote because it is their right (44%) or their duty (11%), and 28% see voting as a chance to elect an honest (14%) leader or an MP they like (14%).

- The number of respondents who think the next elections will be problem free has increased significantly since 2015, from 16% to 35%.

Trust in Institutions

- The army, the most trusted institution in 2015, remained the most trusted in 2017, with 90% of Bangladeshis saying the Army had high integrity. The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) remains the second-most trusted institution at 78%. These were followed by the courts/judges/lawyers at 65%. While political parties (42%) and the police (31%) continue to be the least trusted, both saw significant gains since 2015 (21% and 20% respectively).

Women in Elections and Politics

- Bangladeshi men and women continue to have a preference for male MPs, with 73% of men and 47% of women saying that MPs should all or mostly be men, and 36% of respondents prefer to have a male MP.

- Most Bangladeshis (84%) believe women should make their own choices when voting, but 16% believe they should be advised by men.

Communication and Social Media

- Television remains the most important way respondents get information about what is happening in the country, although those citing it as their first response declined from 84% in 2015 to just 70% in 2017.

- While 80% of Bangladeshis overall own a mobile phone, women (72%)are significantly less likely to own a mobile phonethan men (89%).

- Relatively few Bangladeshis (17%) can access the Internet through their phone, but the number who can has increased by five percent since the 2015 survey.

Identity and Religion

- Bangladeshis—regardless of religion—are religious, and religion plays an important role in people's everyday lives. It is unsurprising, then, that astrong plurality (40%) cite religion as their most important identity.

- Although men and women cite religion as their primary identity at almost equal rates, attendance at services is markedly different between the sexes with 90% of men saying they attend services at least once a week compared to only 17% of women.

Security and Violence

- "Political conflict" is the most common response (30%) when Bangladeshis are asked about the biggest cause of violence in the country. This drops to 16% at the community level.

- Bangladeshis rate the army (91%) as the security institution that makes them feel safest, followed by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) (81%). The police force is the only security institution with fewer than half of respondents saying it makes them feel safe or very safe. Instead, more than one-third of Bangladeshis say the police make them feel unsafe or very unsafe.

- More than a third of Bangladeshis (36%) say they fear for their personal safety or the safety of their family at least sometimes.

Terrorist Attacks

- A strong majority of respondents (82%) say they are aware of the attack on Holey Bakery, and 67% think similar attacks will happen in the future. When asked about the motivations of the attackers, about a quarter (27%) say, "cause trouble for the current government" and another quarter (24%) blame international terrorist organizations.

- Fewer people say they had heard of the attacks on Hindus in Brahmanbaria (70%) than had heard of the Holey Bakery attack; however, respondents have slightly higher expectations of further attacks like those committed in Brahmanbaria (76%). Compared to the Holey Bakery attack, there was an increase in those who say "cause trouble for the current government" (from 27% to 35%) and a decrease in those who ascribe the attacks to international terrorists (from 24% to 17%).

- Nationally, 38% say they are concerned that they or their family and friends might be victims of terrorist attacks.

1 THE NATIONAL MOOD

1.1 Direction of the Country

Generally speaking, do you think things in Bangladesh today are going in the right direction, or going in the wrong direction? (Q7)
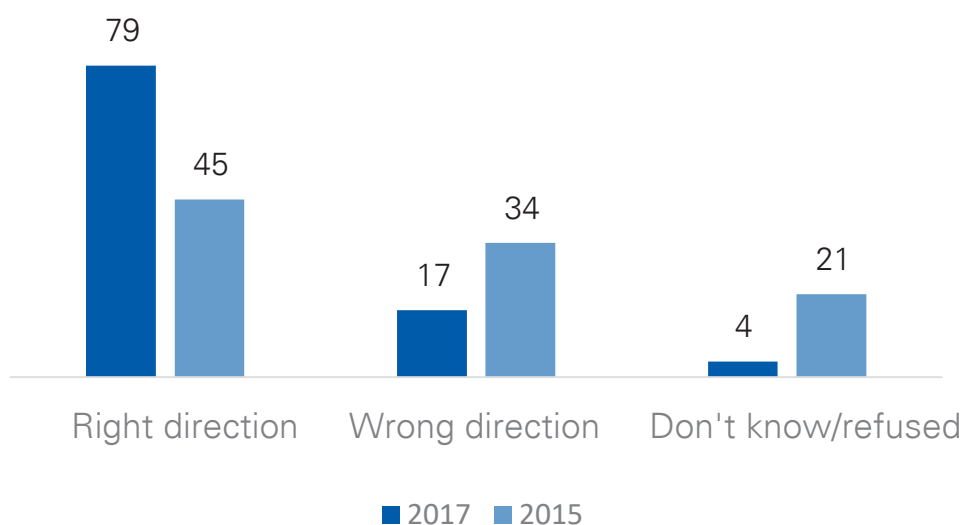
	Right direction	Wrong direction	Don't know/refused
2017	79	17	4
2015	45	34	21

■ 2017 ■ 2015

The people of Bangladesh are much more optimistic about the future than they were at the time of our last survey in late 2015, a time when memories of the controversial 2014 election were fresh, and the country had been wracked by political violence at the beginning of the year and increasing extremist violence. The optimism seen here is confirmed by other findings throughout the survey. Respondents in rural areas (82%) were nine percent more likely to say the country is heading in the right direction than urban respondents (73%). Those least likely to say the country is headed in the right direction were those in Barisal, at 70%, approval ratings that are still quite high compared to the 2015 national-level findings.

1.2 Biggest Problem – National

In your view, what is the biggest problem
facing Bangladesh at the national level?(Q8)

Problem	2017	2015
Price hike of essentials	37	43
Corruption	20	18
Unemployment	17	12
Law and order	7	10
Political instability and intolerance	9	8
Electricity	4	6
Others	4	2
Don't Know/ No Response	3	2

■ 2017 ■ 2015

Inflation in the cost of essentials is still seen as the biggest problem in Bangladesh, although it has decreased six points since 2015; women (40%) were slightly more likely to give this response than men (34%). Concern with corruption has increased slightly, to 20%, while concern with unemployment has increased from 12% in 2015 to 17% in 2017. Concern with inflation is highest in Chittagong and Mymensingh (49%), Sylhet (48%), and among illiterate respondents (48%). Men (11%) were more likely to cite political instability and intolerance than women (7%); this was also listed as the biggest concern by 16% in Barisal. Unemployment was cited as the biggest problem by 26% in Dhaka and 25% in Rajshahi.
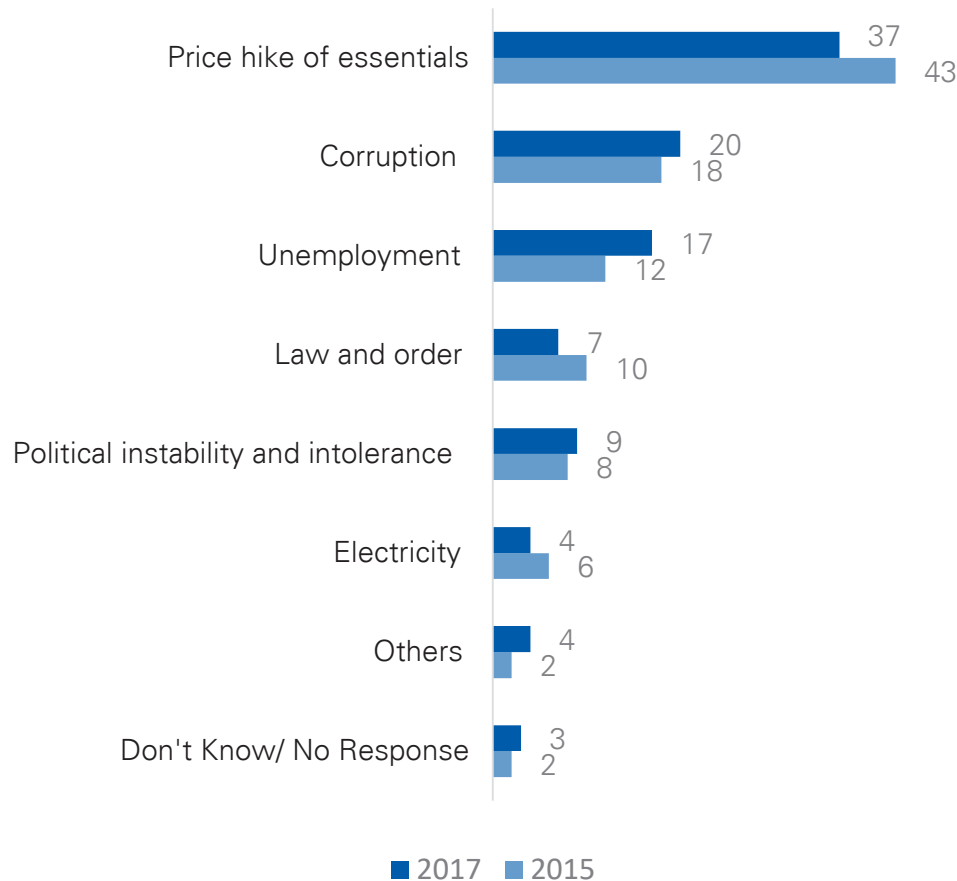
1.3 Direction at the Local Level

Now let's talk about your area. Generally speaking, do you
think things in your area today are going in the right direction,
or in the wrong direction? (Q9)
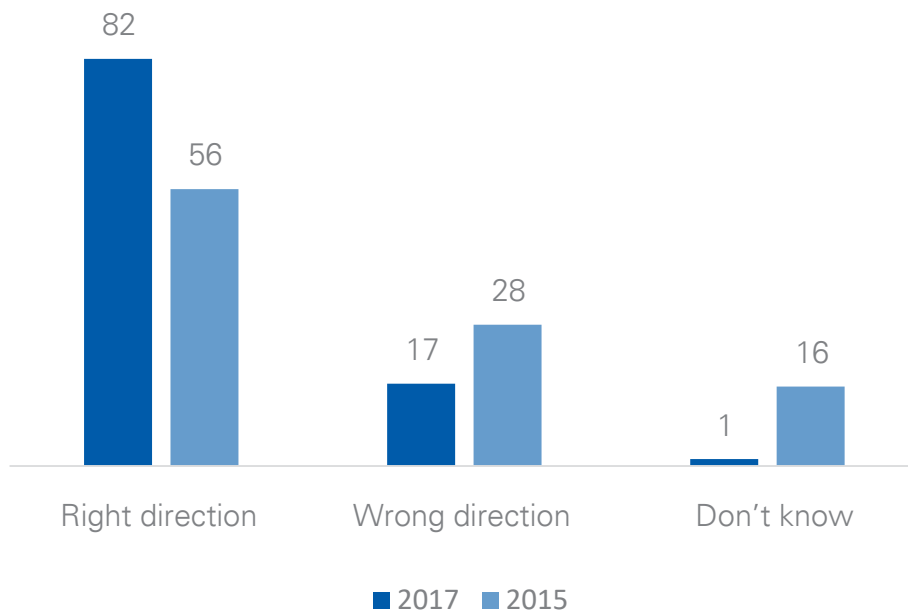
	Right direction	Wrong direction	Don't know
2017	82	17	1
2015	56	28	16

Bangladeshis are also significantly more optimistic about the direction at the local level in 2017 (82%) than they were in 2015 (56%). As with the national-level question, rural respondents (83%) were more likely to say right direction than urban respondents (77%). This finding was relatively consistent across the country, with the most optimistic in Rangpur (94%) and the least in Rajshahi (75%).

1.4 Biggest Problem – Local

In your view, what is the biggest problem
facing the people of your area? (Q10)
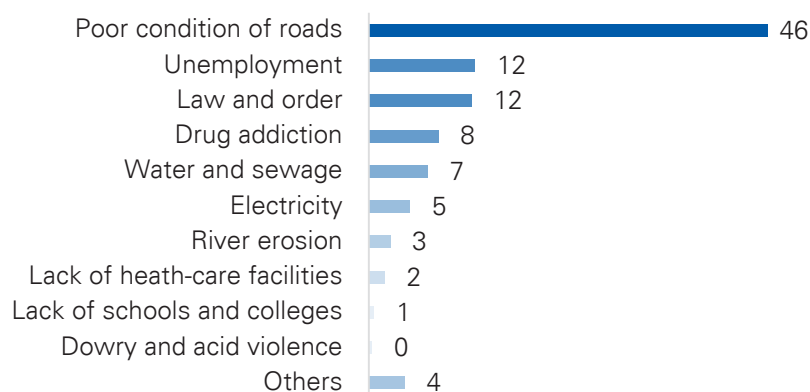
Issue	Value
Poor condition of roads	46
Unemployment	12
Law and order	12
Drug addiction	8
Water and sewage	7
Electricity	5
River erosion	3
Lack of heath-care facilities	2
Lack of schools and colleges	1
Dowry and acid violence	0
Others	4

The poor condition of roads (47%) is by far the biggest problem facing Bangladeshis at
the local level, cited four times more than the next biggest problems, unemployment
(12%) and law and order (12%).Rural respondents (52%) were significantly more likely
than urban respondents (31%) to cite roads as the biggest problem, while urban
respondents were more likely to say drug addiction (13%) and water and
sewage(14%) than rural respondents. Those least concerned about roads were in
Dhaka, but it was still the top problem for 37%; while the most concerned were in
Khulna (60%) and Sylhet (59%).Findings varied significantly by division.

Division-level Priorities

Division	Issue	National Avg.	Division %
Barisal	Roads	47	48
	River erosion	3	12
Chittagong	Roads	47	50
	Law and order	12	22
Dhaka	Roads	47	37
	Drug addiction	8	11
Khulna	Roads	47	40
	Water and sewage	7	17
Mymensingh	Roads	47	54
	Electricity	5	14
Rajshahi	Roads	47	60
	Unemployment	12	12
Rangpur	Roads	47	43
	Unemployment	12	20
Sylhet	Roads	47	59
	Lack of health facilities	2	5

1.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Respondents at both the national and local levels are significantly more optimistic than they were in 2015, returning to historical levels. This is likely because there has been a period of political stability during which disruptive tactics like hartals (strike actions) and transportation blockades have not disrupted daily lives.

The findings related to the biggest problem at the national and local levels can provide actionable information on public priorities for government, political parties and candidates, civil society and media, and Bangladeshi and international development agencies.

For government officials, the findings at the division level can help them gauge citizen satisfaction with service provision and identify areas where improvement is needed. For example, water and sewage in Khulna and electricity provision in Mymensingh should be priorities for improvement.

The findings also provide a virtual roadmap for the development of citizen-responsive political platforms at the national and local levels. At the national level, parties and candidates that wish to improve their election prospects by being responsive to constituents should focus their manifestos and campaigns on plans to tackle inflation, corruption, unemployment, and because it is a national concern, improvement of roads. At the division level, parties and candidates should talk about road building and tailor their platforms to address division-specific priorities outlined in the summary table above, such as law and order in Chittagong and water and sewage in Khulna.

To strengthen political accountability and help ensure that voters have the information they need to make an informed decision on election day, civil society and media actors should track issues identified as important to voters, and focus civic and voter information and outreach efforts on these priority issues.

2 DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND INSTITUTIONS

2.1 Meaning of Democracy[1]

If a country is called a democracy,
what does that mean to you? (Q35)

Category	2017	2006
Opportunity to vote freely	20	9
Equal rights for all	18	10
Government by the people	15	0
Freedom of speech	12	7
People's freedom	5	0
Development of the country	1	0
Rule of law/law enforcement	0	8
Other	3	17
Don't know	26	52

■ 2017   ■ 2006
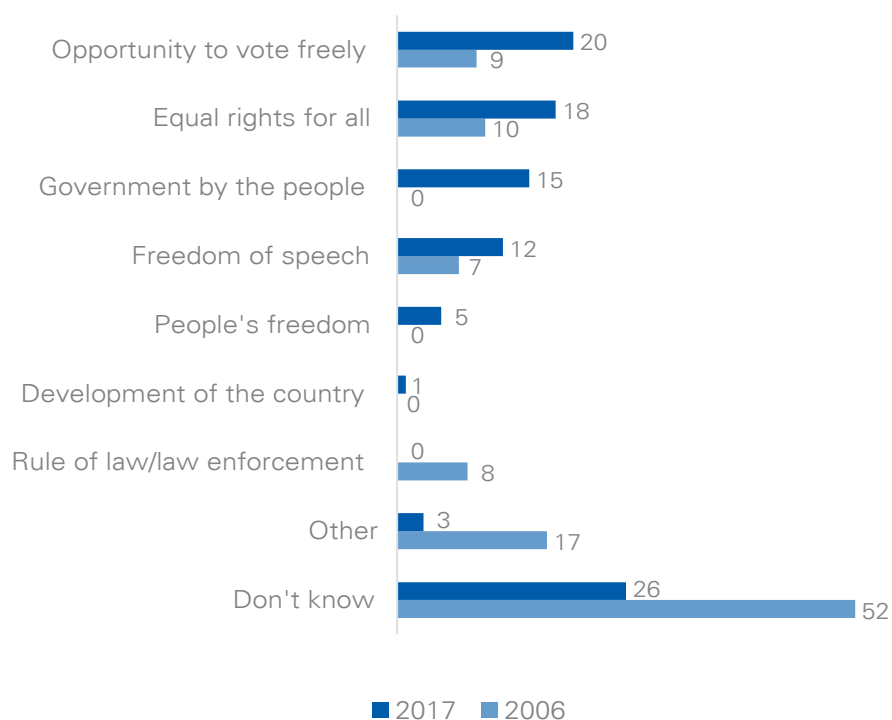
One of the most striking things about our findings in 2017 is how much they differ from our 2006 findings. More Bangladeshis are able to articulate what democracy means to them than in 2006; however, how Bangladeshis understand and describe democracy does not necessarily match Western ideas.

In 2006, more than half of respondents could not list any attribute of democracy. Of those who could list an attribute of democracy, most focused on attributes related to human rights, such as equal rights and freedom of speech, rather than self-government, such as government by the people and opportunity to vote freely.

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1. *This is a standard open-ended question that we ask in many of our surveys. We also asked it in 2015, but have not included it for comparison purposes in this report because the structure of the question (closed) differed from the structure of the question as asked in 2006 and 2017 (open-ended), making the data not comparable.*

In 2017, just a quarter are unable to provide any answer, and more than half of those whohave an answer define democracy in relation to self-government rather than rights, indicating both a broader and a deeper understanding of democracy. Rural respondents (22%) and those over the age of 30 (22%) are slightly less likely than urban respondents (27%) and those under the age of 30 (27%) to provide an answer. Our analysis of these shifts suggests that, over this period, civic education has had a significant impact in increasing public knowledge and understanding of democracy. Nevertheless, it is also clear that much remains to be done, as there are still some demographic groups that include large segments unable to articulate any meaning of democracy. These include women (31%), who were 11 pointsless likely to cite any aspect of democracy than men (20%); the illiterate (45%); and voters in Chittagong (40%), Khulna (38%), and Mymensingh (34%). In addition, the most frequent answer among those who provided a response relates to voting, suggesting that Bangladeshis still see elections as the main indicator of democracy, rather than as one of many critical components.

Some people say, "To have democracy, there must be elections with more than one party competing." Would you agree or disagree? Strongly or somewhat? (Q36)
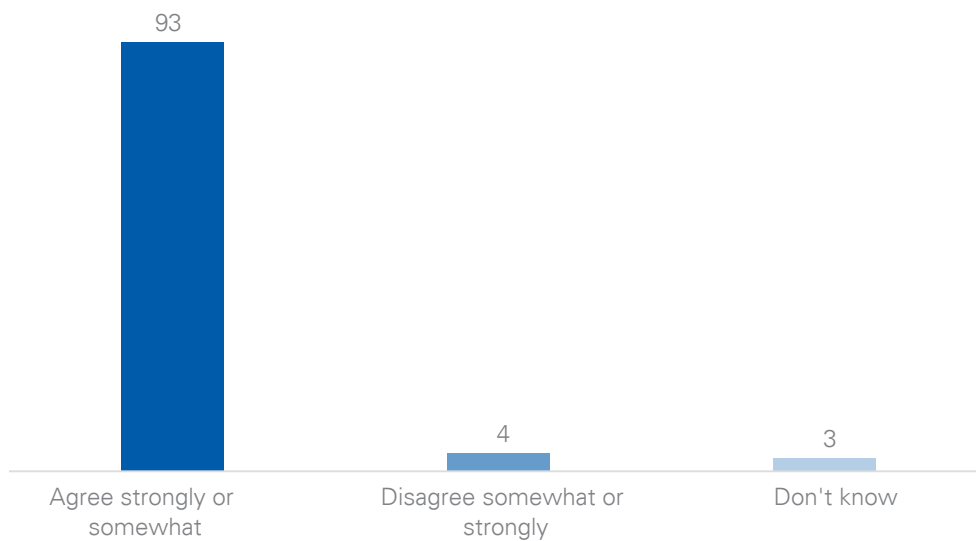
93	4	3
Agree strongly or somewhat	Disagree somewhat or strongly	Don't know

Almost all Bangladeshis agree (93%) that democracy requires more than one political party competing, a slight increase from the 90% who agreed with this statement in 2015. The lowest support for the statement was in Sylhet (79%).

Some people say, "To have democracy, people must be able to freely criticize the government." Would you agree or disagree? Strongly or somewhat? (Q37)
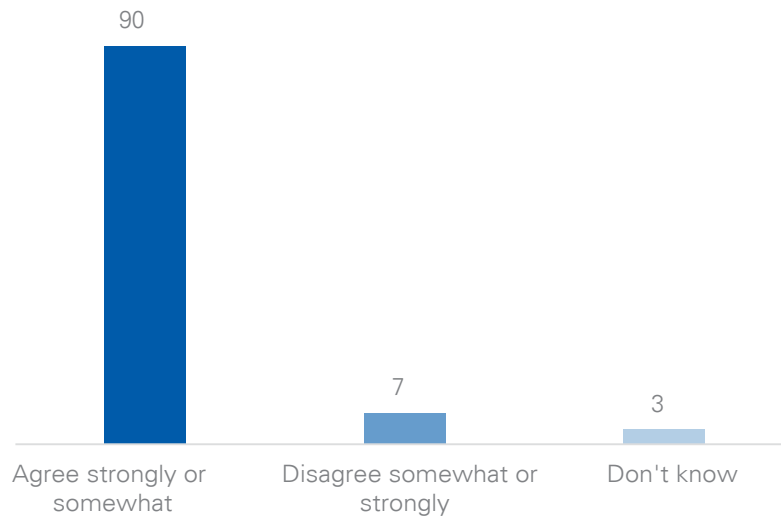
Category	Value
Agree strongly or somewhat	90
Disagree somewhat or strongly	7
Don't know	3

A very strong majority (90%) also support the premise that people should be free to criticize government, but here we do see a small gender difference, with 92% of men agreeing, compared to 87% of women. The lowest levels of agreement with the statement were in Barisal (70%) and Sylhet (78%).

2.2 Persistence of Traditional Social Structures

Here are some different ways people think about the government. Which of these is closest to your view of what the government should be?(Q34)

	2017	2006
Government and people are equals	41	29
Government is the father, the people are a child	41	35
Government is the boss, the people are a worker	12	17
Not sure / don't know	6	19

■ 2017 ■ 2006
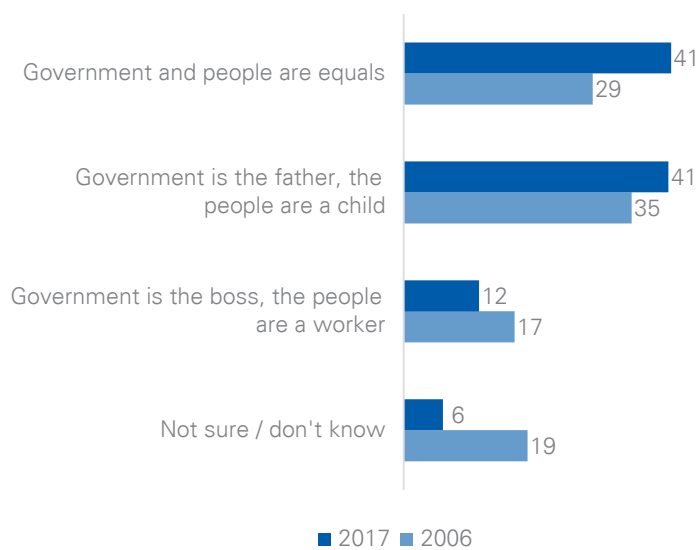
Bangladeshis remain divided about what the role of government should be, with equal numbers (41%) espousing a democratic view and a patriarchal view. Nevertheless, there is room for optimism, as indicated by a 13-point drop since 2006 in those unable to provide a response, a 12-point increase in those with a democratic view of government, and a five-point drop in those who view the government as boss. At the same time, there is a slight increase of six percent in those who view government in a more patriarchal way. Urban respondents agreed with the democratic view of government slightly more frequently than rural respondents, while the latter were slightly more likely to agree with the patriarchal view.

Those most likely to hold the democratic view of government were in Barisal (56%), Mymensingh (56%), and Sylhet (59%); while those least likely to see the government and people as equals were in Rajshahi (27%) and Rangpur (27%). The patriarchal or feudal view of government is held most strongly in Dhaka (50%), Rajshahi (56%), and Rangpur (64%).

While the increase in those who view the government and people as equals is positive and reflects an increasingly democratic culture, a majority of respondents (53%) still experience the government in traditional ways. These findings suggest there is still a great need for targeted civic education to foster a democratic culture in Bangladesh.

2.3 Support For Authoritarianism

On some occasions, democracy doesn't work. When that happens there are people who say we need a strong leader who doesn't have to be elected through voting. Others say that, even if things don't function, democracy is always the best. What do you think? (Q38)

	National	Barisal	Khulna	Rangpur
Democracy is always the best way	77	99	50	58
We need a strong leader who doesn't have to be elected	15	1	40	35
Don't know	7	0	10	7

■ Democracy is always the best way
■ We need a strong leader who doesn't have to be elected
■ Don't know
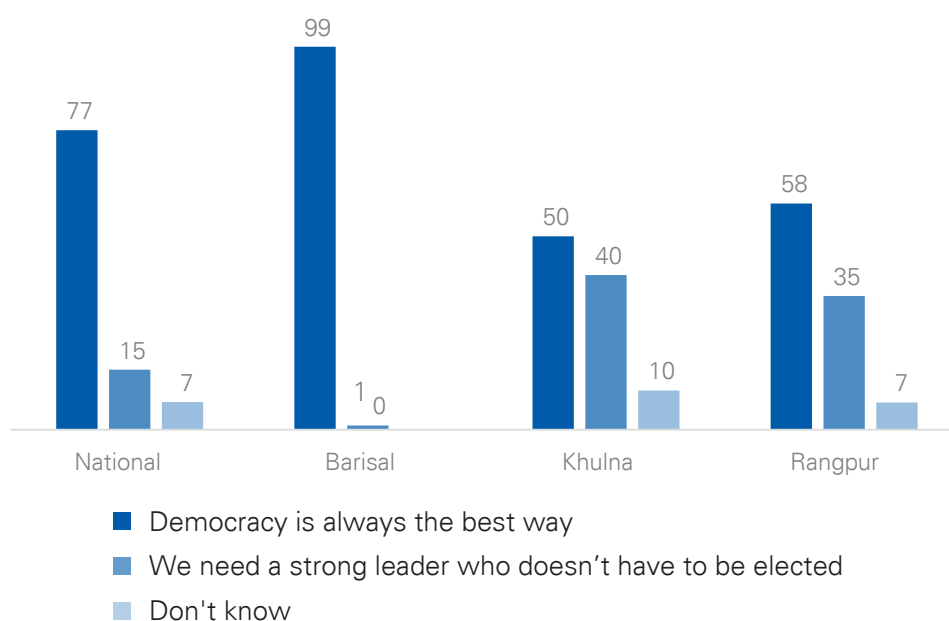
Overall, 77% think democracy is always best, but responses varied widely. The strongest support for democracy is in Barisal (99%) and Dhaka (90%), while the strongest support for authoritarianism is in Khulna (40%) and Rangpur (35%). Support for democracy increases steadily with education, from 70% of illiterate respondents to 85% of those who have completed at least three years of university education. It also increases steadily with income, from 65% among the poorest to 85% among the wealthiest.

2.4 Islam and Democracy

Some people say that Islam has democratic aspects, while others think that modern democracy is probably not compatible with Islamic values. Which is closer to your view? (Q39)

64	22	13
Islam is democratic	Probably not compatible	Don't know
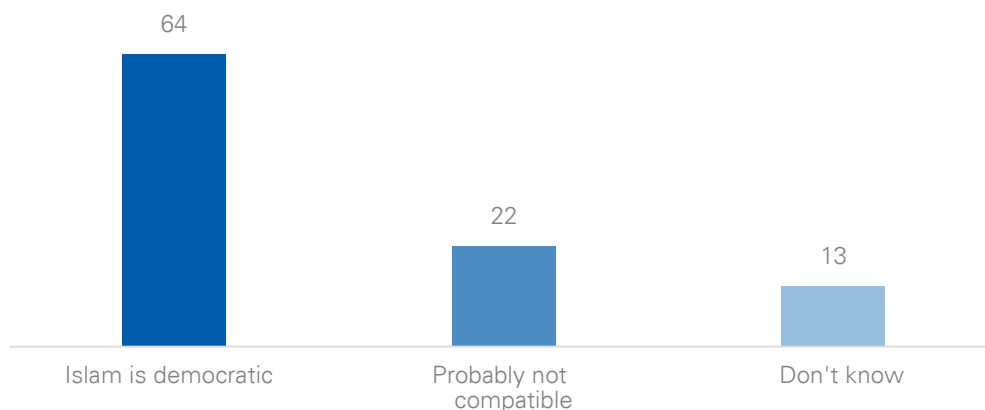
A strong majority (64%) of respondents believe that Islam has democratic aspects, with urban respondents (70%) above average in this view. A third (35%) think Islam is probably not compatible with democracy or are unsure. Respondents in Barisal (96%), Dhaka (77%), and Rajshahi (76%) were most likely to believe Islam has democratic aspects.

Those most likely to think democracy and Islam are incompatible were in Rangpur (60%). This question may have been sensitive in some divisions, as refusal or don't know responses varied widely from the average, with 7% or fewer giving this answer inhalf the divisions, and 19% or more in the other half. The highest don't know/no response rates were in Khulna (27%), Mymensingh (29%), and Sylhet (27%).

2.5 Religious Tolerance

If your son/daughter or brother/sister were to marry
outside your religion, how would you feel? (Q40)

		48	
	39		
9			3
Fine by me, I would accept it	Probably a bad idea, but I would accept it	A bad idea, not acceptable	Don't know
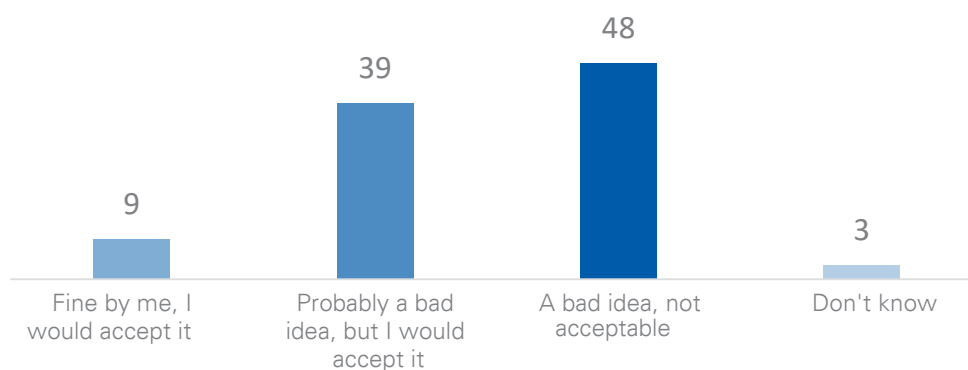
The same number of respondents (48%) would accept interreligious marriage (though the majority of those think it is probably a bad idea) as would not. There was no significant difference between women and men on this question, while urban respondents (52%) were slightly more likely to express acceptance than those in rural areas. The least tolerant are in Mymensingh, where 79% say interreligious marriage is not acceptable.

Due to the phrasing of this question, it is difficult to clearly ascertain the reasons respondents answered one way or another. In the Bangladesh context, interreligious marriage is rare, and when it does happen, one member of the couple is usually expected to convert, often resulting in estrangement from his or her birth family. In addition, children from such marriages are typically raised in one or the other religion, and interreligious families may face social ostracism. Lack of acceptance of such marriages, therefore, may stem from social and family concerns, rather than religious or other intolerance.

Now, suppose a (religious) group wanted to build a building in your village. Tell me for each type if that would be okay, not sure, probably not a good idea, or a bad idea. (Q41)

Okay
- Muslim mosque: 73
- Hindu temple: 65
- Christian church: 64
- Buddhist pagoda: 63

Not sure
- Muslim mosque: 8
- Hindu temple: 11
- Christian church: 13
- Buddhist pagoda: 13

Probably not
- Muslim mosque: 14
- Hindu temple: 18
- Christian church: 18
- Buddhist pagoda: 18

Bad idea
- Muslim mosque: 5
- Hindu temple: 6
- Christian church: 5
- Buddhist pagoda: 6

Legend: ■ Muslim mosque ■ Hindu temple ■ Christian church ■ Buddhist pagoda

For this question, respondents gave responses for each religion other than their own, so the total number of responses varies. A mosque was most accepted, at 73%, though acceptance declined with age, from 83% of those 18 to 24 years old, to 73% of those 50 and older. There were also differences between rural and urban respondents, with those in rural areas more likely to express acceptance of a mosque (76%), and those in urban areas more likely to accept a church, temple, or pagoda.

Those in Rajshahi were more willing to accept a church, temple, or pagoda than other areas, while Barisal and Mymensingh were least accepting.

Most accepting division (Rajshahi) -Okay (Q41)

Buddhist pagoda: 83 (Rajshahi), 63 (National)
Christian church: 83 (Rajshahi), 64 (National)
Hindu temple: 83 (Rajshahi), 65 (National)
Muslim mosque: 83 (Rajshahi), 73 (National)

Legend: Rajshahi, National
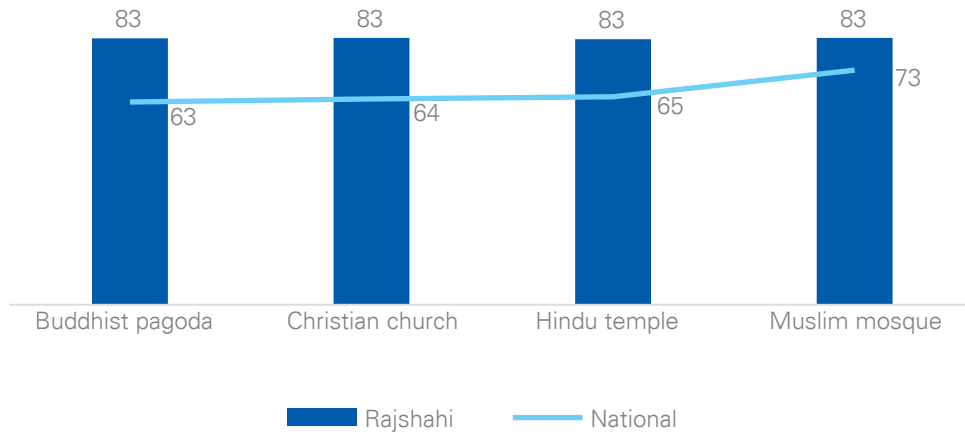
Least accepting divisions (Barisal & Mymensingh) -probably not or bad idea (Q41)

Buddhist pagoda: 53 (Barisal), 40 (Mymensingh), 24 (National)
Christian church: 53 (Barisal), 37 (Mymensingh), 23 (National)
Hindu temple: 50 (Barisal), 50 (Mymensingh), 24 (National)
Muslim mosque: 0 (Barisal), 6 (Mymensingh), 18 (National)

Legend: Barisal, Mymensingh, National
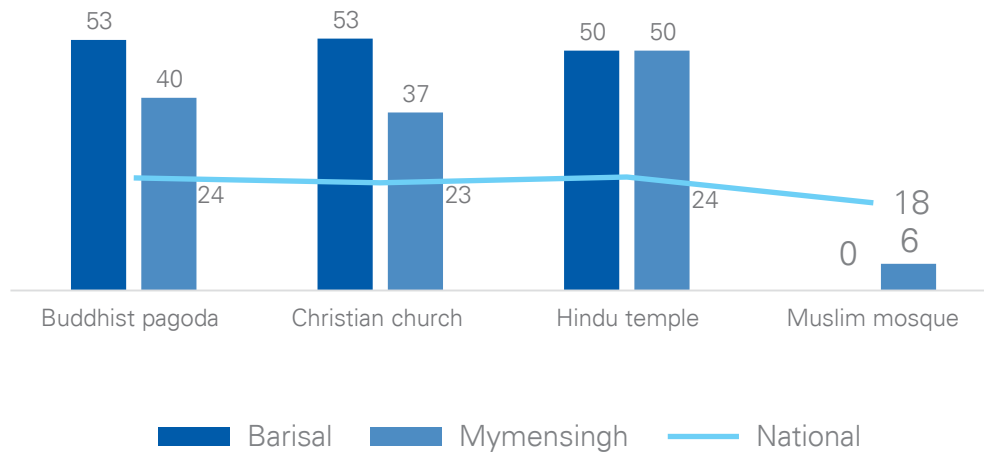
Those least willing to accept a Christian church, Buddhist pagoda, or Hindu temple were in Barisal and Mymensingh.In Mymensingh 25% saida church was definitely a bad idea and almost a third (30%) said a Buddhist pagoda was a bad idea.

2.6 Political Tolerance

Do you think that all political parties, even the ones most people do not like, should be allowed to hold meetings in your area? (Q42)
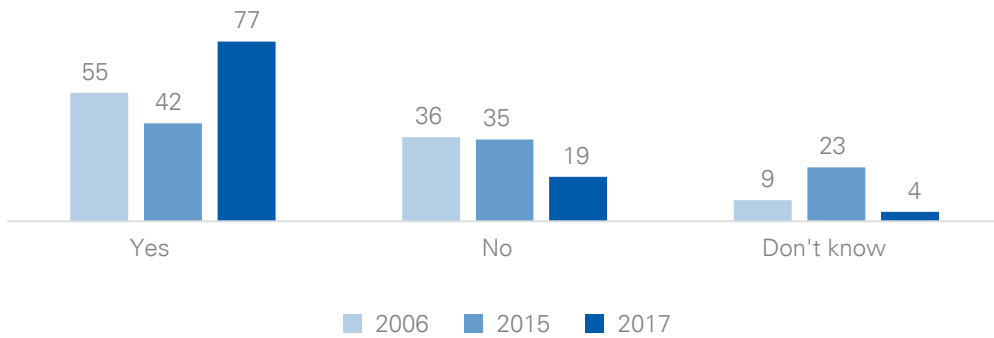

Political tolerance has increased substantially since 2015. The finding in 2015 was surprisingly low compared to our 2006 survey, and also the lowest we have ever recorded on any of our surveys in Asia. In 2017, the most tolerant were in Barisal (96%), Rajshahi (94%), and Rangpur (97%).

An intriguing shift between 2015 and 2017 is the 19-point reduction in "don't know" responses, from 23% to 4%, suggesting that respondents in 2015 found the question sensitive or were unsure about their feelings on this question in the aftermath of the protracted period of political violence at the beginning of the year.

Although the increase in tolerance overall is positive, there are still some places that are significantly less tolerant than the national average, including Chittagong, where 39% said unpopular parties should not be allowed to hold meetings in their area, and Khulna, where 32% said no and another 20% were unsure.

Political tolerance is an area that warrants further investigation in subsequent research.
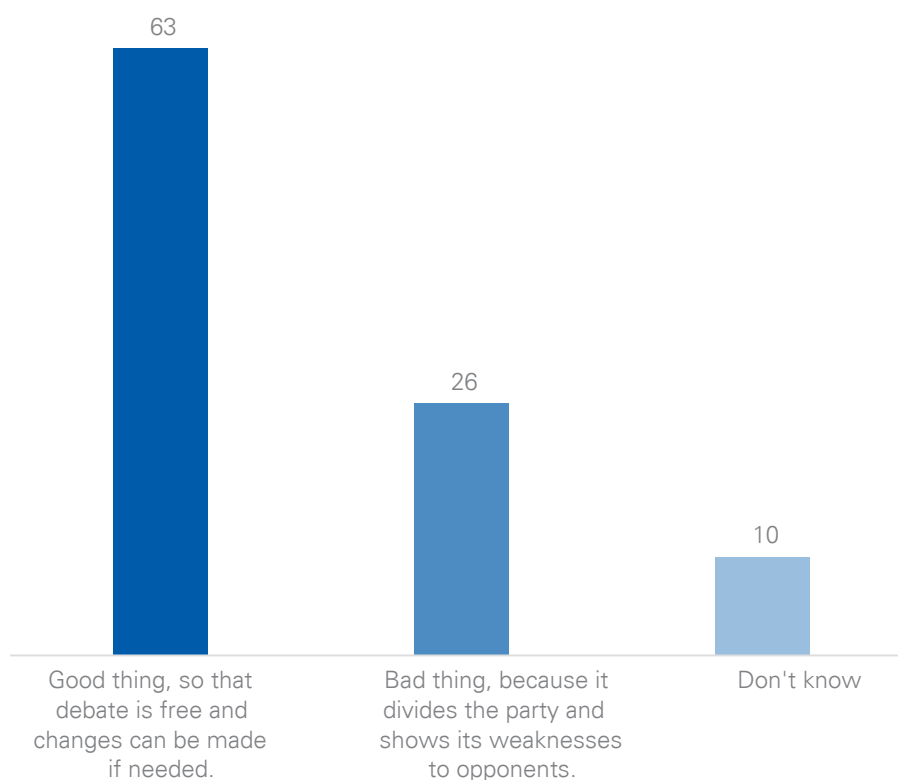
Suppose a friend of yours supported a political party that most people did not like. Would you accept that, or would it end your friendship? (Q43)
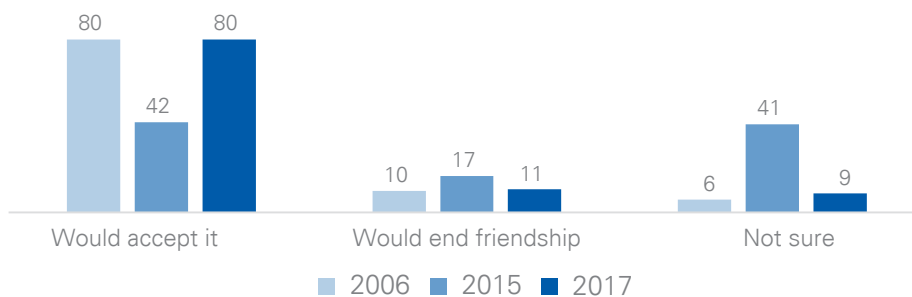
The political turmoil of 2014 and 2015 created a lot of uncertainty on this issue in our 2015 survey, with acceptance dropping by almost half, to 42%, compared to our 2006 survey, and 41% of respondents unsure. In 2017, acceptance rebounded to 80%, almost identical to the level measured in 2006. Respondents in rural areas (83%) were more accepting than those in urban areas (74%). The most tolerant were in Barisal (99%) and Rangpur (94%), while the least tolerant were in Khulna, where 22% said it would end their friendship and a further14% were unsure.

2.7 Perception of Intraparty Disputes

Sometimes the members of a political party strongly criticize their own party publicly. Some people think this is a good thing, so that debate is free and changes can be made if needed. Others think public criticism is a bad thing, because it divides the party and shows its weaknesses to opponents. Which of these is closer to your view? (Q44)

63	26	10
Good thing, so that debate is free and changes can be made if needed.	Bad thing, because it divides the party and shows its weaknesses to opponents.	Don't know

A strong majority (63%) believe public criticism of one's party can be positive, while a quarter (26%) believe that party loyalty demands that leaders and supporters present a unified front in public, and a further 10% are unsure. Support for intraparty criticism was weakest in Chittagong and Rangpur, where 42% and 40%, respectively, thought criticism showed weakness and divided the party.

2.8 Freedom of Speech

To what extent do the people of your locality feel free in expressing their political opinions –very free, fairly free, somewhat not free, or not free? (Q45)
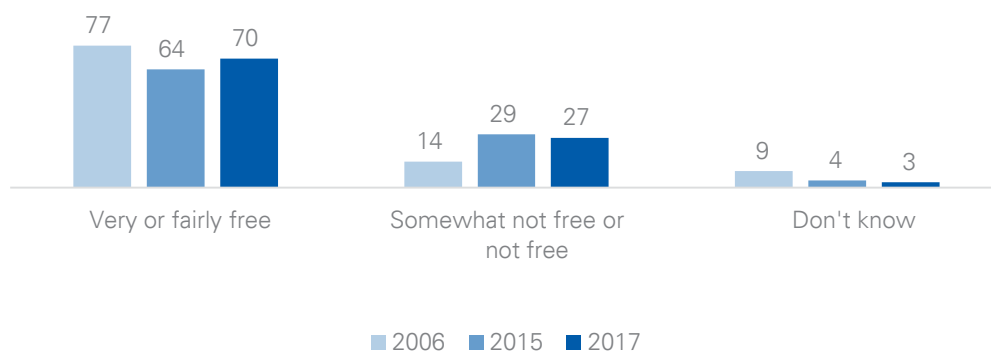
	Very or fairly free	Somewhat not free or not free	Don't know
2006	77	14	9
2015	64	29	4
2017	70	27	3

■ 2006 ■ 2015 ■ 2017

Bangladeshi perceptions about freedom to express political opinions have rebounded somewhat since 2015, but remain lower than in 2006. A strong majority (70%) feel very or fairly free to express their political opinions, but a quarter (27%) still feel their speech is inhibited. Respondents in 2017 feel slightly freer, by six points, to express their opinions than they did in 2015 (with those in rural areas more likely to say very or fairly free), but they feel significantly less free than in 2006, when 77% felt very or fairly free and just 14% said they felt somewhat not free or not free to express their opinions. Those most likely to say they felt free to express their opinions were in Dhaka (80%), and those least likely were in Mymensingh (42%).

2.9 Conclusions and Recommendations

Sustainable democratic consolidation may be more dependent on social and cultural evolution than on institutional reform, and viewed in this light, several of our findings suggest Bangladesh is becoming more democratic, particularly in comparison to our findings in 2006. Bangladeshis have a much deeper and more nuanced understanding of democracy than they did in 2006, and almost all Bangladeshis believe democracy requires more than one party competing and the freedom to criticize government.

Providers of civic and voter education should expand existing programs to address the gaps in understanding of democracy, specifically among women,the illiterate, and voters in Chittagong, Khulna, and Mymensingh,while monitoring the effectiveness of their efforts through future surveys. Civic-education programs in public schools would also help ensure that Bangladeshis learn democratic values from a young age.

A majority of Bangladeshis believe that Islamic values and democracy are compatible, but more than a third do not or are unsure. Political tolerance has rebounded since 2015, to surpass 2006 levels, but significant portions of the population remain somewhat intolerant or unsureand

do not feel free to express political opinions. This issue will be important to track as the next parliamentary elections, which will be preceded and followed by local elections, approach.

National and community dialogue about these issues is largely missing in Bangladesh. Support for Bangladeshi-led efforts to engage in genuine dialogue, including among groups that do not agree, would provide an opportunity to reduce social barriers by fostering understanding and identifying common ideals.

3 POLITICAL INTEREST AND EFFICACY

3.1 Interest in Politics
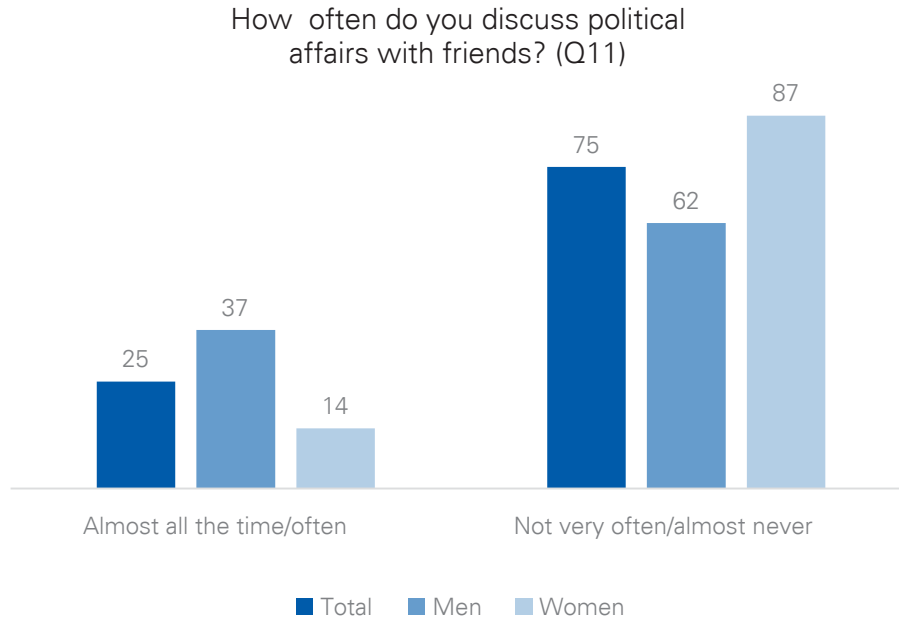
How often do you discuss political affairs with friends? (Q11)

Most Bangladeshis do not discuss political affairs with their friends very often or at all; however, the number who say they discuss politics almost all the time or often has increased five points since our 2015 study to 25%. Because we did not ask this question in 2006, we cannot assess the longer trend. Given that 2017 was not an election year, this increase may be due to the more stable political situation and less sensitivity around political discussions. As people feel more secure in their own communities, tolerance is increasing, and people feel freer to discuss politics with friends.

One of the most striking findings from this question is the very large gender disparity in political discussion, with women (14%)being 23 pointsless likely to discuss politics with friends than men (37%).Other countries show gender differences however the gap is not as wide. [2]Those in rural areas are slightly less likely to discuss politics with friends that urban respondents, and those most likely to frequently discuss politics are in Dhaka (38%).

Over the past three years, would you say that your interest in political affairs has increased, decreased, or remained the same? (Q12)
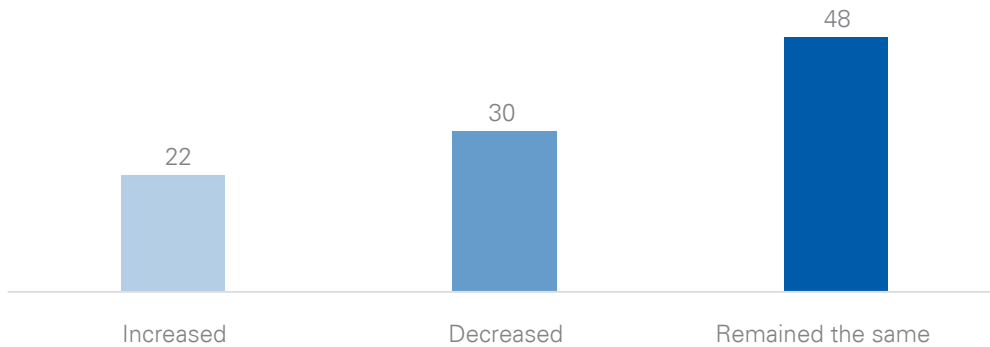
22	30	48
Increased	Decreased	Remained the same

Half of all respondents report a change in their interest in politics over the last three years, with significantly more saying their interest has decreased (30%) than increased (20%). Again, we see a significant gender difference, with 27% of men saying their interest increased, compared to just 17% of women.

2. For example, The Asia Foundation's survey of Thailand in 2010 found that 28% of men say they discuss politics regularly compared to only 15% of women.

3.2 Political Alienation

If you think about the people elected to the National Parliament, suppose someone said: "They care about people like you." Would you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly?(Q13)
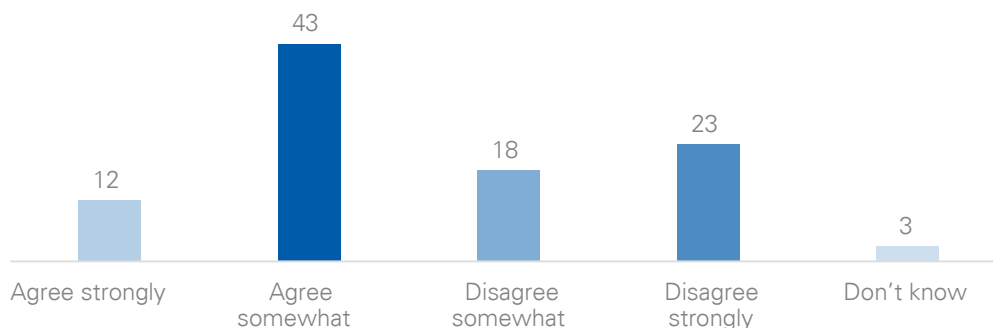
12	43	18	23	3
Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Don't know

A majority (55%) of respondents strongly or somewhat agree that members of Parliament care about them, while 42% disagree somewhat or strongly. Rural Bangladeshis are seven points more likely than urban Bangladeshis to disagree somewhat or strongly. Those most likely to feel alienated from Parliament are in 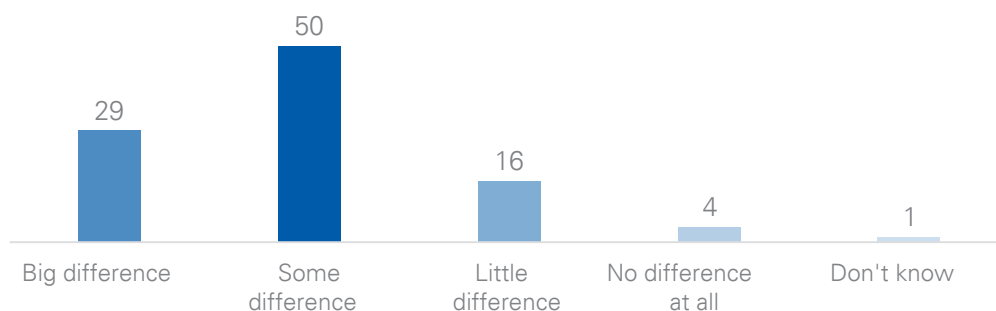Barisal, where just 30% agreed with the statement, and Sylhet, where just 19% agreed. Those most positive about Parliament were in Chittagong, where 82% agreed.

3.3 Impact of Elections

Do you think that voting in national parliamentary elections will make a big difference, some difference, little difference, or no difference at all to the country's well-being? (Q14)

29	50	16	4	1
Big difference	Some difference	Little difference	No difference at all	Don't know

A strong majority (79%) believe that voting in parliamentary elections can improve the country's well-being, a significant increase over the 67% who held this opinion in 2015. Those most skeptical of the influence of elections on the country's well-being were in Barisal, where just 31% thought voting would make a big or some difference.

3.4 Political Efficacy

How much influence do you think someone like you can have
over national government decisions? (Q15)
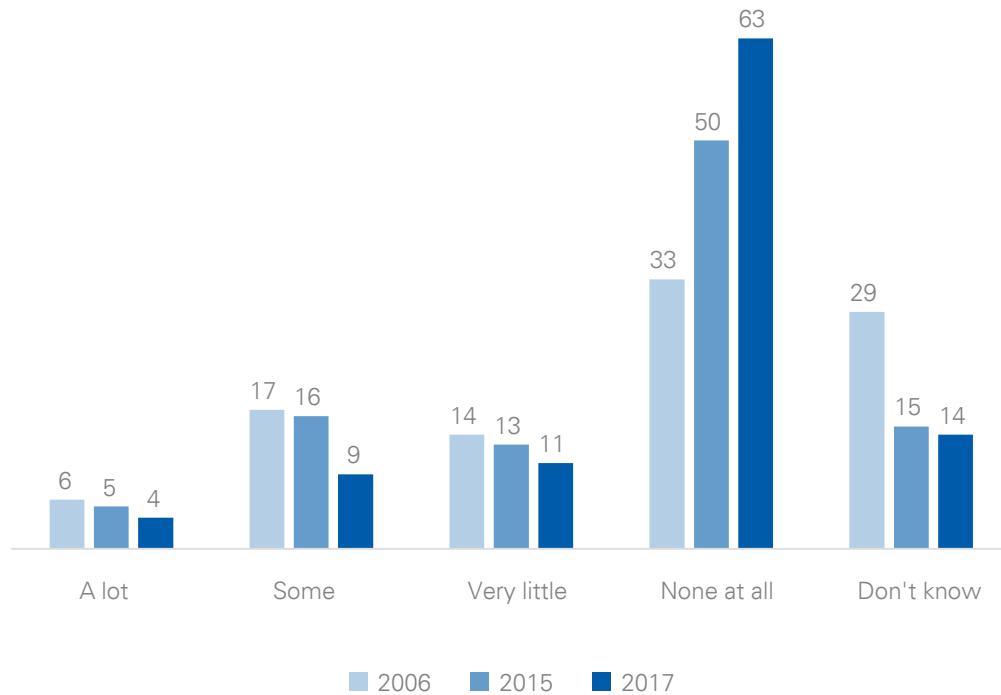
	A lot	Some	Very little	None at all	Don't know
2006	6	17	14	33	29
2015	5	16	13	50	15
2017	4	9	11	63	14

Although 79% of respondents believe that voting is good for the country's well-being, and 97% say they intend to vote in the next parliamentary elections, feelings of political efficacy continue to decline, with those saying they can have no influence over national government decisions increasing from 33% in 2006, to 50% in 2015,to 63% in 2017. Men (79%) are more likely than women(67%) to feel they have very little or no influence, while women (21%) are three times more likely to be unsure than men (7%).

Those most likely to say they have a lot or some influence were in Rangpur (30%) and Sylhet (30%), and those expressing the least sense of efficacywere in Rajshahi, where 5% said they had very little influence and 82% said they had none at all.

How much influence do you think someone like you can have
over local government decisions? (Q16)
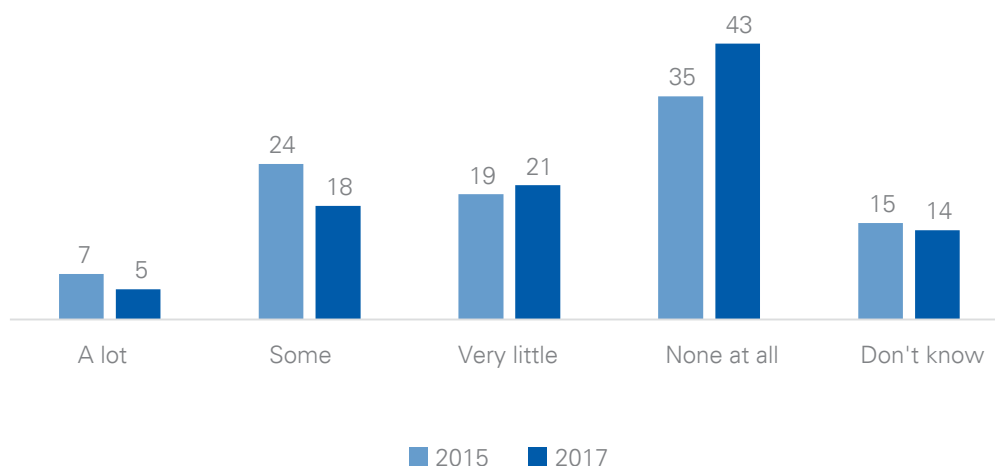
	A lot	Some	Very little	None at all	Don't know
2015	7	24	19	35	15
2017	5	18	21	43	14

■ 2015 ■ 2017

Bangladeshis report higher levels of influence over decisions at the local level (23% say some or a lot) than at the national level, but more than half still say they have very little or no influence. As at the national level, positive feelings of efficacy at the local level have declined significantly since the 2015 survey, from 31% to 23%. Men are again more likely (68%) than women (60%) to feel they have very little or no influence, while women are just over three times more likely (21%) than men (6%) to be unsure.

3.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Although interest in politics has increased since 2015, there is a broad disparity between men's and women's interest. Assistance providers and other stakeholders seeking to increase women's political participation should conduct additional research to better understand the specific reasons for lower levels of interest among women, and then design programs that holistically address these reasons in order to encourage political discussion and engagement by women.

More than half the population expresses some feelings of alienation from the national Parliament, and almost three-quarters think they have little or no influence over national government decisions. Together, these measures might be thought of as an indicator for quality of representation, and suggest that there are opportunities for parties and candidates to increase their vote share if they are willing to change the way they campaign and govern.

To reassure voters that their interests are paramount, parties and candidates should improve communication with their constituents through town hall meetings and social and other media,drawing on data from this and other surveys to craft platforms and agendas that are responsive to public priorities. Politicians and parties already in government should reassure voters that they have heard their concerns and explain to constituents how their work is addressing those issues.

To reduce feelings of alienationand increase feelings of efficacy, politicians and candidates should tell their constituents:

- I hear your concerns and aspirations.

- These are the concerns I hear: (a)… (b)… (c)….

- These are the actions I have taken or will take to address these concerns on your behalf.

This can be thought of as a representation cycle: listen, confirm, act, report.

- Listen—create opportunities for constituents to express their opinions and aspirations.

- Confirm—summarize constituent concerns, and state them clearly. This tells voters you care about them and you hear what they say.

- Act—incorporate voters' priorities intothe party's platform or the politician's official governance activities.

- Report—explain how voters' priorities are influencing governance. This will increase feelings of efficacy.

Speechwriters and other political staff should also work to conveythe quality of political representation through statements, speeches, and policies.

4 POLITICAL PARTIES

4.1 Party or Candidate

Which is more important when choosing who to vote for–the
political party or individual candidate? (Q17)
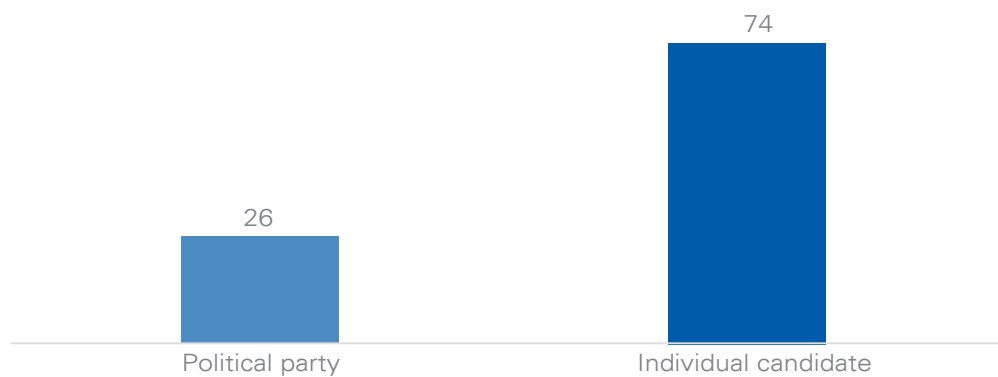
Just a quarter (26%) of voters think the party is more important than the individual
candidate when deciding how to vote. Women (77%) are seven points more likely than
men to say the individual candidate is more important. Responses varied significantly
by division, with the fewest believing parties were more important in Barisal (15%) and
Chittagong (18%), and the most in Mymensingh (39%) and Sylhet (38%).

4.2 Party Attachment

Suppose a candidate you like, or have voted for in the past, switched to a different (or "the other") political party before the election. How likely would you be to still vote for that candidate? (Q18)
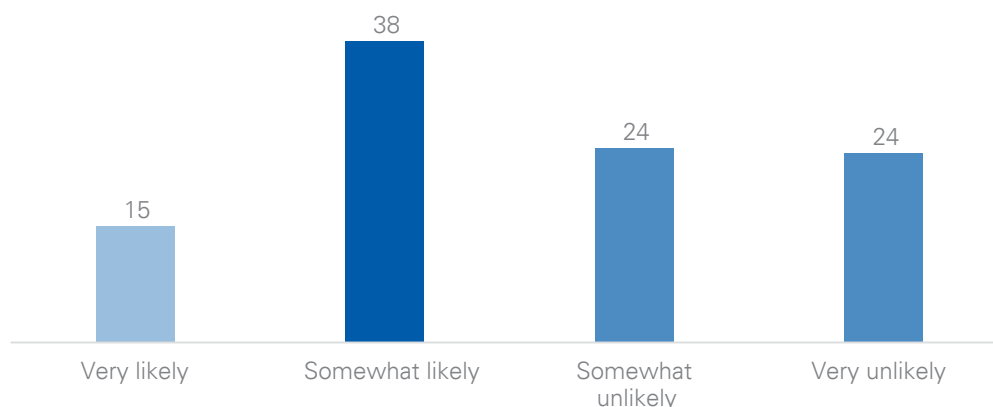
Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
15	38	24	24

Although only a quarter of respondents say that the political party is more important than the individual candidate in making a voting choice, almost half (48%) say they are somewhat or very unlikely to still vote for a candidate they support if he or she switches parties, suggesting that party affiliation is one of the key characteristics by which voters evaluate individual candidates.

Those most likely to vote for a candidate who switched parties were in Dhaka (28% very likely, 33% somewhat), and Chittagong (16% very likely, 58% somewhat). The most loyal to the political party were in Mymensingh, where 29% said they were very unlikely to support a candidate who switched parties, and another 56% said that was somewhat unlikely.

4.3 Most Important Candidate Attributes

What attribute do you consider most important for individuals
to get elected? (Q19)
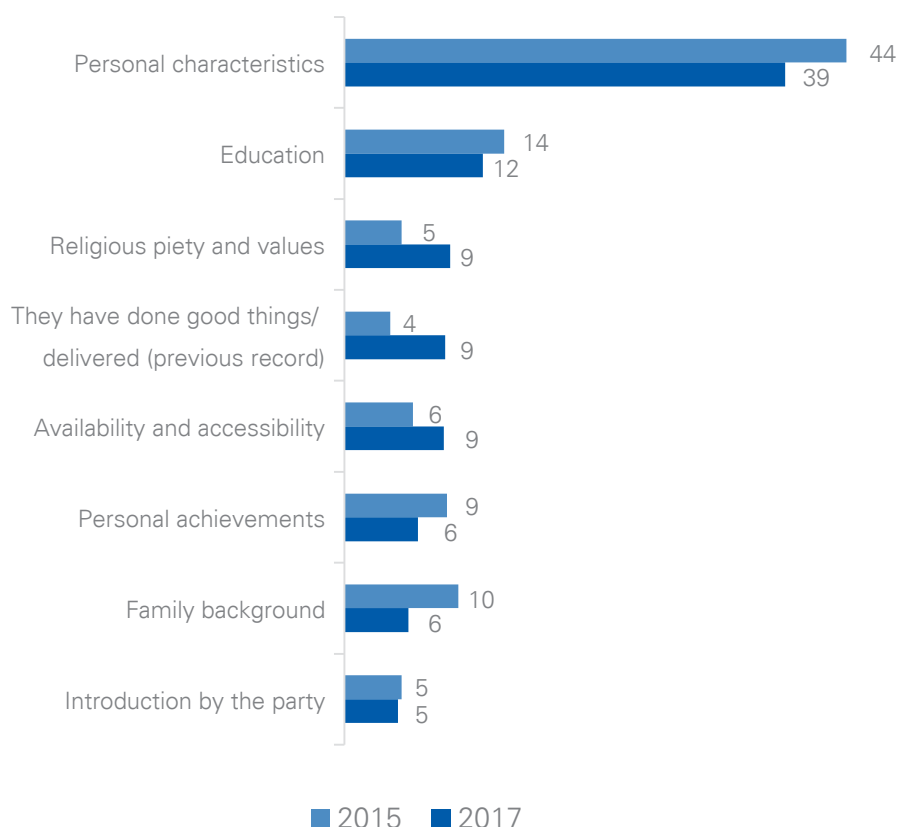
Attribute	2015	2017
Personal characteristics	44	39
Education	14	12
Religious piety and values	5	9
They have done good things/delivered (previous record)	4	9
Availability and accessibility	6	9
Personal achievements	9	6
Family background	10	6
Introduction by the party	5	5

■ 2015 ■ 2017

Personal qualities are still the most important factor for 39% of Bangladeshis when making an electoral choice, but education (12%), accessibility (9%), religious values (9%), and previous record (9%) are also important. The only factors showing increases since 2015 are religious values, which increased four points, previous record, which increased five points and availability which increased three points.

Responses varied widely by division, and the following were some of the outliers. Family background was more important in Mymensingh (14%) and Rajshahi (16%); education was a much more important factor in Barisal (39%) than the average; religious piety was more important in Khulna (26%); introduction by the party was three times more important in Sylhet (21%) than anywhere else; and personal characteristics were least important in Khulna (18%).

4.4 Most Important Party Attributes

What attribute do you consider most important for a party to be elected to government? (Q20)
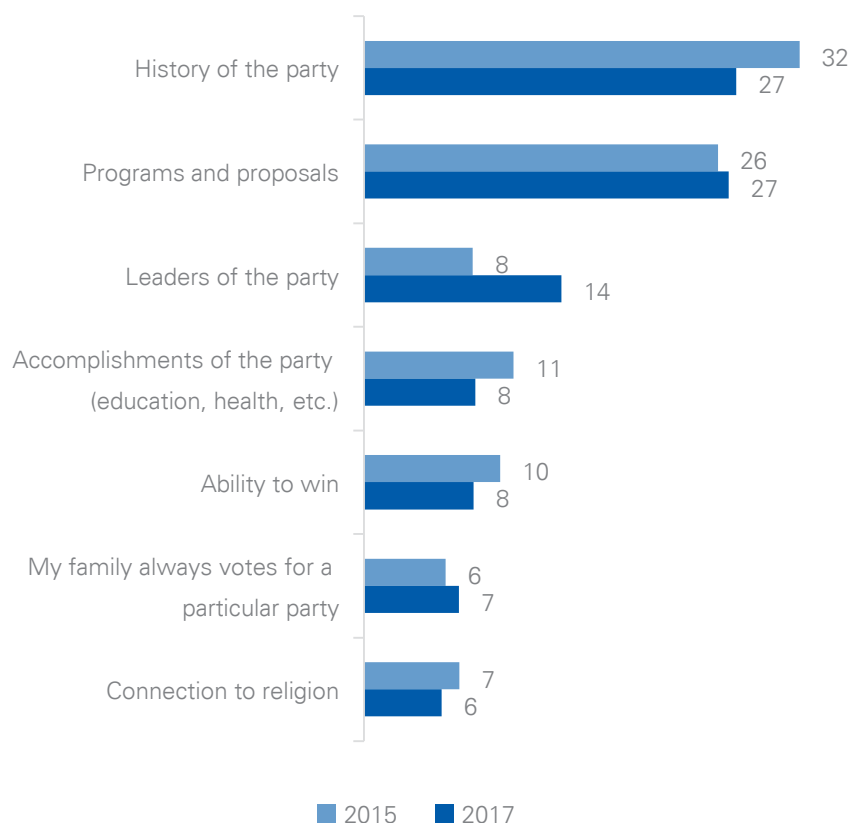
Attribute	2015	2017
History of the party	32	27
Programs and proposals	26	27
Leaders of the party	8	14
Accomplishments of the party (education, health, etc.)	11	8
Ability to win	10	8
My family always votes for a particular party	6	7
Connection to religion	7	6

■ 2015   ■ 2017

The history of the party (27%) and the programs and proposals of the party (27%) are the two most important factors in party selection, accounting for more than half of all responses. Since the last survey, in 2015, party leadership has become more important to many people, increasing from 8% to 14%. History of the party is more important to urban voters (33%) than rural (25%) and to men (30%) than women (25%).

The history of the party is least important as a factor in Khulna (9%), and most important in Sylhet (44%), and in Mymensingh (41%). Also in Mymensingh, leaders of the party are an important criterion (32%).

4.5 Difference between Parties

What difference do you see, if any, between the different parties in Bangladesh today? (Q21)

| Category	2015	2017
There are differences but cannot specify	27	28
No differences	31	23
Commitment to development	4	15
Corruption	7	12
Responsiveness to citizens	3	12
Ideology	8	11
Number of members in Parliament	2	5
Other	0	1
Don't know	18	3

■ 2015   ■ 2017
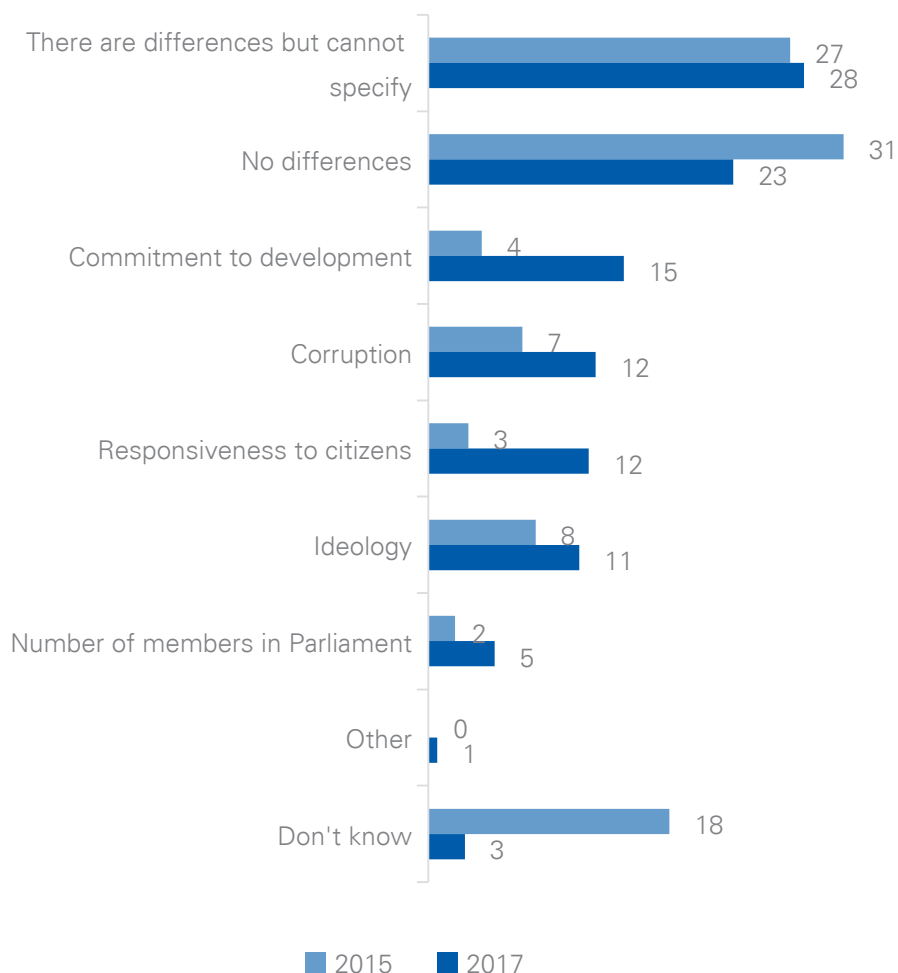
More than half of Bangladeshis(51%) see no differences or cannot name any differences between the political parties, but this is a significant decrease since the last survey, when the comparable figure was 78%. Those in rural areas (53%) were nine points more likely to see no difference or to be unable to name any differences than those in urban areas, who were five points more likely than rural voters to cite corruption as a difference (16%). Ofthose who could name a difference, just 11% mentioned ideology. Those most likely to mention ideology were in Rajshahi (28%), while those most likely to say there were no differences were in Rangpur (50%).
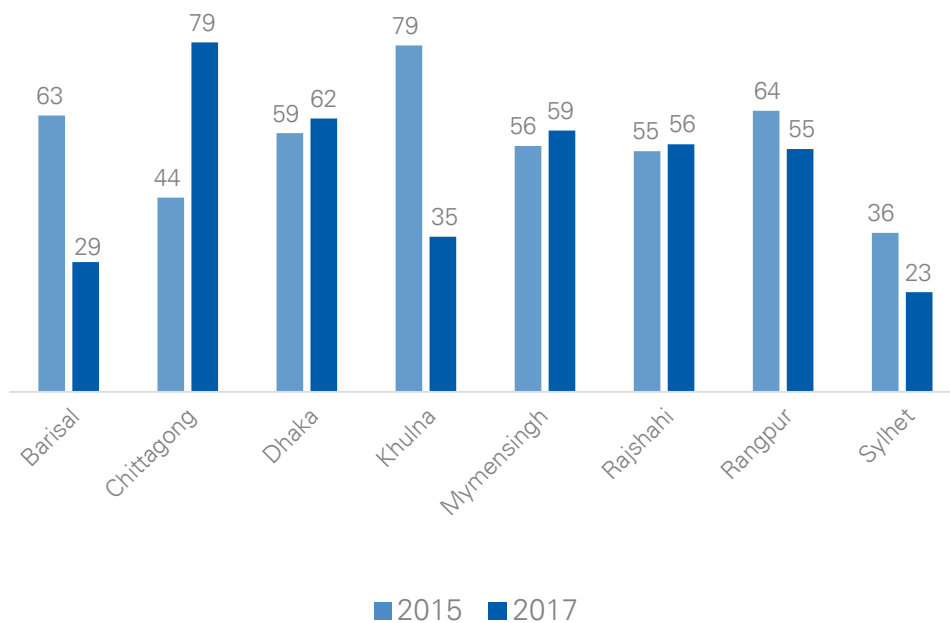
4.6 Party Alienation

I don't want to know which party you support, but thinking about that party, suppose someone said, "They care about people like you." Would you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly? (Q22) (Statement agreement) (National)
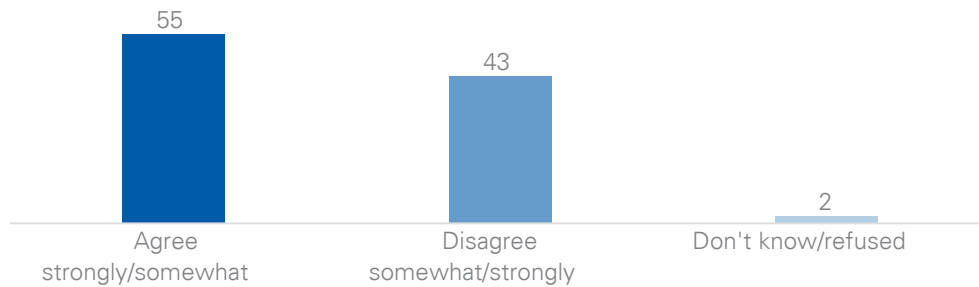
More than half of respondents (55%) agree that their party cares about people like them, but 43% disagree. These results are similar to those we recorded in 2015, but sentiment varies significantly by division, and there have been some big changes in some divisions.

I don't want to know which party you support, but thinking about that party, suppose someone said, "They care about people like you." Would you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly?(Q22) (Respondents that agree strongly)

Closeness to a political party has decreased dramatically in Barisal (from 63% to 29%) and Khulna (from 79% to 35%) since 2015, and decreased significantly in Rangpur (from 64% to 55%) and Sylhet (from 36% to 23%). The only division where alienation from a party has decreased significantly is Chittagong, where closeness rose from 44% to 79%.

4.7 Family and Party Loyalty

Some people say that, in Bangladesh it's important to "support the political party your parents support(ed)", while others think "times are changing, and we should feel free to consider different parties". Which is closer to your view? (Q23)
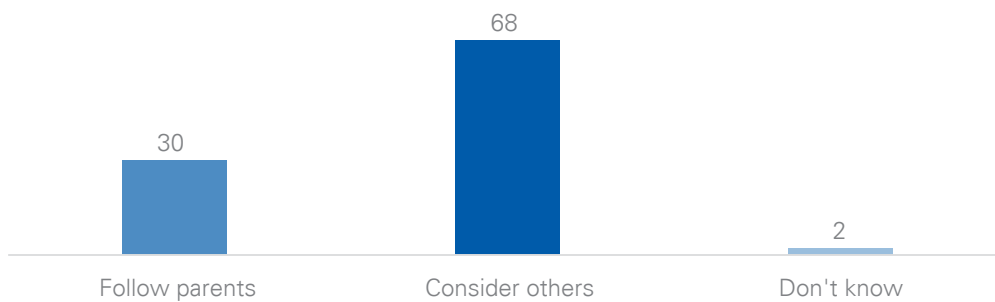
Through this question, we measure support for traditional social and political practice, and find that almost a third of Bangladeshis (30%) believe political affiliation is a family issue rather than an individual choice. Responses vary significantly by division, from Mymensingh (48%) and Rangpur (47%), where respondents are more likely to support their parents' party, to Chittagong (19%) and Rajshahi (17%), where respondents are least likely to do so.

Women (32%) are more likely than men (27%) to support their parents' party, as are rural respondents (31%) compared to those in urban areas (26%). This support increases slightly with age (from 24% for those under 25 to 29% for those over 50), and decreases significantly with education level (from 38% for illiterate respondents to 19% for university graduates and above).

4.8 Openness to New Parties

If a new party started that had a platform closer to your views, how likely would you be to switch to that party? (Q24)

Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
19	46	18	18
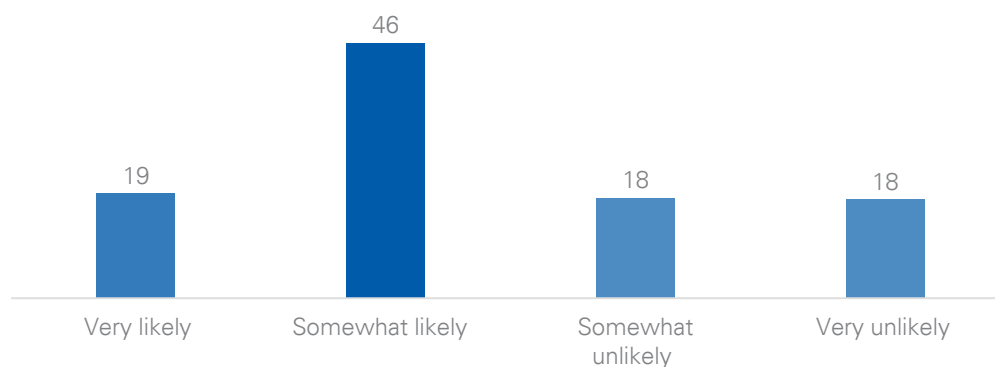
Though Bangladesh has maintained a stable party structure for most of its history, the majority of respondents (65%) say they would be open to switching to a new party that had a platform closer to their views. Coupled with the finding that more than half of voters cannot differentiate between the current parties, this suggests an opportunity for a new party that builds its platform around public interests and concerns, or for an existing party that is able to clarify its platform and policies.

4.9 Conclusions and Recommendations

Few voters say that they make their electoral choice based on party platform or ideology, and more than half cannot name any difference between the political parties, strongly suggesting that a political party that can establish a strong brand based on a popular program or ideology could gain an electoral advantage.

Parties wishing to increase their electabilityshould focus on developing a recognizable party identity and ideology that reflects the aspirations of their constituents, then promote that ideology through simple, easy-to-understand messages. To reduce feelings of political alienation, parties should also focus on improving the quality of public communication, demonstrating through listening that they are hearing the concerns and aspirations of their constituents.

5 POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

5.1 Role of an MP in Parliament

Different people have different ideas about what Members of
Parliament do. What do you think they do? (Q27)
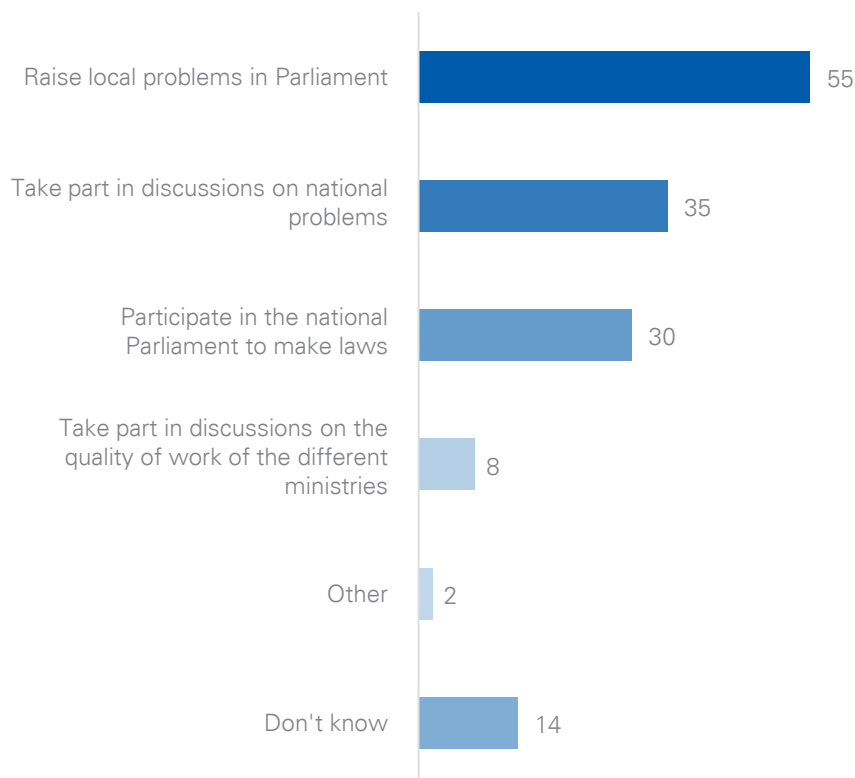
To evaluate their representative's performance and increase democratic accountability,
voters must understand the role of a representative. Most Bangladeshis have some idea
about the role MPs play in Parliament, but 14% of respondents were unable to give any
response. This is significantly fewer than the 2006 survey (36%), suggesting civic-education
efforts have been effective; but women (20%) were almost three times as likely as men
(7%) to have no response, and the less educated were almost twice as likely to have no
response (28%) as the national average (14%).

5.2 Ability to Identify MP

Many people are not sure of the name of the Member of Parliament who represents their constituency in the National Parliament. Can you name your MP? (Q25)
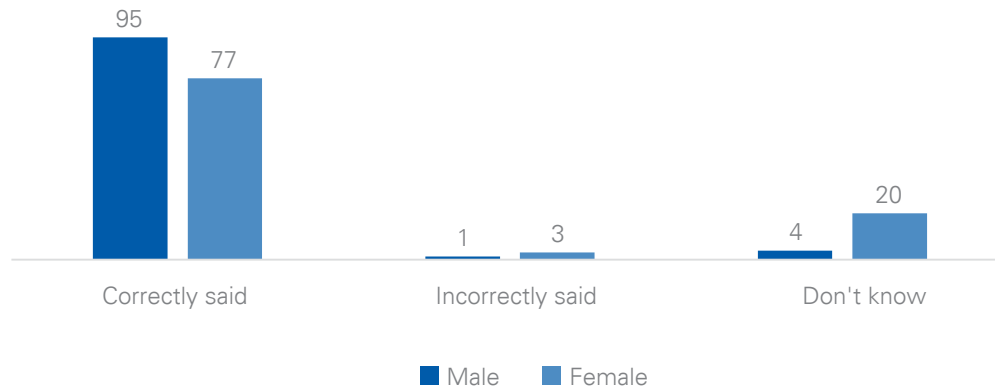
A very large majority (86%) of Bangladeshis can correctly name their representative in Parliament. This highlights the very important role MPs play in their constituencies. Although a strong majority (77%) of women could name their representative, they were significantly less likely than men to know the name.

5.3 MP Visits to the Constituency

As far as you know, has your Member of Parliament visited your community in the last year? (Q26)
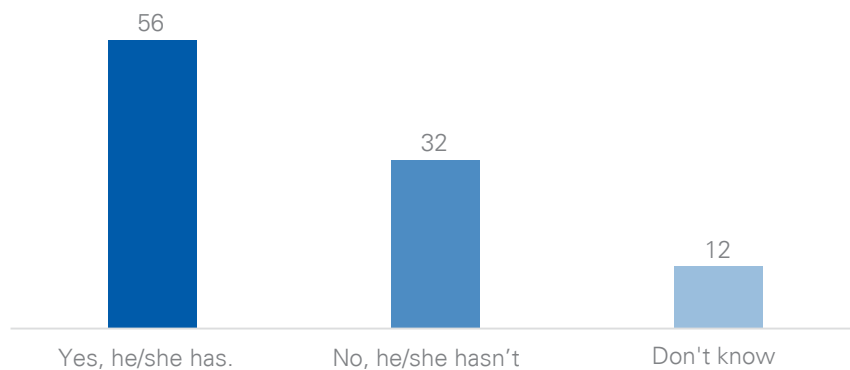
A majority of respondents (56%) say their MP visited their community in the last year. Those least likely to report a visit were in Khulna (32%), and those most likely were in Rangpur (73%) and Dhaka (72%). Women (18%) were more than three times as likely as men (6%) to be unsure whether the MP had visited.

5.4 Personal Contact with MP

Have you ever contacted your MP for help in solving any personal or local problem? (Q28)
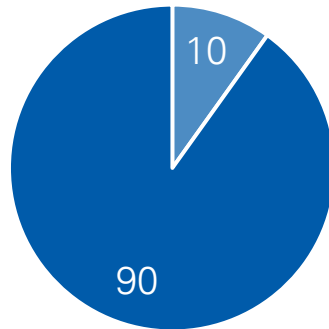
■ Yes ■ No

Reflecting the highly personal and patronal nature of governance in Bangladesh, fully 10% of respondents have directly approached their MP for help in solving a personal or local problem. Men were more than twice as likely (14%) as women (6%) to have approached their representative, and this increased steadily with age (from 7% to 15%), education (8% to 17%), and wealth (6% to 15%).

Now I'd like to share with you same options for communicating with MPs. Which option do you think is the most important? (Q29)

Option	Value
Accompanied by a local leader	32
Through the MP's personal assistant	27
By myself	17
Through party activists	8
Through the MP's relatives	6
Through a middleman	3
At regular weekly meetings	1
Through a samity/association	1
Through NGOs	0
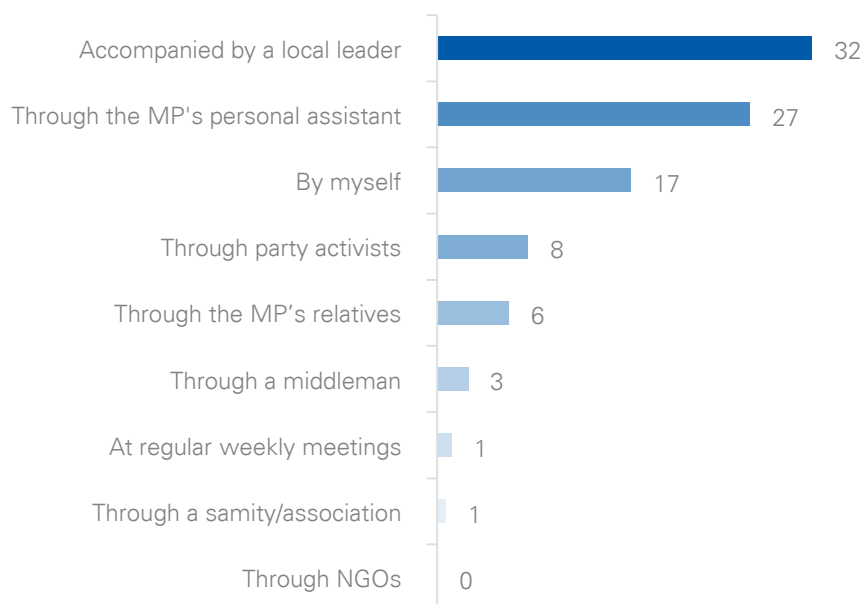
More than half (60%) of respondents say that the most important option for communicating with an MP is through a local leader or an MP's personal assistant, while less than a fifth (17%) say that directly contacting the MP by themselves is the most important option. Unsurprisingly, associations and NGOs are not seen as important options for communicating with MPs(1%). There was no significant difference in responses by gender except for self-initiated contact, with more than a fifth of men (22%) responding that communicating with an MP themselves was the most important option, while the corresponding figure for women was just 12%.

5.5 Satisfaction with MP

Would you say you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the job your MP is doing? (Q30)
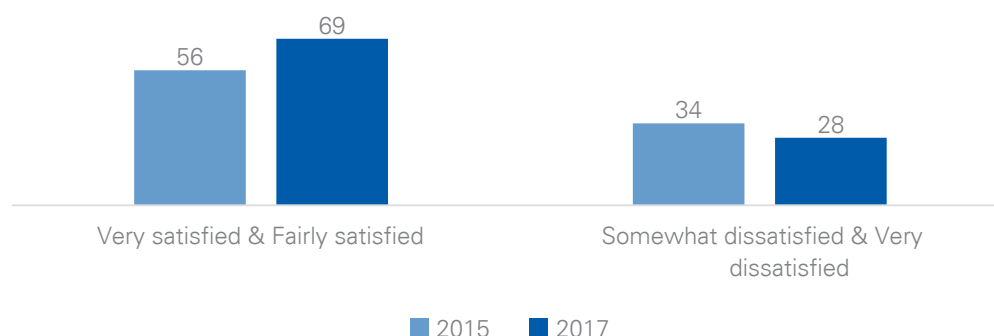
Satisfaction with MPs has increased 13 pointssince 2015. This may be the result of greater political stability and higher overall confidence. It may also be because, since the last parliamentary election, more MPs have visited their constituencies, as discussed below. Satisfaction is highest in Chittagong (78%) and Dhaka (76%), and lowest in Rajshahi, where almost half (48%)said they were somewhat or very dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with MP (Q30), correlated with remembering an MP visit (Q26)
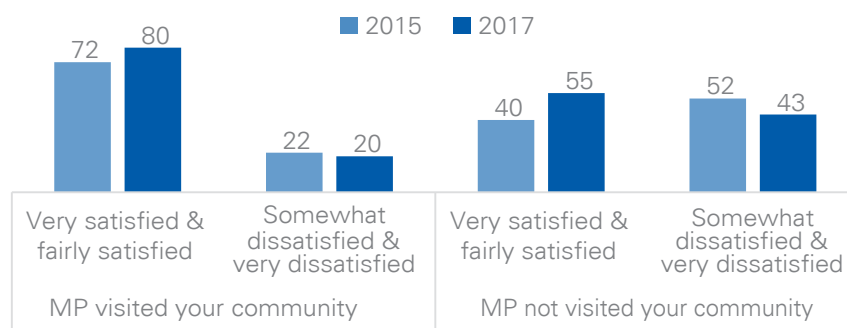
Those who reported a visit to their community by their MP (Q26) were 25 points more likely to say they were very or fairly satisfied with the job their MP was doing (Q30). This is a slight decrease from 2015, when we found that satisfaction was 32 percent higher among those reporting an MP visit. Despite the decrease, this clearly illustrates the personal nature of political representation in Bangladesh, and suggests an easy way for politicians to improve their electability.

Better communication between constituents and representatives should be encouraged, because it increases political accountability and improves the quality of democratic representation.

5.6 Local Representation

Do you know the name of your Union Parishad chairman? (Q31)

| Correctly said | Incorrectly said | Don't know |
| 94 | 1 | 4 |

Have you contacted your Union Parishad chairman or members during the last two years for help in solving any of your personal or local problems? (Q32)

| Yes | No |
| 51 | 49 |

Underscoring the personal and local nature of governance in Bangladesh, almost all respondents know the name of their Union Parishad(UP) chairman. Women are more likely to know the name of their UP chairman than their MP, but are still more likely not to know (7%) than men (2%). An astonishing half (51%) of Bangladeshis have contacted their chairman or a member to seek

help with a personal or local problem within the last two years. Men are significantly more likely to report having contacted a UP representative (61%) than women (42%).
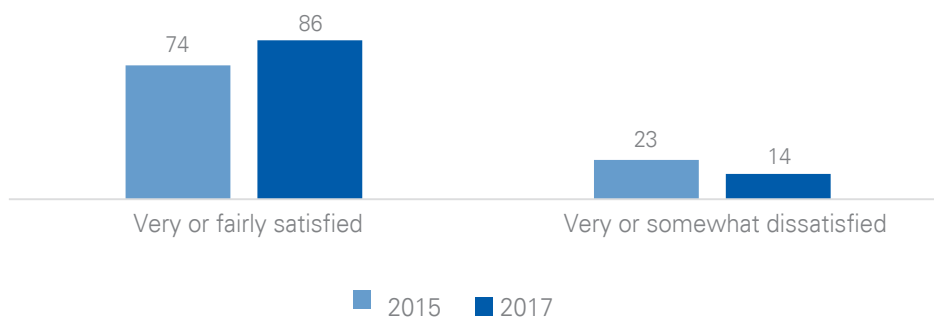
5.7 Satisfaction with Union Parishad Representatives

Would you say you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the job of your Union Parishad elected representatives? (Q33)

	Very or fairly satisfied	Very or somewhat dissatisfied
2015	74	23
2017	86	14

As they do with MPs, respondents report greater satisfaction at the local level in 2017 than in 2015, and they express greater satisfaction with Union Parishad representatives than with MPs. Satisfaction is highest in Rangpur (95%), and lowest in Khulna, where 75% were very or fairly satisfied.

5.8 Conclusions and Recommendations

Bangladeshi society—and therefore its politics—remains deeply rooted in traditional patron-client dynamics. The most politically marginalized and vulnerable members of society, including women, minority groups, and the poor, are also the least likely to have a good understanding of the formal governance system and the least likely to have personal access to their representatives. Civic educators looking for the most effective wayto encourage the development of a democratic Bangladesh should direct their efforts accordingly.

Reflecting the personal nature of the political relationship, Bangladeshis who remembered at least one visit from their MP were much more satisfied with their representative than those who did not. This shows clearly that the electoral fortunes of parties and candidates are directly linked to the public's perception that their MPs care enough about their constituents and where they come from to visit.

6 ELECTION EXPECTATIONS

6.1 Voting Participation

I do not want to know whom you plan to vote for, but tell me: do you plan to vote in the next national parliamentary election? (Q1)

Yes	No	Don't know/Haven't Decided
97	2	1

Demonstrating the ongoing commitment of Bangladeshis to vote, despite the controversy and violence surrounding the 2014 elections and a steady decline in those who say they believe they have influence over national government decisions, almost everyone (97%) plans to vote in the next parliamentary election.

If answer is yes, what are the reasons for voting in the next parliamentary election? (First responses only) (Q2)

Better roads / schools / housing / health care / mosques/temples / other material benefits	5
Civic duty / duty as citizen / democratic obligation	11
Select honest leader	14
It is my democratic right	44
Chance to choose Parliament member of my liking	14
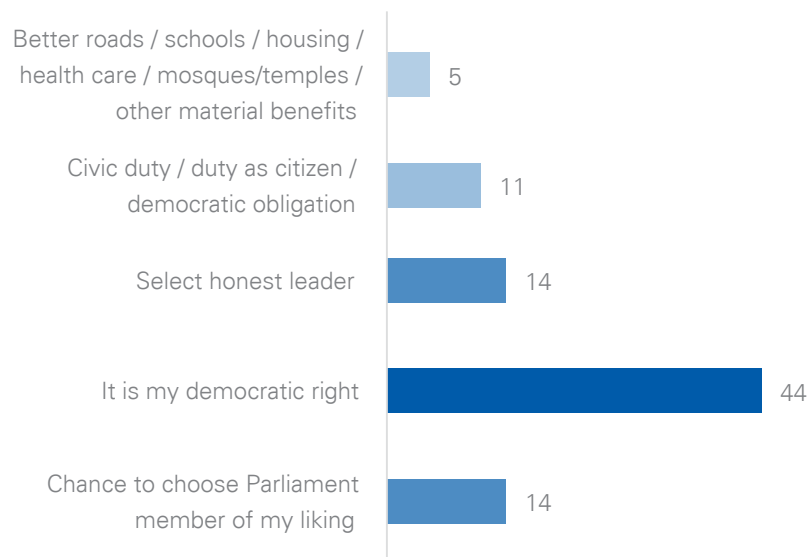
Few Bangladeshis (5%) expect to vote to achieve specific policy outcomes. More than half say they will vote because it is their right (44%) or their duty (11%), and 28% see voting as a chance to elect an honest leader (14%) or an MP they like (14%).

6.2 Fairness of Election Process

I am going to mention some problems that can occur in elections. Do you think it is possible that these problems could happen in the next Bangladesh National Parliamentary Election? (Q5)

Problem	2015	2017
Violence against party activists or voters	33	32
Cheating in vote counting	26	29
Threats from government officials to make residents vote for a particular party	21	21
Gifts or payments for votes	15	21
People being forced to pledge to vote for a party	13	17
People being forced to join a party and vote for it	6	12
Residents not being allowed to register	3	8
News media bias favoring a particular party	7	6
Finding out how people voted without their permission (i.e. violating the confidentiality of voting)	4	3
None of these problems are possible	16	35
Don't know	21	6

■ 2015 ■ 2017

Expectations for the next national elections broadly track those we measured in 2015, with two exceptions. "Don't know" responses decreased significantly, from 21% in 2015 to just 6% in the current survey. The higher "don't know" or refusal rate in 2015 may have been due to lingering fears that the political violence seen earlier in the year might return, or that they found the question sensitive so soon after the 2014 parliamentary and local elections. The decrease in this response reinforces the central finding of a general decrease in political anxiety.

The number of respondents who think the next elections will be problem free has increased significantly since 2015, from 16% to 35%, a finding in accordance with our general perception that the Bangladeshi public is moving away from the uncertainty and unease that characterized the postelection political environment in 2015.

Findings on this issue (confidence in problem-free elections) were relatively consistent across demographic groups, with just a few prominent outliers: respondents in Sylhet (62%) and Chittagong (50%) were most confident the elections would be problem free, while respondents in Khulna (11%) were the least confident. Interestingly, urban respondents expressed greater concern (36%) than rural respondents (26%) about cheating in vote counting, as well as about gifts or payments for votes, at 29% and 19%, respectively.

6.3 Election Security

When there are elections, are you concerned about
your personal security? (Q6)

76	23
I don't feel worried about my personal security	I feel worried about my personal security
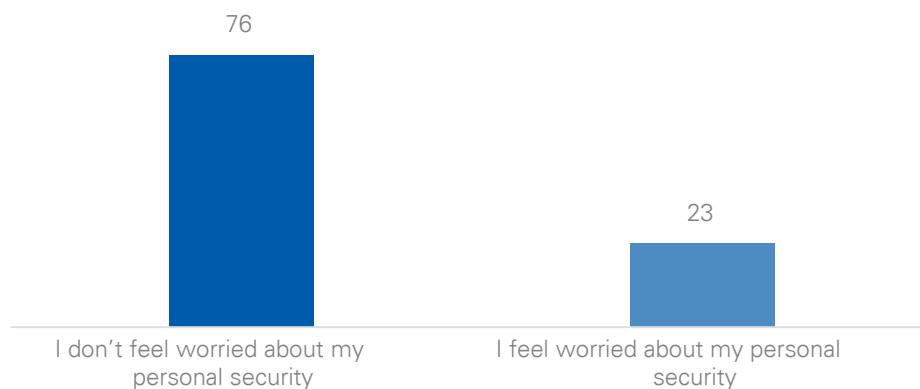
Concerns about personal security during elections show no significant change from findings we recorded in 2015. Those most worried about their security are in Chittagong (34%), Rajshahi (31%),and Rangpur (31%).

6.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Almost all Bangladeshis plan to vote, meaning there is little need for civic or voter educators to sponsor get-out-the-vote activities. Nevertheless, regardless of their intention to participate, many Bangladeshis still have doubts about the integrity of the polling process. To reassure voters, the Bangladesh Election Commission should encourage comprehensive partisan and nonpartisan election observation, since, according to our 2015 survey, "the presence of election observers strengthens the public's perception of the legitimacy and credibility of an election process."

Political parties, candidates, and security actors also have important roles to play instilling confidence in the integrity and safety of the electoral process through transparent monitoring and reporting and by discouraging malpractice and political violence.

7 TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

In this chapter, we examine levels of trust for several governmental and social institutions and compare our 2017 findings with the findings of the 2015 survey. First, we compare the institutions by the percentage of the population that rated their integrity as very high or high. We then compare that to the 2015 findings, and then move on to look at individual findings for each institution. The question posed to respondents, which applies to each of the following graphs, is this:"I will read you a list of institutions. For each institution, please rate its integrity according to this scale: very high integrity, high integrity, neither high nor low integrity, low integrity, very low integrity" (Q46).

7.1 Trust Compared to 2015

Levels of integrity compared to 2015 findings
(Percent rating the institution as having very high
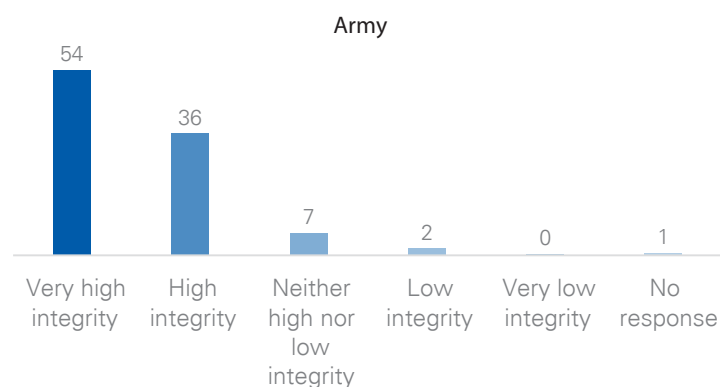or high integrity)(Q46)
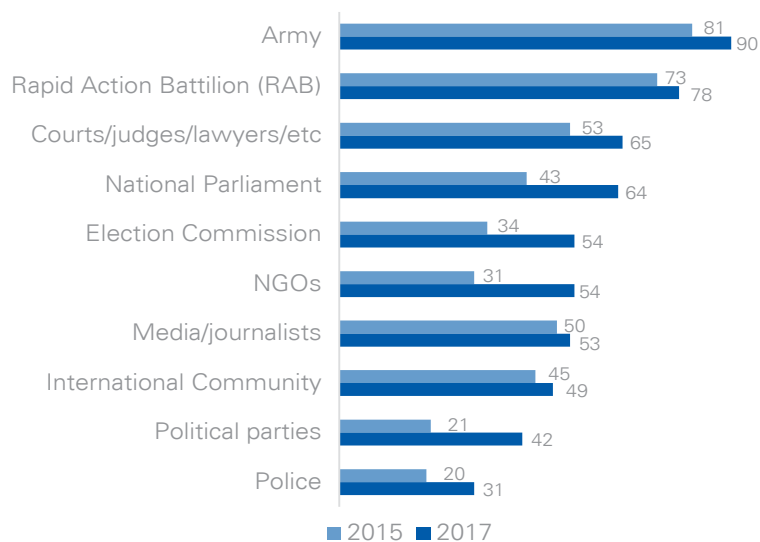
Political stability and growing public confidence are reflected in increases in trust in institutions across the board, although the size of those increases varies considerably. The army, the most trusted institution in 2015 and 2017, had little room to grow, but nevertheless managed a nine-point increase inthose rating it as having very high or high integrity, to 90%. The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) remains the second-most trusted institution, showing a slight increase,from 73% in 2015 to 78% in 2017.

Trust in the national Parliament, the Election Commission, and political parties all increased by 20 points or more, though from a relatively low baseline. These three institutions are most closely associated with the electoral process and political turmoil of 2014 and 2015, so it makes sense that their trust levels were the most depressed in our 2015 survey, suggesting that the 2017 findings may represent reversion to the mean.

The police, the least-trusted institution in both 2015 and 2017, managed an 11-point increase in its integrity rating. Ratings for the media and the international community changed little, but due to improving scores forother institutions, their rankings fell. Trust in NGOs increased overall.

7.2 Army

Army

Very high integrity	High integrity	Neither high nor low integrity	Low integrity	Very low integrity	No response
54	36	7	2	0	1

The army is, by far, the most trusted institution in Bangladesh, with 90% saying it has high or very high integrity. Levels of support are very consistent across demographic groups, with the only outlier Barisal, where positive perception of the army dips to 76%.

7.3 Rapid Action Battalion

Rapid Action Battalion

Very high integrity	High integrity	Neither high nor low integrity	Low integrity	Very low integrity	No response
39	39	13	6	1	1
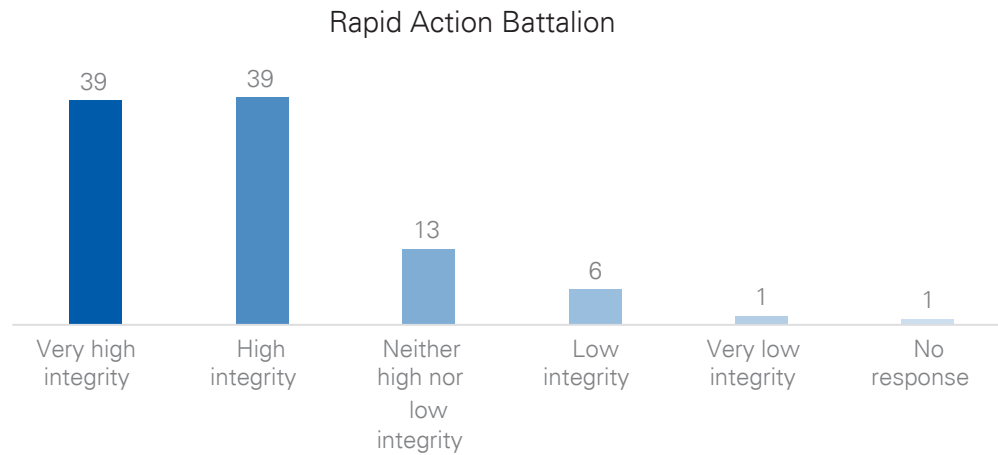
The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) is formally part of the police force, the least trusted institution in Bangladesh, however the RAB is second only to the army in public trust, with 78% rati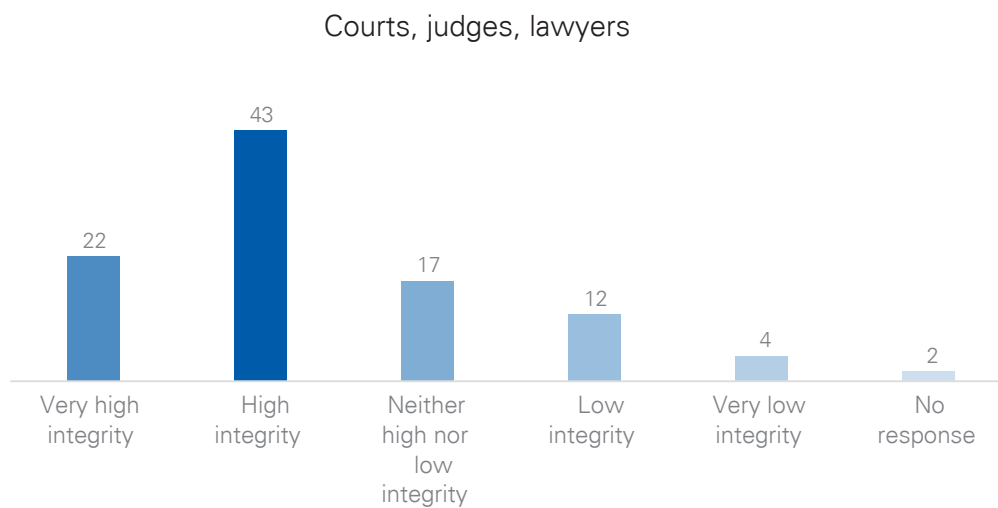ng it as having high or very high integrity. Again, we see little variation in this perception, with positive impressions ranging from a low of 72%, in Barisal, to a high of 88%, in Khulna, but with most clustering around the mean.

7.4 Courts/Judges/Lawyers

Courts, judges, lawyers

Very high integrity	High integrity	Neither high nor low integrity	Low integrity	Very low integrity	No response
22	43	17	12	4	2

A majority of Bangladeshis (65%) rate the legal institutions as having high or very high integrity. Responses were relatively consistent across the country, though rural respondents, at 67%, were more likely to say very high or high integrity compared to urban respondents (60%). Those most likely to assess high or very high integrity were in Chittagong (78%), and those least likely were in Rangpur (45%).

7.5 National Parliament

National Parliament
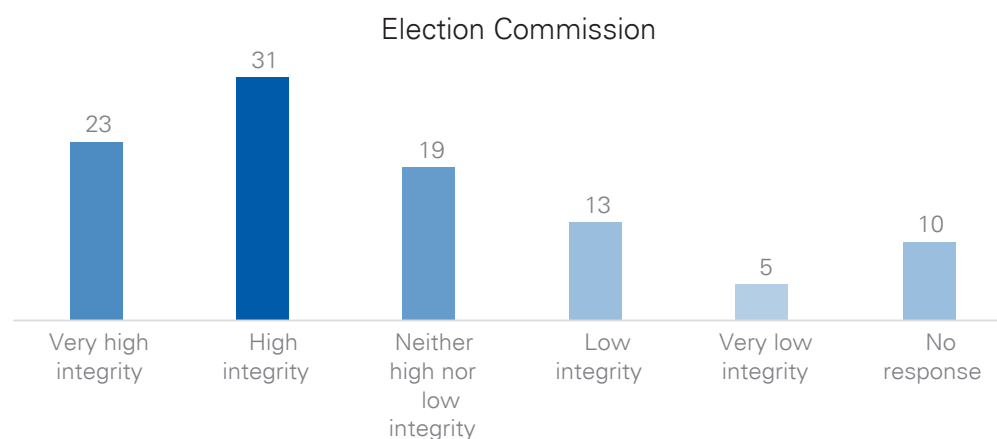
Category	Value
Very high integrity	30
High integrity	34
Neither high nor low integrity	18
Low integrity	10
Very low integrity	3
No response	6
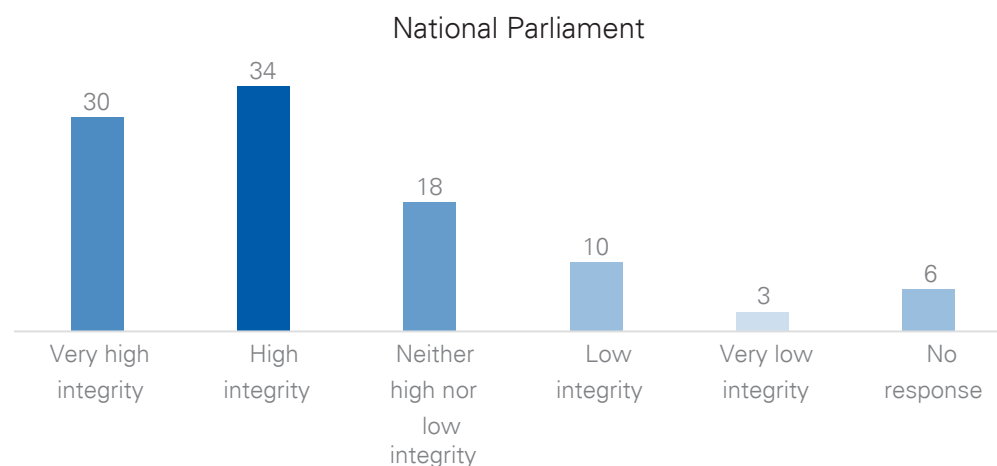
Nationally, 64% rated the integrity of the national Parliament as very high or high in 2017, up from just 43% in 2015. We see relatively little variation across the country, though as with legal institutions, rural respondents, at 66%, are more likely to say very high or high integrity compared to urban respondents (58%). There are two geographic outliers: Barisal, where just 35% rated Parliament as having high or very high integrity; and Chittagong, where 81% had a positive impression of the national Parliament.

7.6 Election Commission

Election Commission

Category	Value
Very high integrity	23
High integrity	31
Neither high nor low integrity	19
Low integrity	13
Very low integrity	5
No response	10

The Election Commission is another of the institutions that saw a double-digit jump in positive perception between 2015 (34%) and 2017 (54%), but that still leaves almost half (46%) not confident in the integrity of the institution. Perceptions varied by location, from two-thirds expressing confidence in Mymensingh (68%) and Chittagong (67%), to just one-third in Barisal (33%) and Rangpur (32%). Although the survey data was collected during the period in early 2017 when a new Election Commission was being chosen, we do not have sufficient data to determine whether awareness of that process affected people's perceptions.

7.7 Nongovernmental Organizations

Nongovernmental organizations

Positive perceptions of the integrity of NGOs increased from 31% in 2015 to 54% in 2017, but still seem remarkably low for associations meant to represent the people and serve the poor. The lowest levels of trust were in Mymensingh and Rajshahi (33%).

7.8 Media/Journalists

Media/journalists
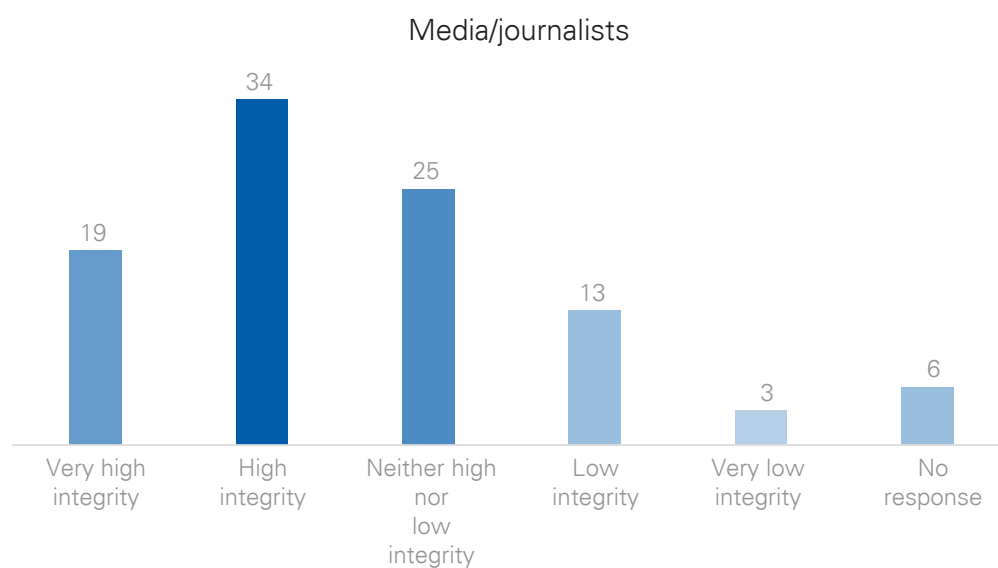
Perceptions of the integrity of the media showed the least change from 2015, with positive impressions increasing from 50% to 53%, a difference that is statistically meaningless as it falls within the margin of error of the survey. Urban respondents, at 58%, were more likely to say very high or high integrity compared to rural respondents (51%). Responses varied significantly, from the most trusting, in Mymensingh (81%) and Chittagong (74%), to the least, in Barisal (34%), Rajshahi (33%), and Rangpur (26%).

7.9 International Community

International community

Very high integrity	High integrity	Neither high nor low integrity	Low integrity	Very low integrity	No response
18	31	21	7	2	22
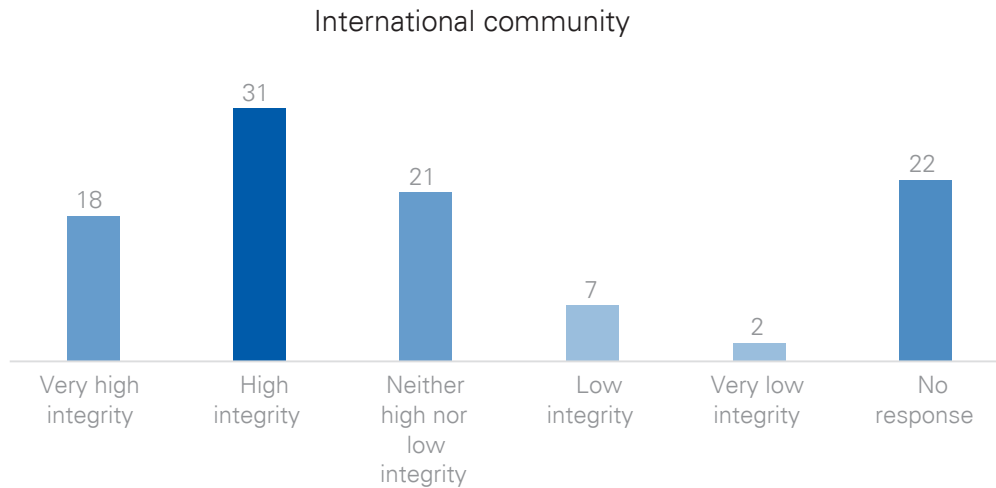
Just half of Bangladeshis (49%) are confident in the integrity of the international community. There is a small variance between rural and urban respondents, with the former more likely, at 50%, to say very high or high integrity than the latter, at 44%. Findings varied significantly by division, with the most confident (56%) in Dhaka, and the least confident (37%) in Mymensingh. This finding (low confidence) may be related to perceptions of international attitudes towards Muslims, with just 40% of those who identify as Muslim saying the international community has very high or high integrity.

7.10 Political Parties

Political parties

Very high integrity	High integrity	Neither high nor low integrity	Low integrity	Very low integrity	No response
12	30	29	20	4	5
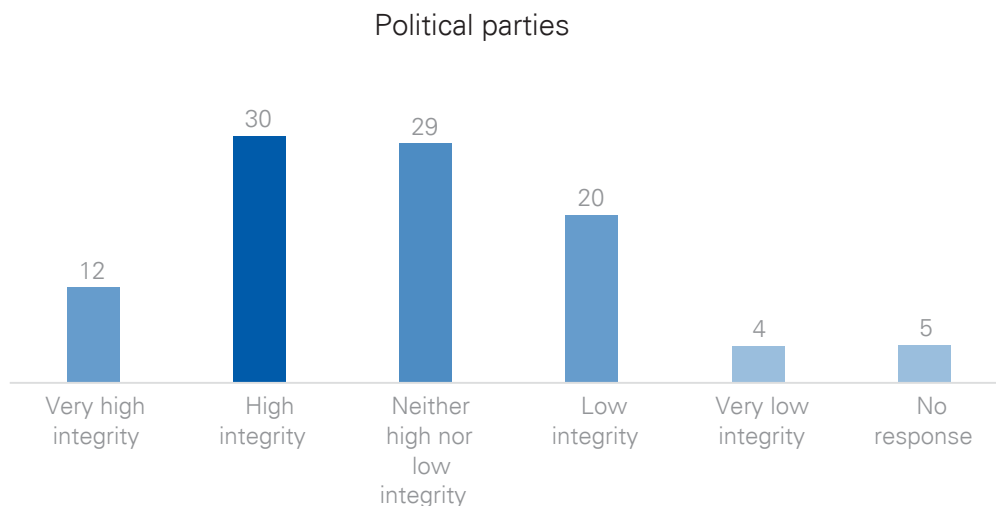
Political parties rank near the bottom on our trust scale, with fewer than half of respondents (42%) saying they have high or very high integrity. Those most trusting of political parties were in Chittagong (68%), while those least trusting were in Khulna (22%), and Rajshahi (22%).

7.11 Police
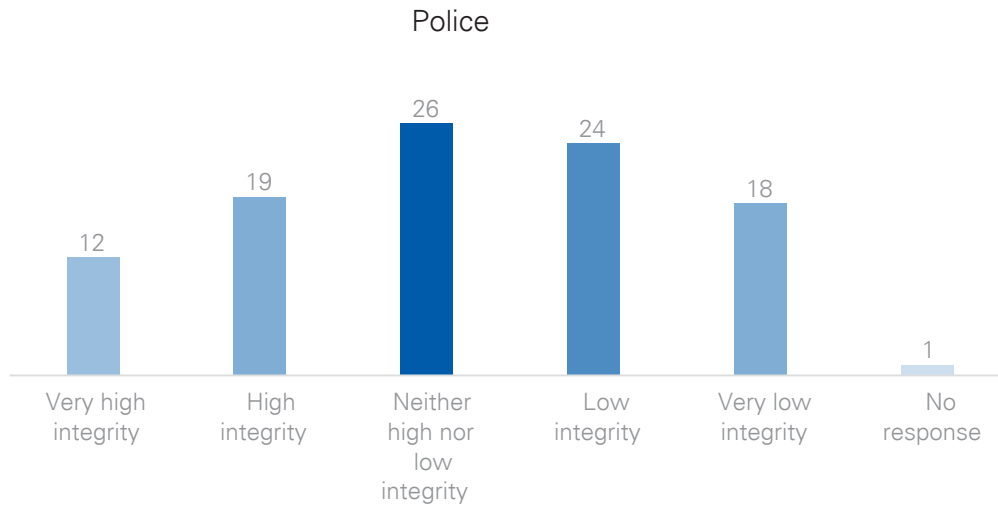
Police

Despite significant improvement in the public's perception since 2015, the police remain the least trusted institution in Bangladesh, with just 31% rating them as having high or very high integrity. There was a significant difference between rural and urban respondents regarding the police, with the former (34%) 13 points more likely to say very high or high integrity than the latter (21%). The findings across the country were relatively consistent, with those least likely to give the police a positive rating in Barisal (18%) and Sylhet (21%), and those most likely in Chittagong (38%).

7.12 Conclusions and Recommendations

Clearly, some institutions in Bangladesh have work to do to restore public confidence, and they may benefit from using these findings as a benchmark from which to measure the effectiveness of their efforts. Of particular concern are the low ratings for police, political parties, and the Election Commission.

Political and governmental reformers, as well as international donors and implementing organizations,who wish to meaningfully improve the lives of ordinary Bangladeshis might make a priority ofpolice reform, including stronger focus on community policing. Recommendations for political parties and the Election Commission highlighted in other sections of this report will also contribute to increased confidence in those institutions.

8 WOMEN IN ELECTIONS AND POLITICS

8.1 Women's Education

Level of education, by gender

52%

54%

54%

64%

48%

46%

46%

36%

| Illiterate | Upto class 10 | SSC Or HSC | Graduate & above |

● Men   ● Women
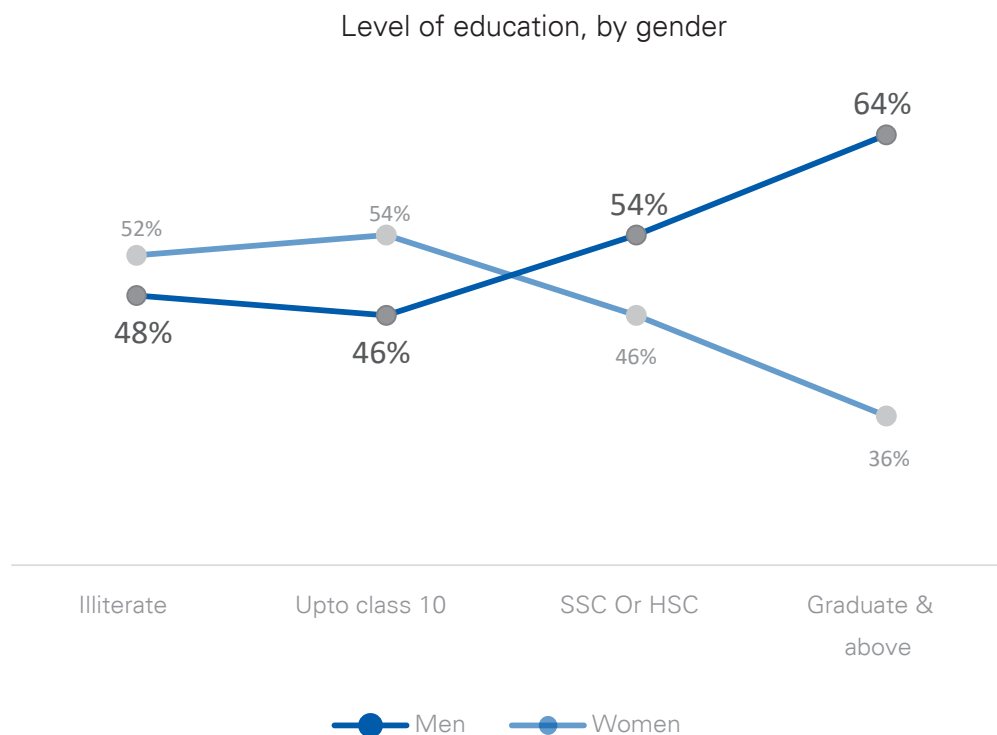
Although women have parity in education up to grade 10, their numbers drop precipitously after that and, by the end of university, they are just a third of the student population. This finding suggests that, culturally, the education of women is perceived as less valuable than the education of men, and to the extent that higher education is deemed a qualification for political office (12% say that education is the most important consideration in selecting a candidate, and a further 15% say it is the second-most important criterion), the lower numbers of women with higher education will be a significant constraint to achieving gender parity in political leadership positions.

8.2 Gender Preference for Member of Parliament

Do you think that members of the national Parliament
should be all men, mostly men, an equal number of men
and women, mostly women, or all women? (Q47)

All or mostly men
- Total: 60
- Men: 73
- Women: 47

Equal number of men and women
- Total: 39
- Men: 26
- Women: 51

All or mostly women
- Total: 1
- Men: 1
- Women: 2

■ Total ■ Men ■ Women
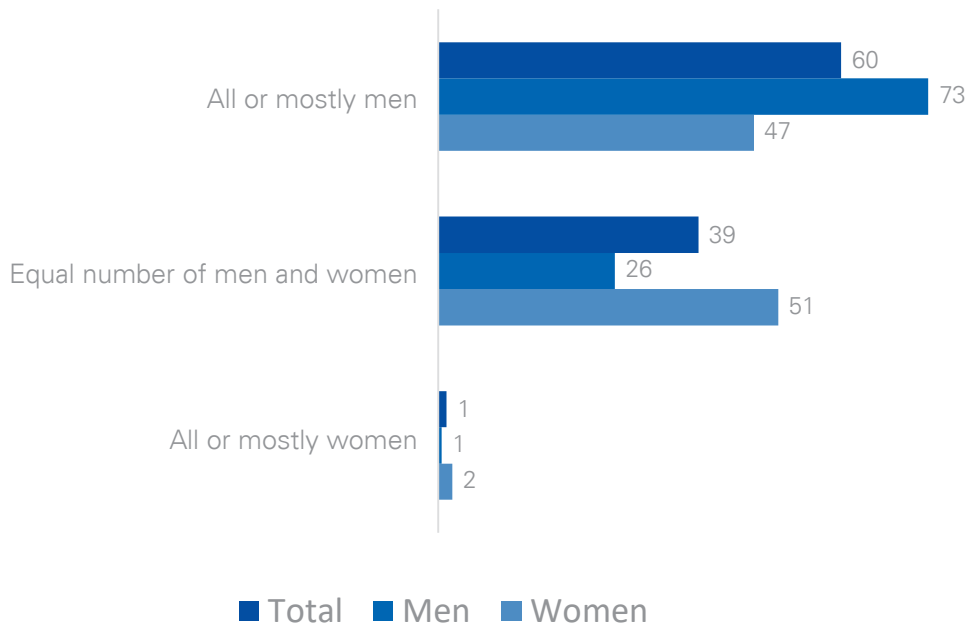
Bangladeshi men and women do not widely accept the idea of women as MPs. Findings remain similar to the 2015 survey, with a significant majority of respondents—both women and men—still believing members of Parliament should be all or mostly men. Women are 26% less likely to give this response than men, but that still leaves almost half of Bangladeshi women believing that MPs should be all or mostly men.

Urban respondents, at 43%, are more likely to support an equal number of men and women than rural respondents (37%). Rajshahi had the highest support for an equal number of men and women, at 48%, while Chittagong had the lowest rate of support, at 26%. Chittagong also had the highest support for all men (16%) and mostly men (58%). The lowest support for all men was found in Dhaka (8%), Rangpur (8%), and Sylhet (9%). The lowest support for mostly men was in Rajshahi (40%).

Percentage responding "Equal number of men and women" by age group

under 25	25 — 29	30 — 49	50+
47	44	39	29
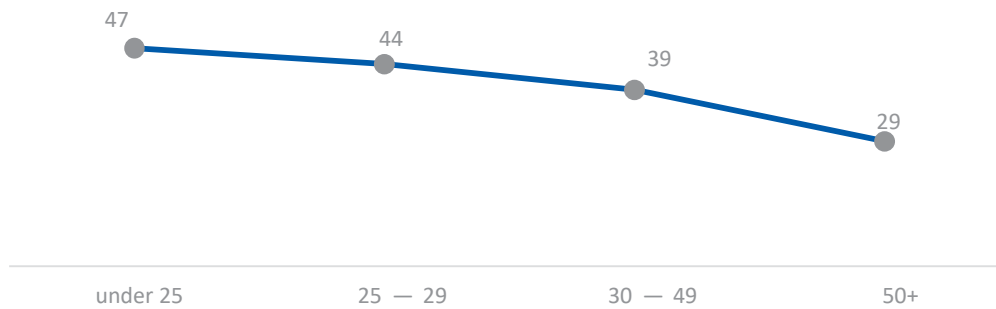
Fortunately, the survey data also gives cause for optimism, as we see that the youngest cohort, 18- to 24-year-olds, isthe most supportive of an equal number of men and women in Parliament, at 47%. This trend was already apparent in the 2015 survey, when 43% of those under 25 expressed support for an equal number of men and women. Support for gender parity in Parliamentsteadily decreases as age increases, dropping to just 29% for those over 50 in 2017.

Percentage responding "Equal number of men and women" by education level.

Illiterate	Up to class 10	SSC Or HSC	University graduate & above
25	38	52	49
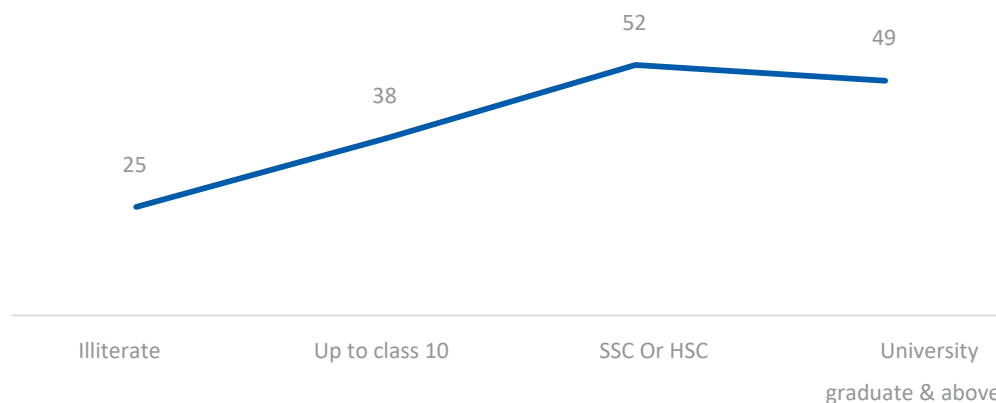
Support for gender parity in Parliament also steadily increases with education, before leveling off at the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) or Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) levels. This is a positive trend, but the fact that half of all respondents who complete at least three years of university education do not support gender parity at the highest level of politics and governance suggests that there is still much need for civic education at the university level, as well as in lower-level educational institutions.

Who do you prefer as a Member of Parliament (MP) representing your constituency in the national Parliament—a man, a woman, or it makes no difference? (Q48)

	A man	A woman	Makes no difference
2015	40	5	53
2017	36	5	59
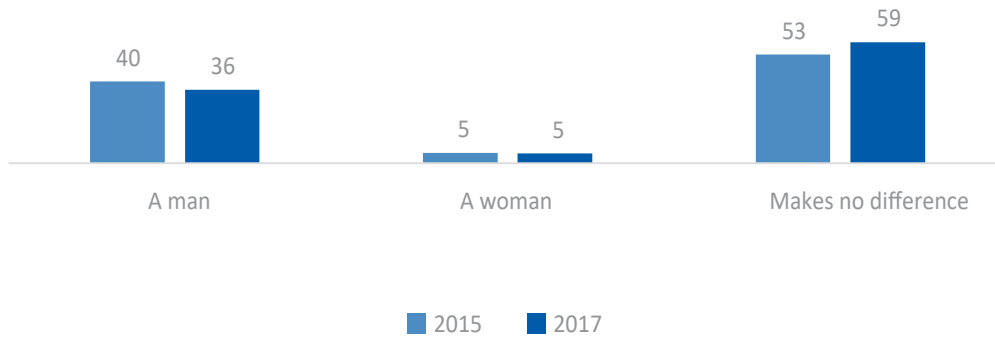
A third (36%) of Bangladeshis prefer a man as their MP, while more than half (59%) say gender makes no difference. There has been a slight but significant increase in the number of respondents giving the gender-neutral response, attributable, at least in part, to younger respondents entering the sample pool.

Although traditional and cultural notions of gender roles in Bangladesh are found almost equally between the genders, on this measure we see a significant gender difference, with almost two-thirds of women (65%) saying gender makes no difference, compared to just over half of men (53%). Moreover, almost half of men (47%) prefer a man, compared to approximately a quarter (27%) of women.

Urban respondents, at 65%, were more likely to say gender makes no difference than were rural respondents (57%). Those most likely to give the gender-neutral response were in Sylhet (75%), Rajshahi (70%), and Dhaka (70%), while those least likely were in Chittagong (32%). Those who say they attend services more than once per day were the second least likely (after the outlier, Chittagong), at 46%, to give that response. This suggests that religion and religiosity (i.e., intensity of religious belief) remain significant factors in perception of appropriate gender roles.

8.3 Independence of Women's Vote Choice

Do you think a woman should make her own choice in voting, or do you think she should be advised by men in her choice? (Q49)

84	16
Make her own choice	Men should advise her

Most Bangladeshis (84%) believe women should make their own choices when voting, but 16% believe they should be advised by men. Responses from men and women were similar (within the margin of error). Those most likely to say men should advise women were in Barisal (26%) and Sylhet (25%), or illiterate (29%). Younger people and the more educated were significantly more likely to support a woman's choice.

8.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Women in Bangladesh face significant cultural challenges in achieving parity in political participation and representation. Education is seen as an important criterion in evaluating political candidates, but women are significantly less likely than men to have higher education, suggesting a cultural understanding that higher education is less appropriate for women than men.
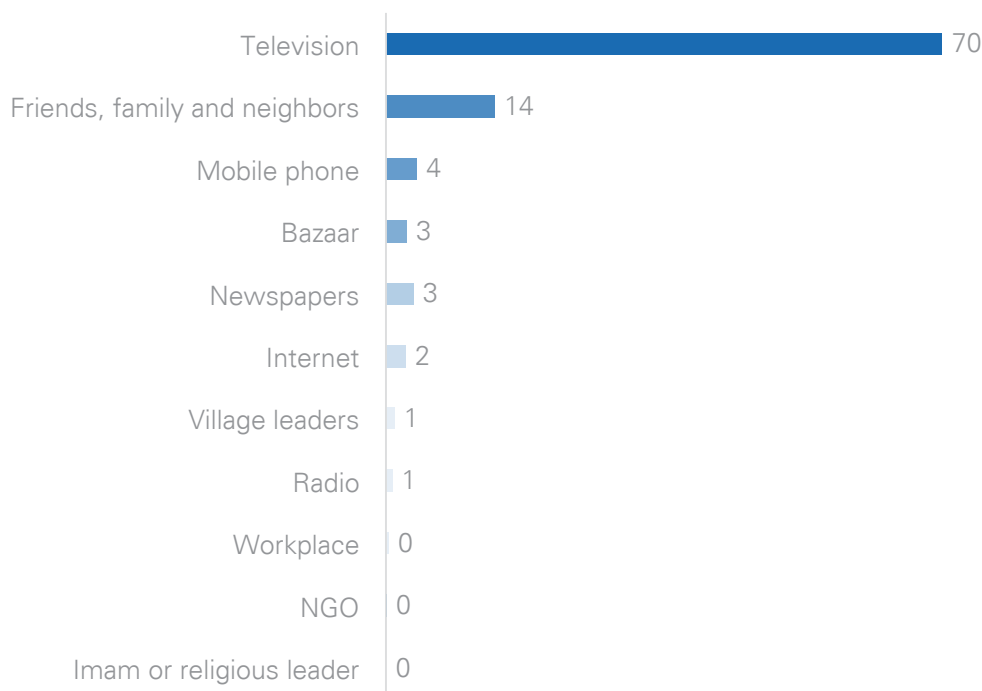
Cultural conceptions of appropriate gender roles that serve as constraints on equal participation are also evident in the finding that almost half of all women, and almost three-quarters of men, believe Parliament should be made up all or mostly of men.

It is evident that Bangladesh is changing. Younger and more educated respondents are more accepting of gender equality, demonstrating that traditional gender norms are not immutable. It is important to acknowledge, however, that women's political participation cannot be increased in the absence of broader changes in the social norms that dictate appropriate roles for women and men. Further progress in this area will require messages, approaches, and techniques that can change perceptions among both women and men.

9 COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

9.1 Sources of Information

How do you normally get information about what is
happening in the country? (Q50, first response)

Source	Value
Television	70
Friends, family and neighbors	14
Mobile phone	4
Bazaar	3
Newspapers	3
Internet	2
Village leaders	1
Radio	1
Workplace	0
NGO	0
Imam or religious leader	0

Television remains the most important way respondents get information about what is happening in the country, although those citing it as their first response declined from 84% in 2015 to just 70% in 2017. The decrease in reliance on television is largely accounted for by an increase in reliance on friends and neighbors (from 9% to 14%), mobile phones (from 2% to 4%), and the Internet (from 0% to 2%). Television is more important for urban respondents (74%) than rural respondents (69%), while family, friends, and neighbors are more important for rural respondents (15%) than urban respondents (9%).

Percentage who gave "internet" as their primary source of information by age group. (Q50)

Age group	Percentage
Under 25	9
25–29	3
30–49	1
50+	1
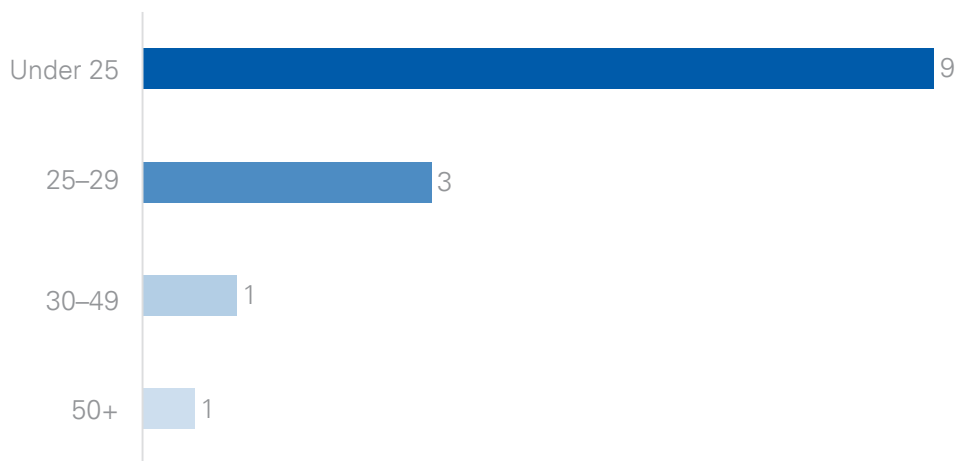
Although the Internet is the primary medium for a very small percentage of the population, its use is expected to grow rapidly over the next few years, particularly among the young. Respondents younger than 25 were three times more likely to list the Internet as a primary source than respondents 25–29 years old, and nine times more likely than respondents 30 and older.

Significant gender differences in sources of information (Q50)

Source	Men	Women
Friends, family and neighbors	7	20
Bazaar	5	1
Newspapers	5	2
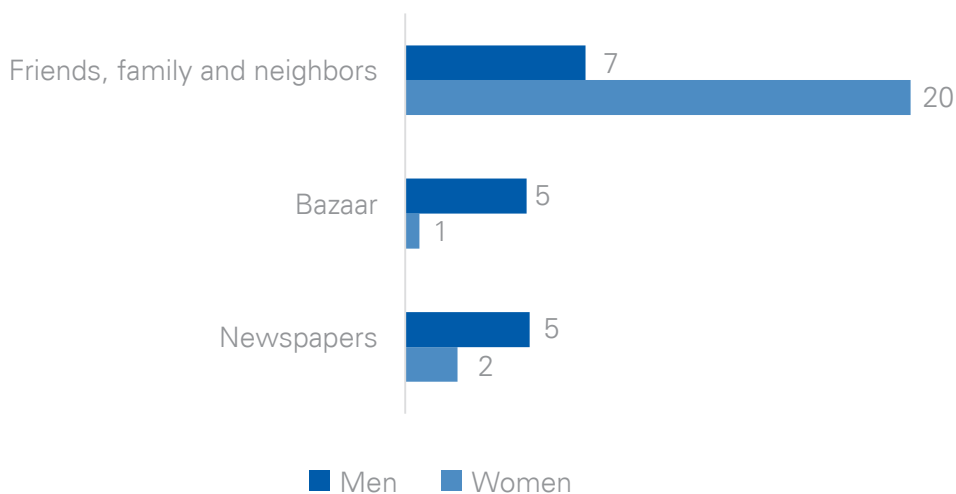
■ Men ■ Women

Women are almost three times as likely to rely on friends, family, and neighbors for information as men, who are more likely to get information in the bazaar or from newspapers.

Women most reliant on "Friends, family and neighbors"
as their primary source of information. (Q50)

Khulna	37
Mymensingh	37
Chitttagong	25
Illiterate	30
Tk.7001–Tk.10,000	27
Up to Tk.7000	25
50+ years old	24
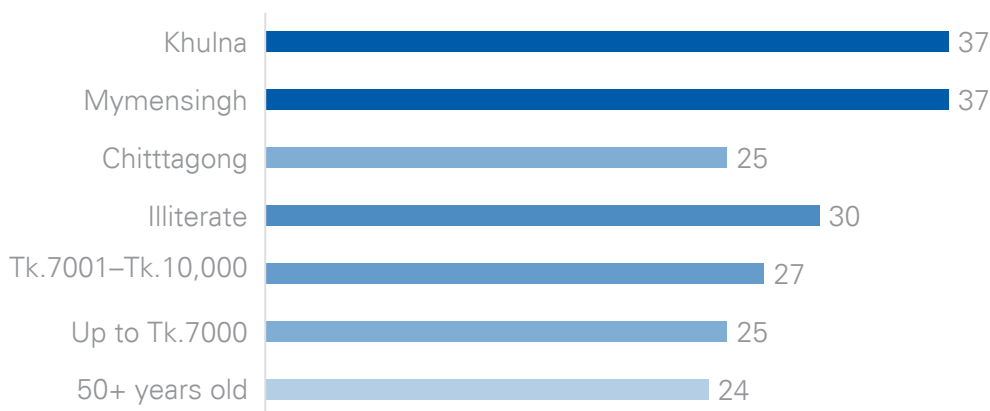
More than a third of women (37%) in Khulna and Mymensingh rely on friends, family, and neighbors as their primary source of information. Other women who do so include the illiterate, the poor, and the elderly. Women with the least access to information should be a priority target for civic educators, but those with the greatest need may also be among the most difficult to reach through traditional media.

9.2 Phone Ownership and Access to Internet

Do you own a mobile phone? (Q51) "Yes" responses

Total	Men	Women
80	89	72
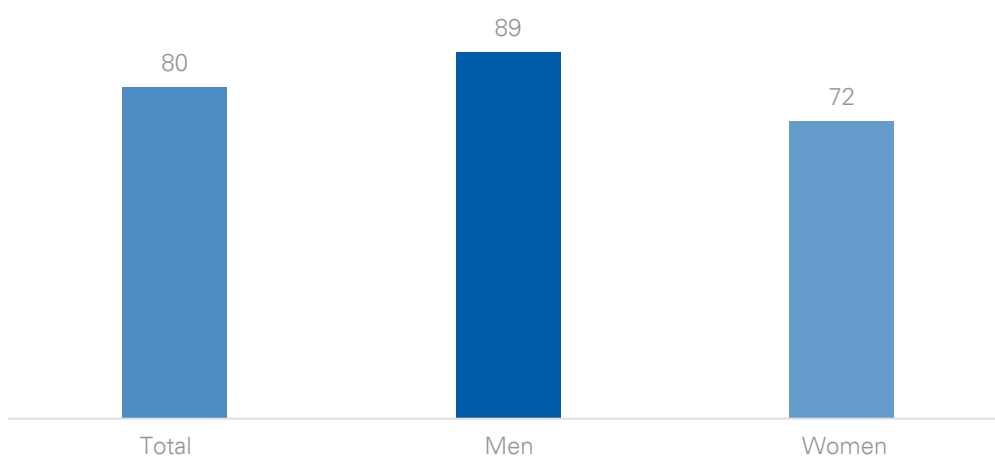
In an era when political, economic, and social participation around the world relies increasingly on technology, Bangladesh still has a significant gender digital divide. While 80% of Bangladeshis overall own a mobile phone, women (72%)are significantly less likely to own a mobile phone than men (89%).

Phone ownership by urban respondents is six points higher than rural respondents, and ownership decreases with age, from 87% of those 24 and under to 72% of those 50 and older. The highest rates of ownership are in Dhaka (90%)and Rangpur (91%), while the lowest are among women (72%), respondents over age 50 (72%), and those in Khulna (70%), Mymensingh (73%), and Rajshahi (66%). Ownership increases steadily with education, from 68% among illiterate respondents to 96% among those who have completed at least three years of university education.

Mobile phone ownership by division and gender. (Q51)
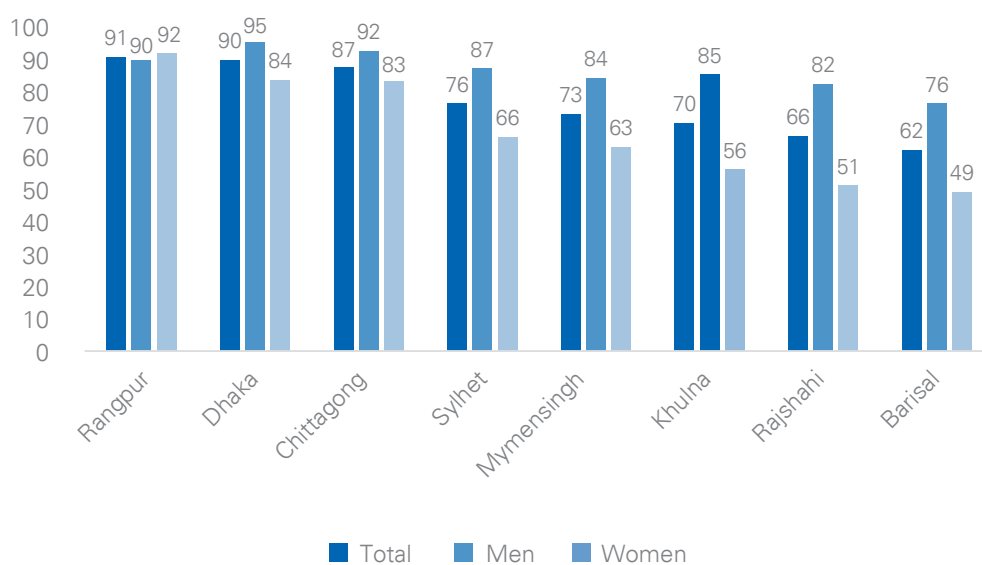
The only division with gender parity in phone ownership is Rangpur, while the divisions with the biggest disparities between men and women areKhulna (29%) and Rajshahi (31%).

Mobile phone ownership by age and gender. (Q51)
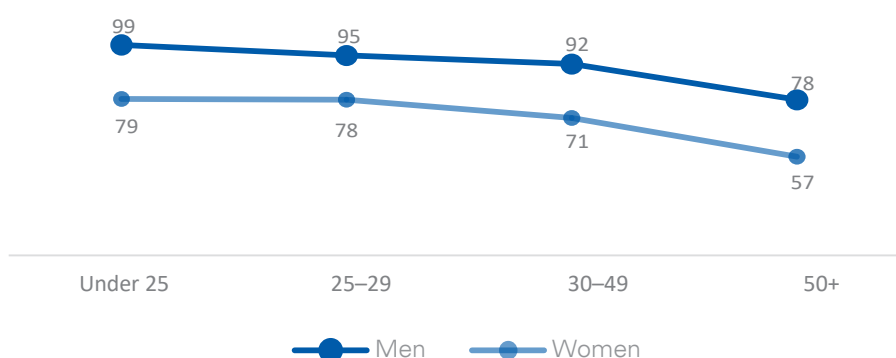
Unlike other gender-equality indicators, there is no improvement in gender parity in phone ownership among the young. Almost all

young men have a phone, while just eight in 10 women do, and this 20-point gap is consistent for all age groups, even as overall phone ownership decreases steadily with age. Urban women are more likely, at 79%, to own a mobile phone than rural women (70%), and women with HSC or higher levels of education are significantly more likely to own a phone, from a low of 64% among illiterate women to a high of 91% among those who have completed at least three years of university education.

9.3 Use of SMS

How often do you use SMS, frequently, sometimes, rarely, or never? (Q52)
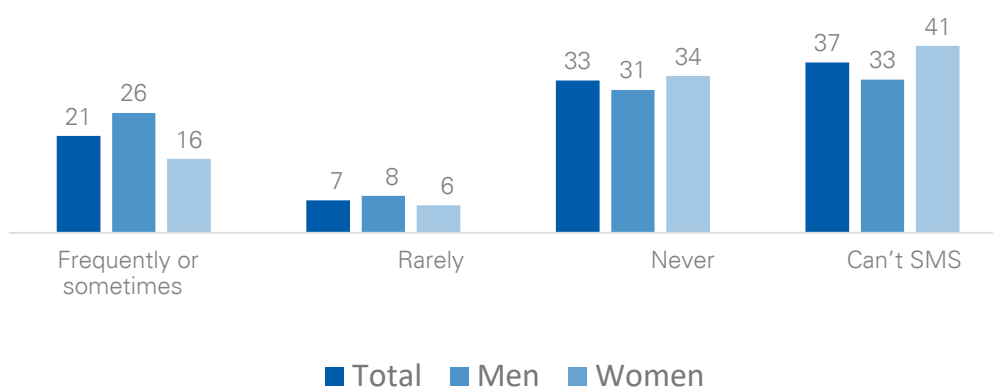
SMS is typically the initial gateway to text-based online participation. Unlike voice alone, it requires both literacy and the ability to use a keyboard. Once they have mastered it on an ordinary cell phone, users can easily make the transition to smartphone-based messaging apps, and then gradually learn to use the full communication and information capabilities of an Internet-enabled smartphone.

The percentageof SMS users in Bangladesh is low overall (28%), suggesting that this is not an important communication tool for many Bangladeshis, and SMS use is significantly lower for women (22%) than for men (34%). The ongoing use of older model phones, which have SMS character limits, may be a factor in Bangladesh's overall low SMS usage. A more significant factor may be cost:SMS is generally more expensive than voice calls. Moreover, Bangladesh remains a predominantly oral culture, with people preferring to speak in person or on the phone rather than to write.

Frequently or sometimes use SMS by district and gender. (Q52)

Rangpur: Total 29, Men 31, Women 29
Dhaka: Total 27, Men 32, Women 22
Chittagong: Total 25, Men 35, Women 16
Sylhet: Total 18, Men 24, Women 13
Mymensingh: Total 17, Men 20, Women 14
Khulna: Total 12, Men 16, Women 9
Rajshahi: Total 9, Men 14, Women 4
Barisal: Total 9, Men 11, Women 7

■ Total ■ Men ■ Women
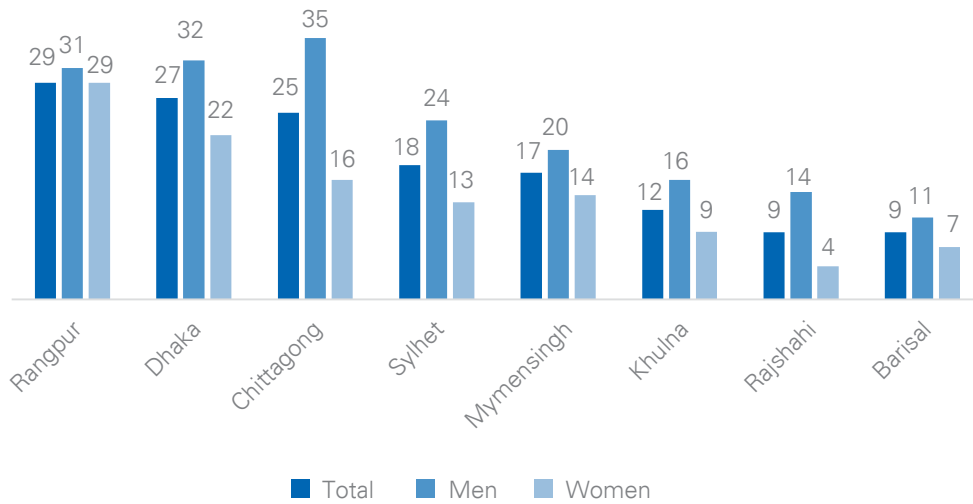
Rangpur is the only division to achieve gender parity in SMS use. The greatest gender disparity in SMS use (19 percent) is in Chittagong.

Frequently or sometimes use SMS by age and gender. (Q52)

Men: Under 25 — (39), 25–29 — 38, 30–49 — 25, 50+ — 74
Women: Under 25 — 39, 25–29 — 20, 30–49 — 10, 50+ —

●— Men   ●— Women
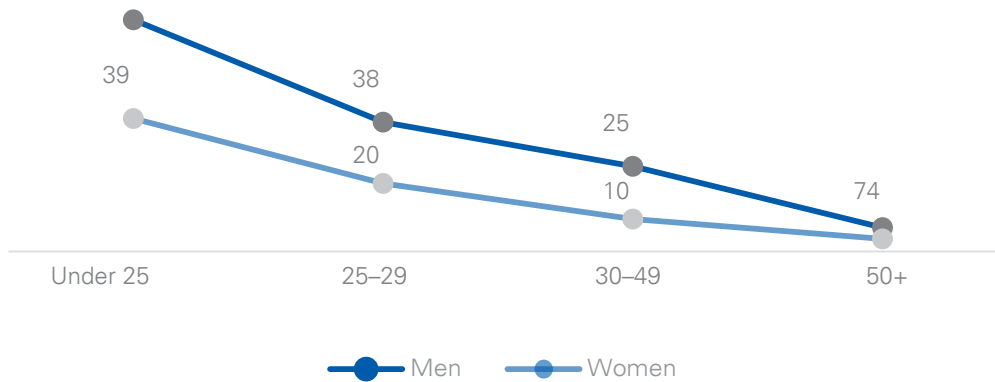
 While the young use SMS more than older respondents, the gender disparity in SMS use is also greatest among the young, with 39% of young women frequently or sometimes using SMS, compared to 68% of young men.

9.4 Access to Internet

Percentage of population that can access the internet from a mobile phone (Q53)

Total: 17
Male: 24
Famale: 11
Rural: 14
Urban: 26
Under 25: 46
25-29: 27
30-49: 13
50+: 1
Barisal: 10
Chattagong: 19
Dhaka: 25
Khulna: 14
Muymensingh: 6
Rajshahi: 14
Rangpur: 16
Sylhet: 17
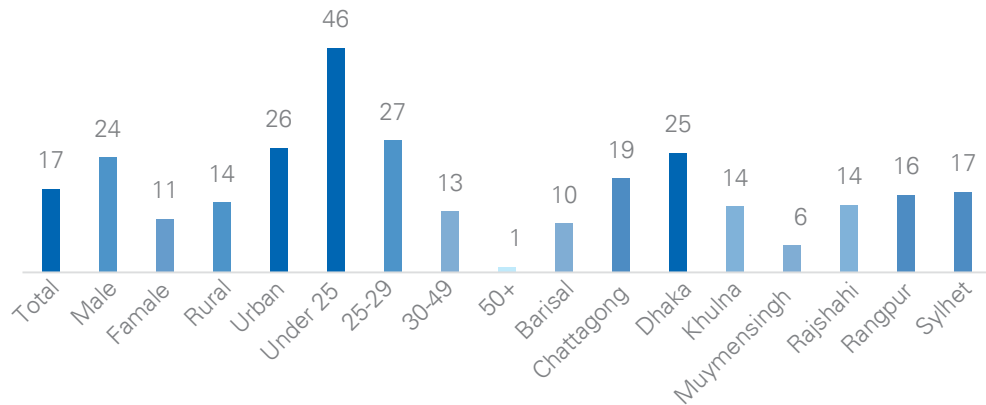
Compared to the rest of Asia, relatively few Bangladeshis (17%) can access the Internet through their phone, but the number who can has increased by five percent since the 2015 survey and, based on adoption rates in other Asian countries, we expect this rapid growth to continue. Predictably, access is highest (46%) among the young and lowest for those 50 and older (1%). Urban respondents (26%) are also more likely to have access than rural respondents (15%), despite the nationwide penetration of mobile networks offering mobile data. The gender digital divide persists, with men (24%) more than twice as likely as women (11%) to have access to the Internet. Access varies significantly by division, from 25% in Dhaka to just 6% in Mymensingh.

Do you have a computer at home that you use to access the internet? (Q54)

7
93
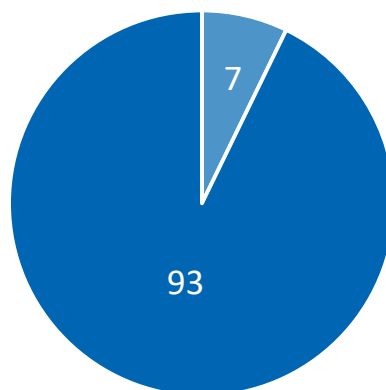
■ Yes ■ No

Just 7% of respondents overall have a computer at home from which they can access the Internet; this jumps to 17% in urban areas. Younger Bangladeshis are also more likely to have Internet access through a home computer, ranging from a high of 19% among those 24 and under to just 9% among 24- to 29-year-olds, 5% among 30- to 49-year-olds, and 3% of those 50 and older. Nevertheless, unlike early adopters Indonesia and Singapore, trends suggest that hand-held devices like phones and tablets, rather than personal computers, will dominate the Bangladeshi market.

Home computer access, by division (Q54)
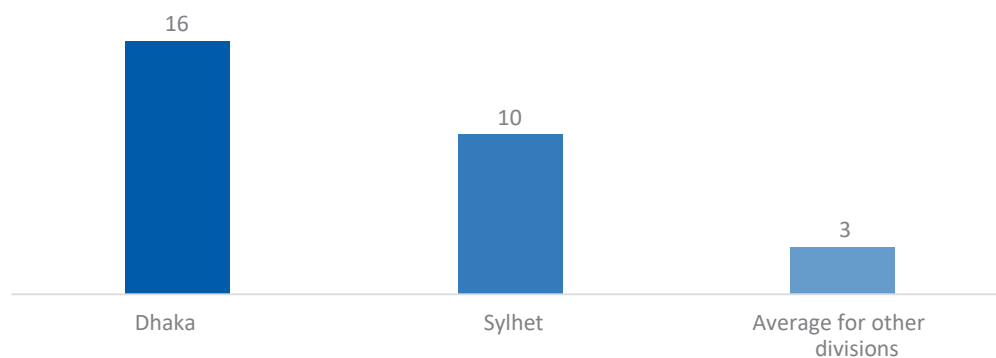
Unsurprisingly, Dhaka has the highest rates of internet access from home computers (16%), followed by Sylhet, at 10%, with no other division exceeding 5%.

9.5 Access to Social Media

Popular platforms -Percentage of the population that uses each platform. (Q55)
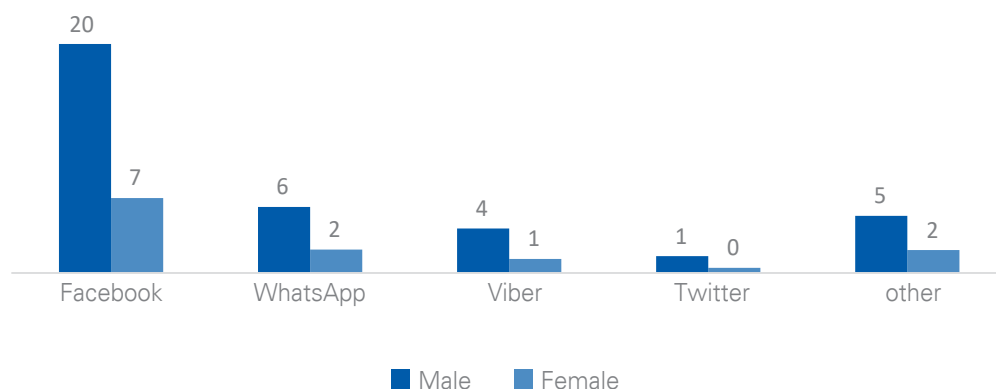
Facebook has emerged in the last decade as the most important medium for both political discussion and organizing political movements, yet women are one-third as likely to be on Facebook as men.

If yes to Facebook or Twitter, what do you use these platforms for? (n=421) (Q56)

Category	Value
Communicating with family and friends	90
To get news or educational material	60
For entertainment	55
For political activity	12
To shop or communicate with a business	6

Most people use Facebook and Twitter for communicating with family and friends (90%), but significant numbers also use these platforms to get news (60%), and a few use social media for political activity (12%).

Percentage who use Facebook or Twitter for political activity (Q56)

	Percentage
Men	1.00%
Women	0.25%
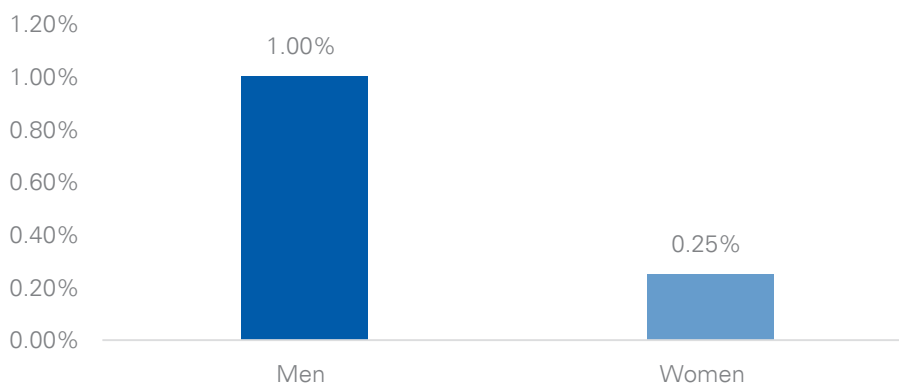
When we asked the relatively few respondents who used Facebook (about 421 out of 3,272) how they used it, just 12% said they used it for political activity. In other words, just 47 of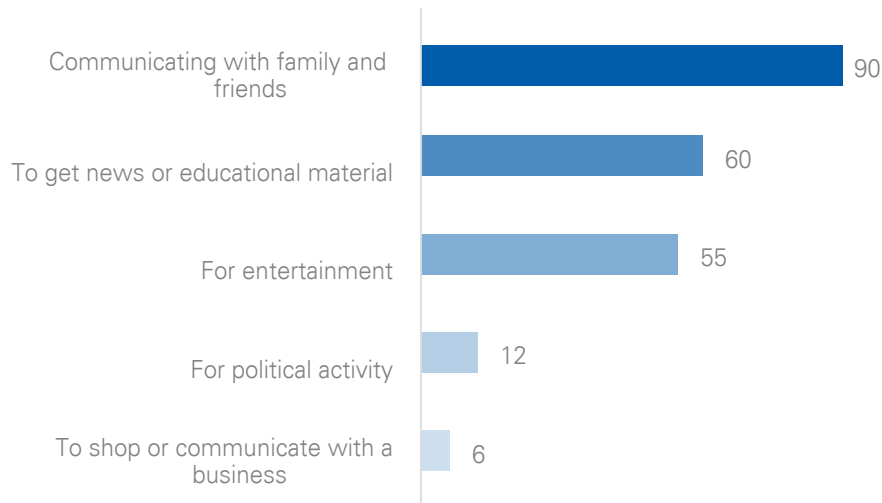 the 3,272 people in our sample reported using Facebook for political activity. Of those, only seven were women. Although this sample is too small to be meaningful, we have graphed it, as one-quarter of 1% for women and 1% for men, because it clearly shows the limits ofonline political participation, particularly women's, in Bangladesh. While this technology can be a powerful tool with an important role in programmatic interventions and political and government outreach, expectations foritsreach and effectiveness in Bangladesh must be tempered by this reality.

10 IDENTITY AND RELIGION

10.1 Religious Affiliation

Religious affiliation in Bangladesh

90	9	1
Muslim	Hindu	All others
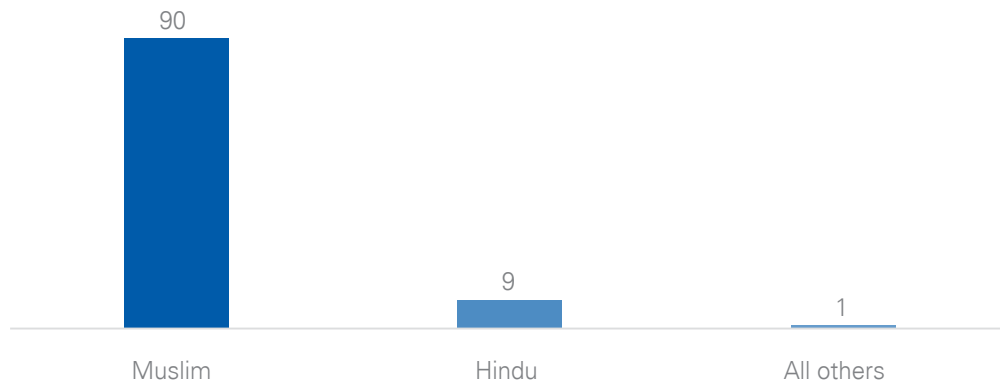
Bangladesh is a predominately Muslim country (90%),with Hindus the second-largest religious denomination (9%), and Christians, Buddhists, and all others comprising just 1% of the population.

10.2 Most Important Identity

Most important identity (Q57)

My religion	40
Being a citizen of Bangladesh	32
My village or local area	17
My ethnicity	10

Bangladeshis—regardless of religion—are religious, and religion plays an important role in people's everyday lives. It is unsurprising, then, that a strong plurality (40%) cite religion as their most important identity. This include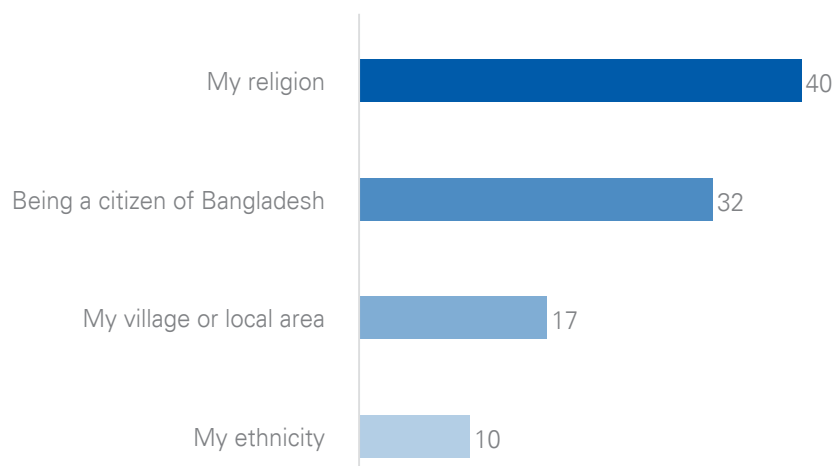s 41% of Muslims and 36% of Hindus (the other religions represented were too small a sample to be meaningful). As this is the first time we have asked this question, we do not have data to determine whether this represents a shift in people's sense of identity.

Older respondents were more likely to cite religion as their primary identity, with an 11-point difference between those 50 and older (45%) and 18- to 24-year-olds (34%). Those most likely to give religion as their primary identity were in the frequently outlying Barisal (90%) and in Mymensingh (64%). Those least likely to rank religion as their primary identity were in Dhaka and Khulna, but even there, 30% cited religion as their most important identity.

A third (32%) of respondents say being a citizen of Bangladesh is their primary identity. The finding was relatively consistent across the country, with the response being most common in Sylhet (48%). Respondents under 25 years old were more likely than other age groups to give this answer (38%), as were urban respondents (36%). Non-Muslims (38%) were more likely to cite being a citizen of Bangladesh as their primary identity than Muslim respondents (32%).

Identification with one's village was strongest in Chittagong and Rangpur, where slightly more than one-third (35%) gave that as their primary identity.

First-, second-, third-, and fourth-most important identities.

	My ethnicity	My village or local area	Being a citizen of Bangladesh	My religion
1st	10	17	32	40
2nd	16	18	31	35
3rd	38	29	18	14
4th	36	36	18	10

10.3 Frequency of Religious Attendance

How often do you go to religious services at a (mosque, church, temple, pagoda)? (Q58)
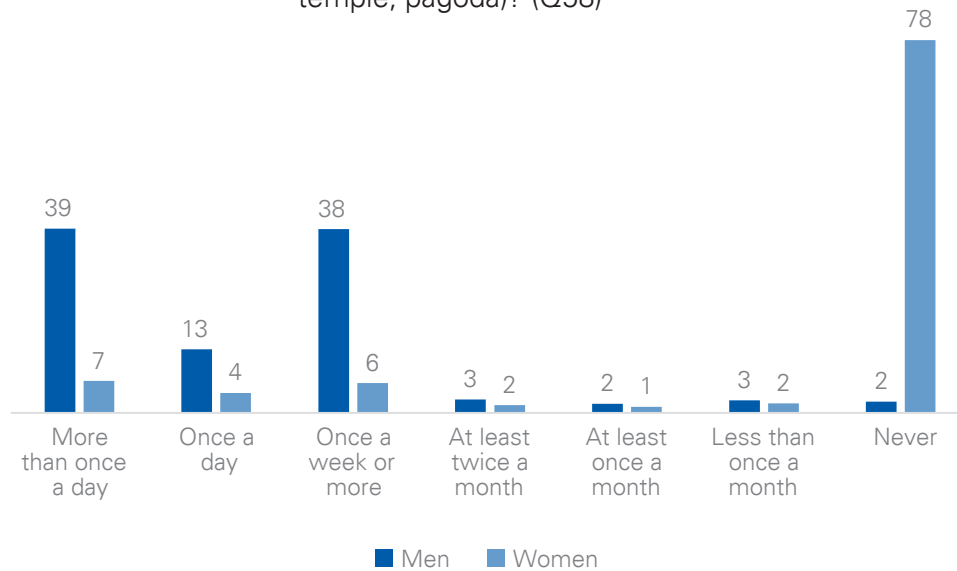
Although men and women cite religion as their primary identity at almost equal rates, attendance at services is markedly different between the sexes. If you are a man in Bangladesh, there is a good chance that attendance at religious services is an important part of your routine, with 39% of men saying they attend services more than once a day, and 90% saying they attend services at least once a week.

Women, on the other hand, seldom attend religious services, with just 17% saying they attend at least once a week, an unsurprising result given that Muslim women in Bangladesh do not go to mosque for prayer as Muslim men do. Because the vast majority of Bangladeshis are Muslim, this means that women are largely excluded from formal religious services and, to the extent that a religious institution, usually a mosque, serves as a location for political and social discourse or the formation of public consensus on important social and political issues, women are largely excluded from the process.

Those men most likely to say they attend services more than once a day are 50 years old and older (53%) or in Chittagong (57%).

10.4 Religion and Politics

Does the religious leader of your (mosque, church, pagoda, or temple) offer guidance on social and political issues? (Q59)
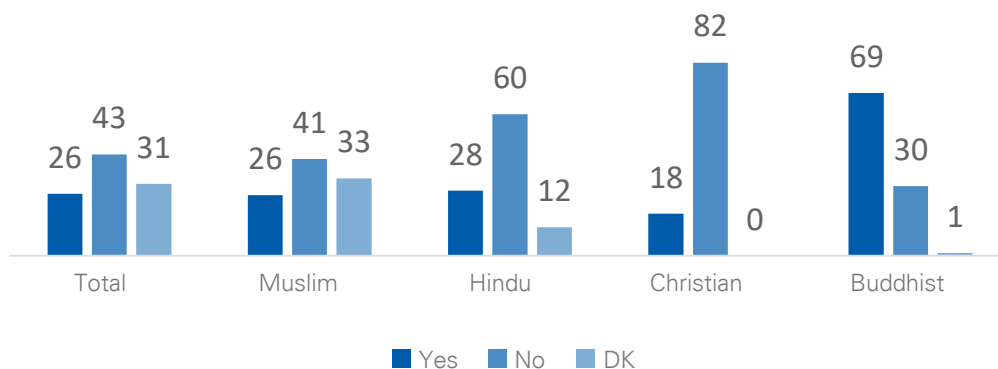
Overall, a quarter (26%) of respondents—at similar rates for Muslims and Hindus—say that their religious leader offers guidance on social and political issues; however, 31% of respondents overall, 33% of Muslim respondents, and 12% of Hindu respondents say they do not know. Significantly more women (55%) than men (7%) responded don't know, which likely correlates to the fact that a large percentage of women do not regularly attend religious services and, therefore, would not have an answer to this question. Alternatively, some respondents may have found the question sensitive. The n-sizes for Christians (7) and Buddhists (25) are too small to be significant.

How much attention do you pay to his views on social and political issues: a lot, some, not very much, or none at all? (not very much, and none, combined) (Q60)
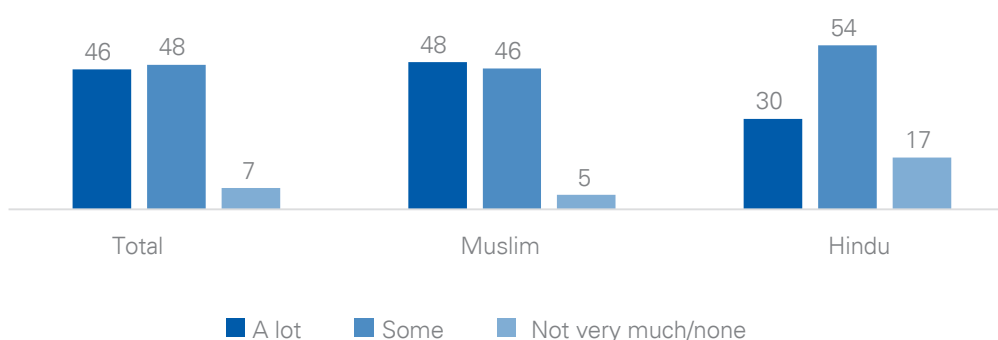
 Although fewer than half of respondent say their religious leader offers guidance on social and political issues, almost all (94%) say they pay at least some attention to such guidance. This highlights the influential role played by religious leaders in social, political, and cultural development in Bangladesh.

10.5 Islam and Fairness

Do you think that Muslims are treated fairly by western nations
(e.g. USA, UK, France)? (Q61)

Response	Value
Yes, most of the time	7
Sometimes	13
Not always	47
Rarely	18
Don't know	14
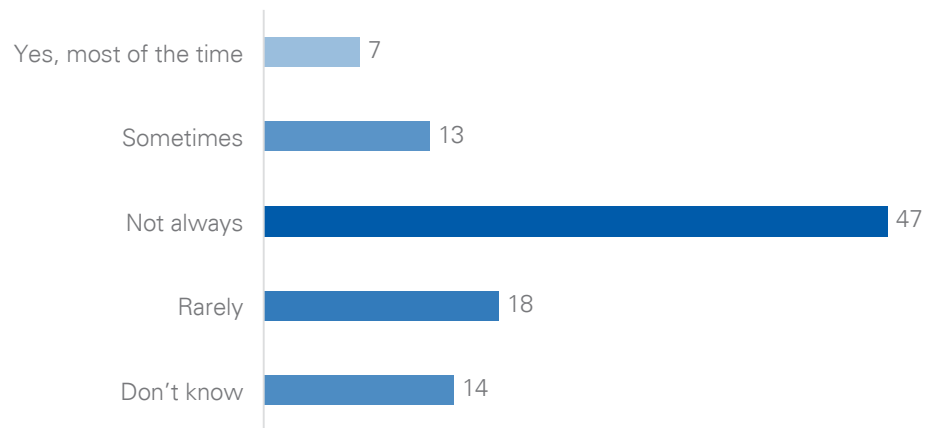
A majority (65%) of respondents think that Muslims are not always or rarely treated fairly by Western nations, while just 7% say that Muslims are treated fairly most of the time. Among those who think that Muslims are not always or rarely treated fairly, there is a significant difference between men (72%) and women (60%), possibly reflecting women's relative lack of access to information and higher education, as those most likely to hold this opinion are more educated and wealthier than average. There were only slight differences in responses when disaggregated by religious identity.

11 SECURITY AND VIOLENCE

11.1 Causes of Violence

In your view, what is the biggest cause of violence in Bangladesh? (Q62)
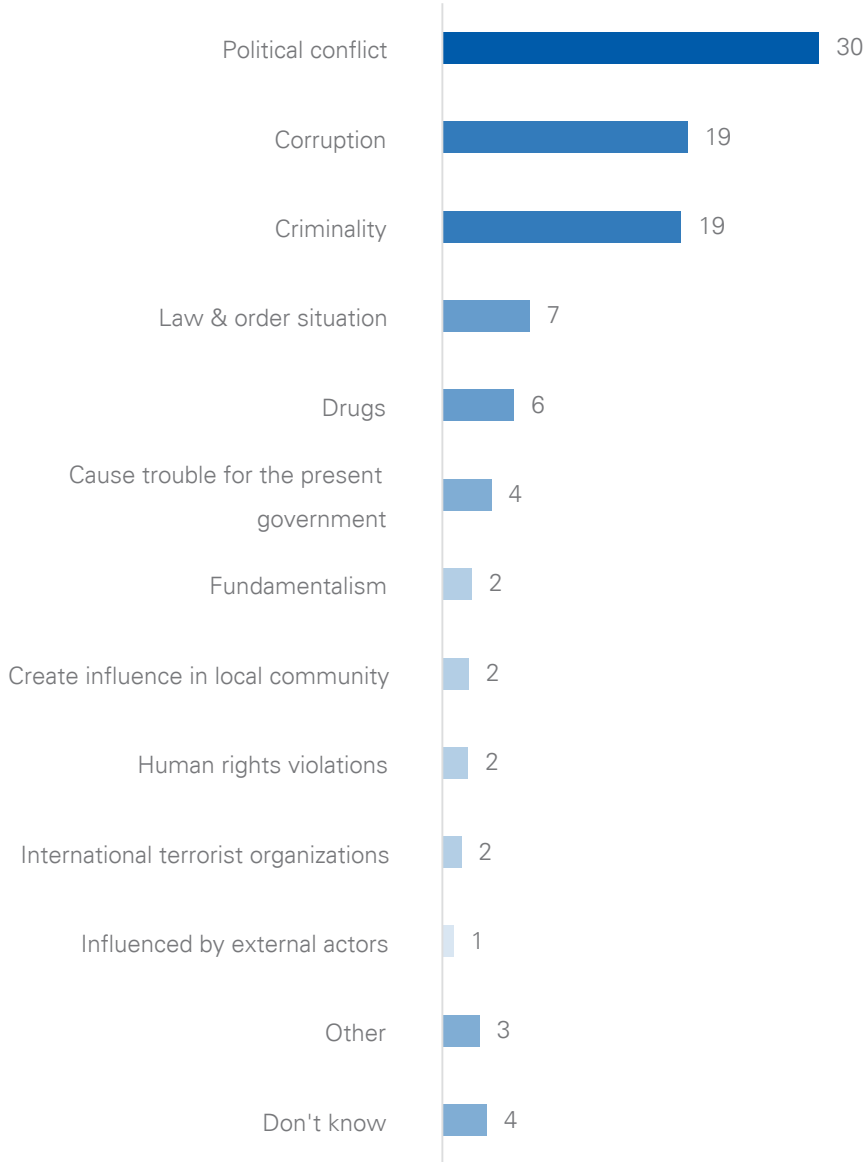
Cause	Value
Political conflict	30
Corruption	19
Criminality	19
Law & order situation	7
Drugs	6
Cause trouble for the present government	4
Fundamentalism	2
Create influence in local community	2
Human rights violations	2
International terrorist organizations	2
Influenced by external actors	1
Other	3
Don't know	4

"Political conflict" is the most common response (30%) when Bangladeshis are asked about the biggest cause of violence in the country. Other important factors perceived to cause violence include corruption (19%) and criminality, which includes theft,

robbery, murder, extortion and mastani (19%). Issues mentioned in "other" include eve teasing, forceful occupation of property, and labor unrest.

There is significant variation by division.Concern about political conflict is greatest in Rajshahi (40%) and Rangpur (50%). Theft, robbery, and murder were major issues in Mymensingh (35%), Chittagong (21%), and Rajshahi (20%). In Barisal, the major issue was corruption (44%).

In your view, what is the biggest cause of violence in your community? (Q63)

Category	Value
Political conflict	16
Theft, robbery, murder	15
Corruption	15
Drugs	14
Forceful occupation of property	8
Mastani/extortion	8
Law & order situation	7
Create influence in local community	6
Cause trouble for the present government	2
Other	4
Don't know	4
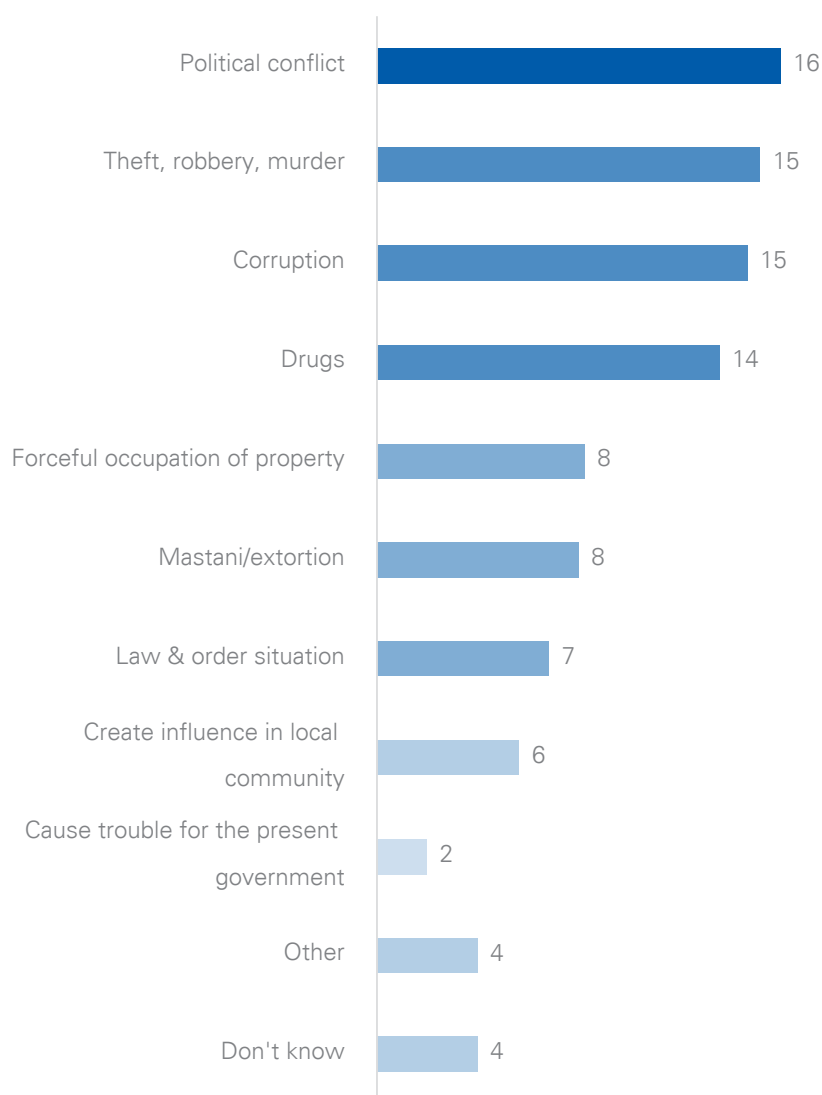
When respondents were asked about the major cause of violence in their community, four causes accounted for over half of the responses: political conflict (16%), theft, robbery, and murder (15%); corruption (15%); and drugs (14%). Forceful occupation of property increased from 1% at the national level to 8% at the local level and similarly mastani/extortion increased from 6% at the national level to 8% at the local level. Theft, robbery, and murder were particular concerns in Chittagong (27%), Rajshahi (31%), and Mymensingh (39%). Respondents in every division expressed concern over drugs at levels similar to the national average (14%) except in Khulna (6%). Respondents citing corruption varied significantly by division, with the most concerned (by far) in Barisal (44%), while respondents in Mymensingh (8%), Rajshahi (4%), and Rangpur (8%) were relatively unconcerned. Political conflict was a big issue in Rajshahi (26%) and Rangpur (21%). Urban respondents were slightly more concerned about drugs (18%) and political conflict (18%) than rural respondents, who were slightly more concerned about theft, robbery, and murder (16%) and forceful occupation of property (9%).

11.2 Trust in Security Institutions, National

I will read you a list of actors responsible for maintaining security. For each actor, please rate how safe they make you feel. (Q64)

- Very safe or safe
- Neither safe nor unsafe
- Unsafe or very unsafe
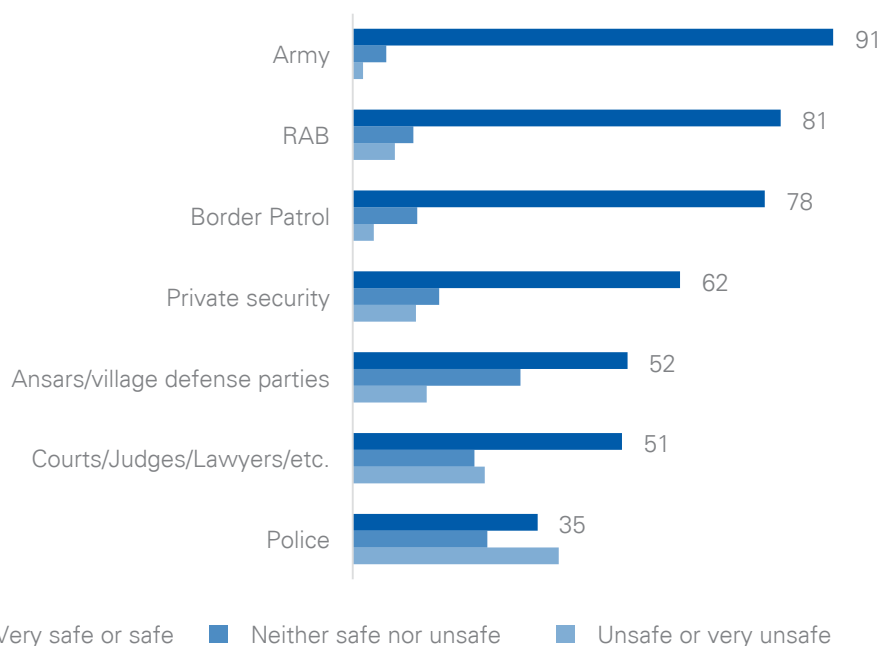
Bangladeshis rate the army as, by far, the security institution that makes them feel safest, followed by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). The police force is the only security institution with fewer than half of respondents saying it makes them feel safe or very safe. Instead, more than one-third of Bangladeshis say the police make them feel unsafe or very unsafe. The findings regarding the army, the RAB, and the police are consistent with our earlier question regarding the integrity of institutions.

11.3 Trust in Security Institutions,by Division

Percent of respondents saying the institution made them feel very safe or safe (Q64)							
	Police	Ansars/ village defense parties	Courts/ judges/ lawyers	Army	RAB	Private security	Border patrol
National	35	52	51	91	81	62	78
Barisal	16	44	35	73	63	55	58
Chittagong	36	56	58	90	79	74	84
Dhaka	44	70	46	93	78	66	93
Khulna	33	36	48	90	87	62	68
Mymensingh	39	50	40	90	71	62	72
Rajshahi	25	48	75	95	83	53	66
Rangpur	31	42	33	89	84	33	67
Sylhet	39	45	61	99	96	83	94

Trust in every security institution is significantly lower in Barisal than the national average. Respondents in Chittagong are slightly more trusting of all institutions, except the RAB, than the national average. Dhaka trustsAnsars, the police, and the border patrol significantly more than the national average, while in Khulna they trust Ansars significantly less than the national average. Mymensingh has less trust in the RAB, but otherwise broadly reflects the national average. Rajshahi respondents have the most trust in the judicial system, but lower trust than average in the police and border patrol. Rangpur trusts the judicial system significantly less than the national average, while in Sylhet there are higher levels of trust in all security institutions except Ansars.

11.4 Perception of Safety

How often do you fear for your own personal safety or security or for that of your family these days? Would you say that you always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never fear for you and your family's safety? (Q65)
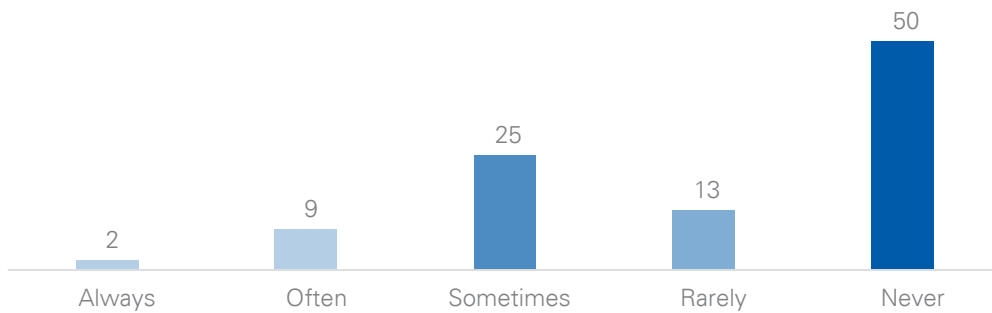
Highlighting the significant problem of violence in Bangladeshi society, more than a third of Bangladeshis (36%) say they fear for their personal safety or the safety of their family at least sometimes. More than a tenth (11%) feel fear often or always. A full 50% say they never fear for their safety, and rural respondents (53%) were more likely to give this response than urban respondents (43%).

Percentage of respondents who fear for their own or their family's safety always, often, or sometimes, by division (Q65)
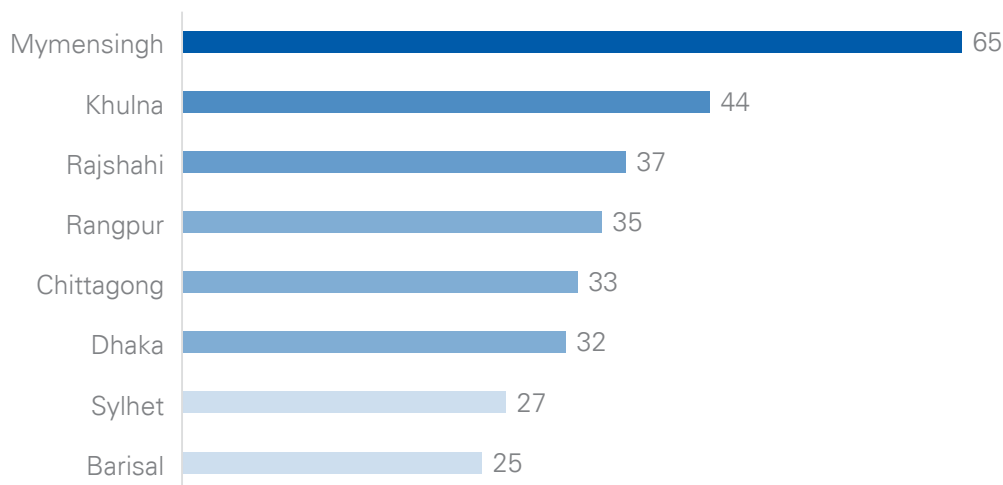
Those most likely to say they are fearful always, often, or sometimes are in Mymensingh (65%) or Khulna (44%). Those most likely to say they rarely or never feel fear are in Barisal (75%) and Sylhet (73%).

Have you or has anyone in your family suffered from violence or some criminal act in the past year? (Q66) ("Yes" responses, national and by division)
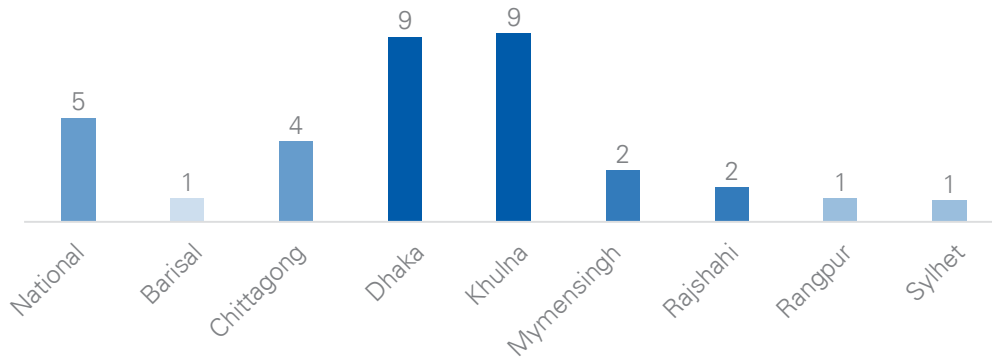
Those most likely to report that they had been victims of a criminal act in the past year were in Dhaka (9%) and Khulna (9%), orurban respondents (7%).

12 TERRORIST INCIDENTS

12.1 Holey Bakery Attack

Have you heard of the July 2016 (Month of Ramjan) attack on Holey Bakery Restaurant in Gulshan Dhaka? (Q67A1) ("Yes" responses)
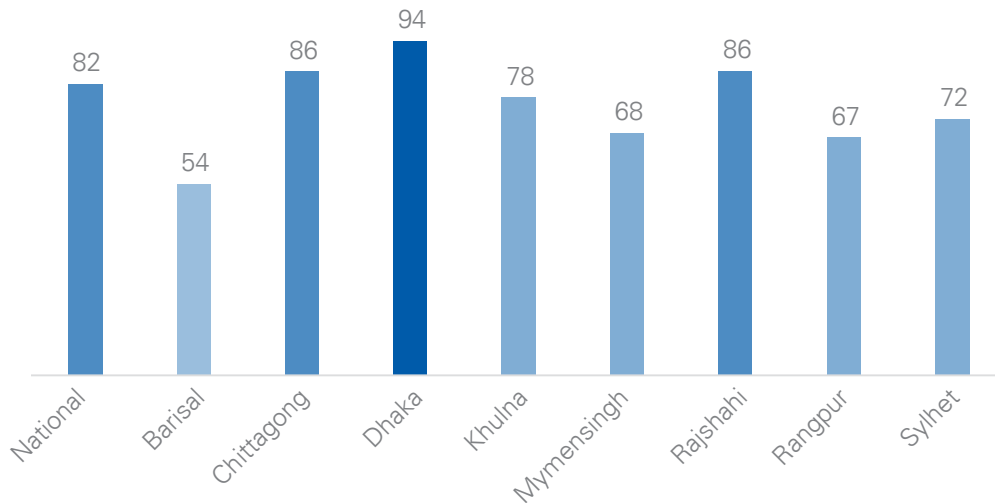
A strong majority of respondents (82%) say they are aware of the attack on Holey Bakery, but women (74%) were much less likely than men (89%) to have heard about the attack, a simple statistic that illustrates and quantifies the gender disparity in access to information in Bangladesh. Urban respondents (88%) were also more likely to have heard of the attack.

If answer is yes, do you think more of these attacks will happen in the future? (Q67A2) ("Yes" responses)

National — 67
Barisal — 75
Chittagong — 44
Dhaka — 70
Khulna — 63
Mymensingh — 52
Rajshahi — 87
Rangpur — 98
Sylhet — 62
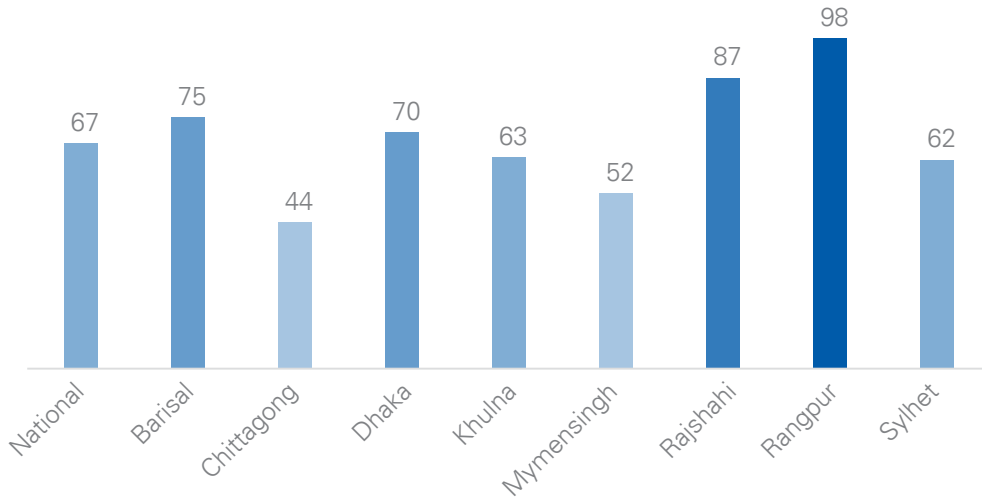
Of respondents who had heard about the Holey Bakery attack, two-thirds (67%) thoughtsimilar attacks will happen in the future, with responses varying from a low of 44% in Chittagong to a high of 87% in Rajshahi and 98% in Rangpur.Devout Muslims (those attending services more than once per day) were significantly less likely (58%) to expect future attacks. Those under age 25 (71%) were also more likely than older respondents to anticipate future attacks.

What do you think were the motivations of the attackers? (Q67A3)

Cause trouble for the current government — 27
International terrorist organizations trying to destabilize the country — 24
Influenced by external actors — 13
Retribution for injustice done to Muslims in Bangladesh — 7
Retribution for injustice done to Muslims in other countries — 6
Want Islam to have a bigger role in Bangladesh — 5
Others — 6
Don't know — 29
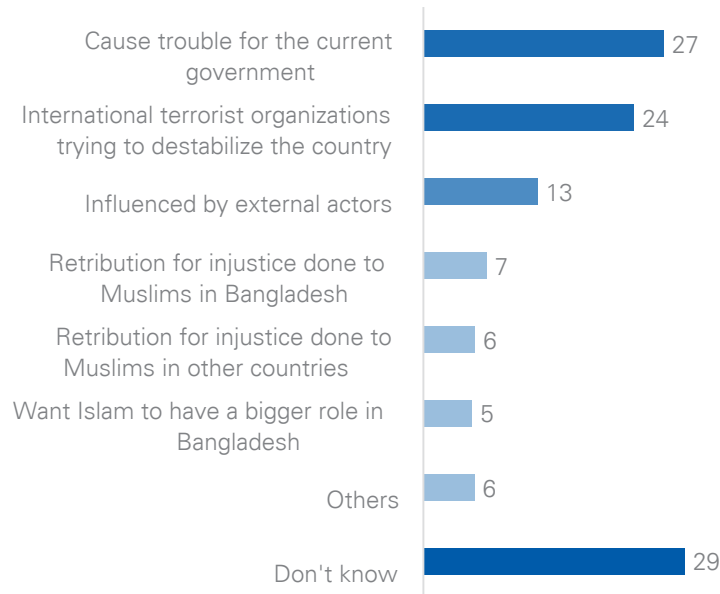
When asked about the motivations of the attackers, about a quarter (27%) said,"cause trouble for the current government" and another quarter (24%) blamed international terrorist organizations. There was no significant difference between rural and urban respondentsin most responses, but urban respondents were10 pointsmore likely to cite international terrorist organizations than rural respondents. Those most likely to say "cause trouble for current government" were in Rangpur (43%), while those most likely to blame terrorists were in Sylhet (40%). Women (36%) and rural respondents (32%) were more likely to say they do not know.

12.2 Brahmanbaria Attacks on Hindus

Have you heard of the November 2016 attacks on the Hindu community in Brahmanbaria? (Q67B1) ("Yes" responses)

	National	Barisal	Chittagong	Dhaka	Khulna	Mymensingh	Rajshahi	Rangpur	Sylhet
	70	41	66	84	59	56	83	68	61
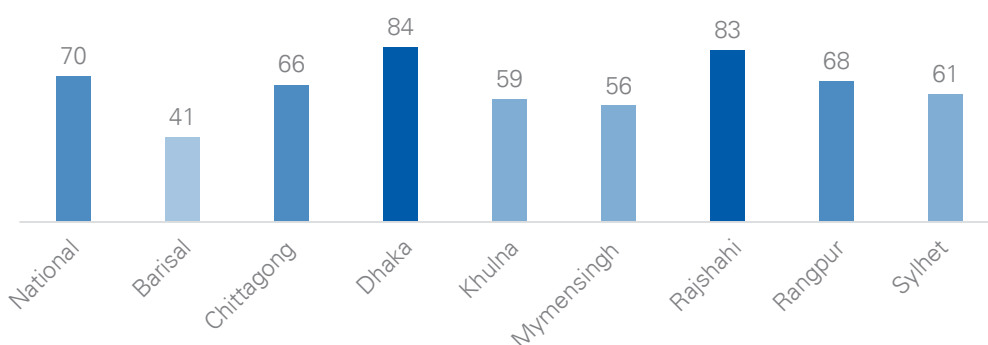
Fewer people said they had heard of the attacks on Hindus in Brahmanbaria than had heard of the Holey Bakery attack, but responses by division do parallel the Holey Bakery attack responses, suggesting that these findings also provide an accurate, relative measure of access to information by division. There are, again, disparities in awareness between women (60%) and men (80%) and between urban (79%) and rural (67%) respondents.

If answer is yes, do you think more of these attacks will happen in the future? (Q67B2) ("Yes" responses)

	National	Barisal	Chittagong	Dhaka	Khulna	Mymensingh	Rajshahi	Rangpur	Sylhet
	76	89	47	79	73	67	91	98	76
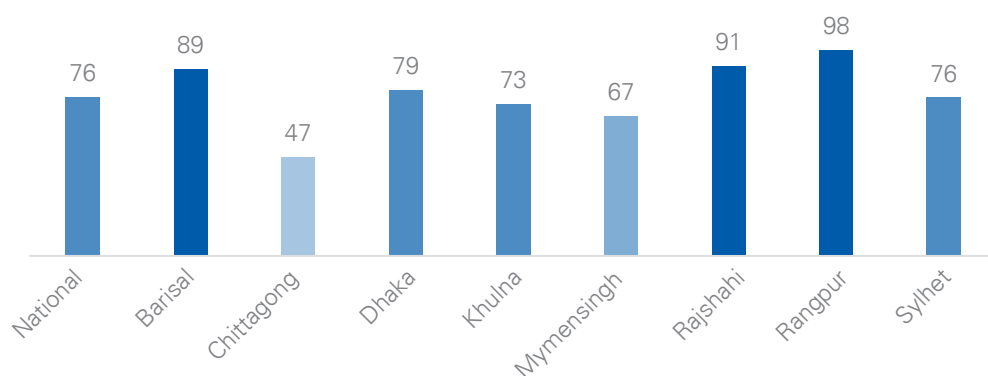
Nationally, respondents had slightly higher expectations of further attacks like those committed in Brahmanbaria (76%) than of further attacks like the Holey Bakery attack (67%), despite the fact that awareness of the Brahmanbaria attacks was slightly lower. This may be because attacks on religious minorities are not new, while the targeting of foreigners, like the Holey Bakery attack,are unprecedented.

What do you think were the motivations of the attackers? (Q67B3)

Motivation	Value
Cause trouble for the current government	35
International terrorist organizations trying to destabilize the country	17
Influenced by external actors	12
Retribution for injustice done to Muslims in Bangladesh	9
Retribution for injustice done to Muslims in other countries	6
Want Islam to have a bigger role in Bangladesh	5
Others	10
Don't know	21

Again, these responses generally track responses to the Holey Bakery attack question, but with an increase in those who say "cause trouble for the current government" (from 27% to 35%) and a decrease in those who ascribe the attacks to international terrorists (from 24% to 17%). Women (28%) and rural respondents (23%) were again more likely to say they do not know the motivations of the attackers.

12.3 Fear of Terrorist Attack

Are you concerned that you/your family/your friends might be the victims of these kinds of attacks? (Q68) ("Yes" responses.)
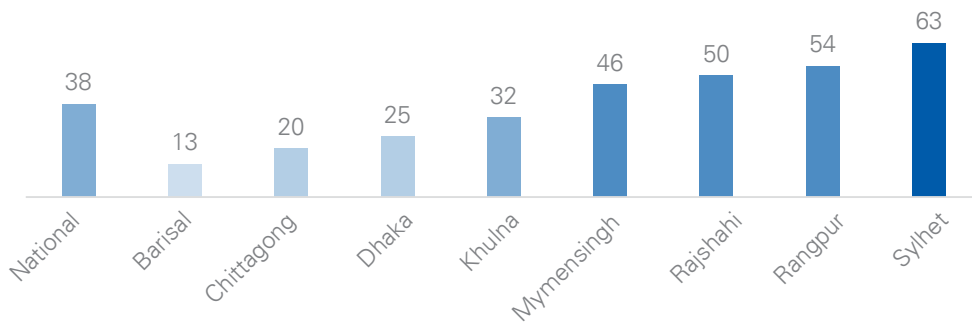
National	Barisal	Chittagong	Dhaka	Khulna	Mymensingh	Rajshahi	Rangpur	Sylhet
38	13	20	25	32	46	50	54	63

Nationally, 38% say they are concerned that they or their family and friends might be victims of terrorist attacks, but responses vary widely by region, from a low of 13% in Mymensingh to a high of 63% in Rangpur.

13 ANNEX A – METHODOLOGY

Please contact The Asia Foundation for a full description of the methodology. Below is a summary of the methodology.

SRS national sample is comprised of 3,272 respondents in clusters of eight respondents desegregated by divisions, regions, and other administrative areas as well by various subpopulations, including ethnicities. The national sample renders estimates at national level with margin of error at +/- 3%; further, the sample provides reliable estimates for various subgroups. Exact margins of error vary depending on the disaggregation. Various elements of the sample survey design and implementation procedure, are provided in the example below.

SAMPLE SURVEY DESIGN

OVERVIEW

Sample sizes were allocated by administrative areas geographically. Thus, nationwide sample is to be allocated proportionately by administrative divisions and by areas rural and urban and also in the lower tier of administrative areas by design.

Multistage Random Sampling Method

Step1: Determination of Sample Size

Allocation of Sample by Division (7) Area (PSU of respondents)

Urban (94) PSU

Rural (315) PSU

Selection of Households by Systematic only Random procedure

Selection of respondents by Grid
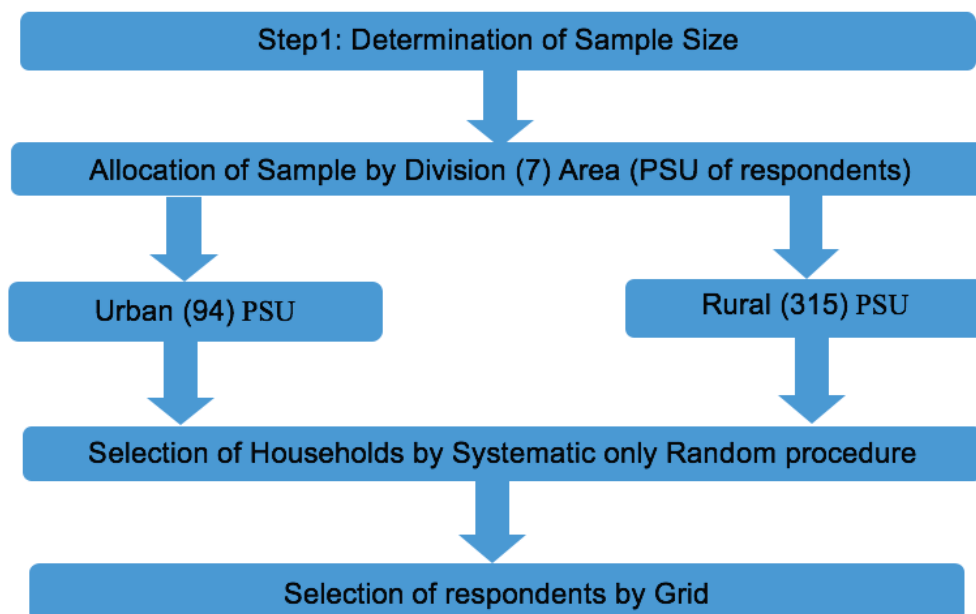
Step1: Determination of sample size and sample allocation

The proposed survey has been designed so that the margin of error at the national level is contained within +/-3%. The attributes as described are diversified and were expected to vary widely. The desired level of precision (limiting margin of error) has been defined in terms of limiting the margin of error at supervision.

As suggested in the RFP that selection of sample respondents for the survey may be carried out in clusters of persons recorded in villages/mahallas. Cluster size of 8 respondents was determined to be realistic and pragmatic. The overall sample size for the survey then worked out to be around 1250 x 2.5 or about 3125 respondents selected over various sub-groups – by gender, age, education, urban-rural, geographic division, districts, etc. In order to have rounded or whole number of respondents the nationwide sample size was decided at 3200 respondents initially distributed over all 8 divisions in the country and selected in 400 clusters of 8 respondents each.

Step 2: Sample Allocation & Sample Size for Specific Division

Sample respondents to be selected are allocated by geographical areas – administrative divisions and urban-rural areas within administrative areas. As suggested in the TOR, the 2011 population census data was used for proportionate allocation of the sample respondents as 23% urban and the remaining 77% as rural as per population respondents in census. Eight metropolitan cities in the eight divisions, district towns and municipal areas at upazila level together form the urban areas or urban stratum and the rest of the Country is treated as rural or rural stratum.

The 2011 census data was used for allocation. Sampling had to be carried out in two stages. At the first stage villages/mahallahs as the primary sampling units were selected and clusters of households at the second stage were selected following selection of the primary sampling units.

Sampling frame of Villages for rural areas and sampling frame of Mahallahs for urban areas was prepared. Initially sample size of primary sampling units (PSUs) 308 villages for rural areas and 92 for urban areas were considered to be selected. These 308 villages and 92 Mahallas had been distributed among 8 administrative divisions according to PPS (Probability proportional to size). The selection of villages and of mahallas (to be selected) from different divisions are shown below:

Number of Primary Sampling Units (PSU), by division, by district

Division	PSU (Primary Sampling Unit)		
	Total	Rural (Village)	Urban (Mahalla)
Barisal	23	19	4
Chittagong	83	63	20
Dhaka	102	63	39
Mymensingh	30	26	4
Khulna	47	39	8
Rajshahi	54	45	9
Rangpur	45	39	6
Sylhet	25	21	4
Grand Total	409	315	94

OVERSAMPLING:

In addition, it was desired to consider the ethnic minorities as a separate domain with the requirement for reliable data for the indigenous ethnic minority population and as a result over-sampling of the minorities became a necessity. The over sampling was carried out to an extent that would provide dependable estimates of the minorities of hill areas. Indigenous minority population consisted of as many as 10 to 12 communities or tribal groups; of these communities two communities, Chakma and Murma are the two dominant groups of all and each approximately comprised of nearly a third of all the ethnic minorities while the remainder third of the minority population is comprised of other smaller communities or groups. Considering the terrain of hill areas, difficulties of survey implementation, and cost consideration as well it was decided to over-sample the indigenous minority domain to the extent for providing estimates of the two dominant ethnic communities- Chakma and Murma separately while at the

same time try to provide estimates on other smaller groups together as a group. To this end the sampling plan considered selection of 12 clusters or 96 respondents of ethnic minority to be selected in the standard procedure maintaining urban-rural allocation and geographical order of the administrative districts given in the BBS's census enumeration order.

Over- sampling resulted in selection of 12 clusters (96- respondents) of indigenous minority respondents; 3 of the twelve clusters were to be selected in urban areas of the minority domain and the remaining 9 clusters were to be selected in the rural areas of hill districts.

A proportionate allocation of 2 clusters was made for selection of non-ethnic (Bengali) respondents of the hill districts.

Chittagong Hill Tract area respondents by ethnic group

Chakma	32 respondents
Murma	32 respondents
Other ethnic minority	32 respondents
Total	96 respondents

Step 3: Sample Household Selection

The investigators were to go to each sampled village/mahalla and find a land mark. They were to select a sample household nearest to the land mark at random for interviewing. It would be the first sampled household. Then the investigator would select second household at an interval of 15 households counted from the first selected household following geographic contiguity. And using 15 as the fixed interval and would select 8 more sample households for interviewing.

Step 4: Selection of sample respondents by using Grid System Method

The general principle for selection of sample respondent in a household as described above is implemented using general grid system. There are two tasks involved in the selection process: first, the enrollment of eligible persons of age 18 years and older and, second, the selection of one person from each sample household.

The enrollment consists of drawing up a list of all adults (age 18+) in the household with demographics-gender and age and other information including education, occupation and relationship with the head of the household. For a full description of the grid system please contact the Asia Foundation.

Number of PSU (Primary Sampling Unit) by division by district

Division	Districts	PSU		
		Total	Rural	Urban
BARISAL	BARGUNA	3	2	1
	BARISAL	6	5	1
	BHOLA	5	4	1
	JHALOKATI	1	1	0
	PATUAKHALI	5	4	1
	PIROJPUR	3	3	0
	Total	23	19	4
CHITTAGONG	BANDARBAN	3	2	1
	BRAHMANBARIA	7	6	1
	CHANDPUR	6	5	1
	CHITTAGONG	20	12	8
	COMILLA	14	12	2
	COX'S BAZAR	6	4	2
	FENI	3	3	0
	KHAGRACHHARI	5	4	1
	LAKSHMIPUR	5	4	1
	NOAKHALI	8	7	1
	RANGAMATI	6	4	2

Division	Districts	PSU		
		Total	Rural	Urban
	Total	83	63	20
DHAKA	DHAKA	33	7	26
	FARIDPUR	6	5	1
	GAZIPUR	9	6	3
	GOPALGANJ	3	3	0
	KISHOREGONJ	7	6	1
	MADARIPUR	4	3	1
	MANIKGANJ	4	4	0
	MUNSHIGANJ	4	3	1
	NARAYANGANJ	9	6	3
	NARSINGDI	6	5	1
	RAJBARI	4	3	1
	SHARIATPUR	3	3	0
	TANGAIL	10	9	1
	Total	102	63	39
MYMENSINGH	JAMALPUR	7	6	1
	MYMENSINGH	14	12	2
	NETRAKONA	5	5	0
	SHERPUR	4	3	1
	Total	30	26	4
KHULNA	BAGERHAT	4	4	0
	CHUADANGA	3	2	1
	JESSORE	9	7	2
	JHENAIDAH	5	5	0
	KHULNA	7	4	3
	KUSHTIA	6	6	0
	MAGURA	3	2	1
	MEHERPUR	2	2	0
	NARAIL	2	2	0
	SATKHIRA	6	5	1
	Total	47	39	8
RAJSHAHI	BOGRA	10	8	2
	CHAPAI NABABGANJ	5	4	1
	JOYPURHAT	4	3	1
	NAOGAON	6	6	0
	NATORE	6	5	1

Division	Districts	PSU		
		Total	Rural	Urban
	PABNA	7	6	1
	RAJSHAHI	7	5	2
	SIRAJGANJ	9	8	1
	Total	54	45	9
RANGPUR	DINAJPUR	9	8	1
	GAIBANDHA	7	6	1
	KURIGRAM	6	5	1
	LALMONIRHAT	3	3	0
	NILPHAMARI	5	4	1
	PANCHAGARH	3	3	0
	RANGPUR	8	7	1
	THAKURGAON	4	3	1
	Total	45	39	6
SYLHET	HABIGANJ	6	5	1
	MAULVIBAZAR	4	4	0
	SUNAMGANJ	7	6	1
	SYLHET	8	6	2
	Total	25	21	4
Grand Total		409	315	94