

YOUTH POLITICAL CONSULTATION 2020



“VOICES OF THE FUTURE”
YOUTH POLITICAL CONSULTATION 2020

Disclaimer

This work is the result of a collaboration of a number of independent young Libyans.

All the efforts were under voluntary terms. The expenses of producing and advocating our work costed us approximately 1000LYD.

The content and views of our publications are unbiased, they represent the voices of thousands of Libyan youths. We are not sponsored by any party, corporation, or government.

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Introduction

Libya has been and is still going through an extraordinary period of complex and dynamic transformation and change. Since the fall of the Gadhafi Regime in 2011, Libya has struggled to successfully make the transition to democracy.

It has been nine years since the fall of the Gadhafi regime, through the nine years the living conditions and environment has been that of conflict, instability, crime (kidnapping, Human trafficking, smuggling, etc.), power outages, shortage of commodities, a deteriorating economy, a collapsed financial system, poor health services, a neglected education system, corruption, displaced people (internal & external).

Throughout the past few years, young people, the initiators of this historic change, have been one of the worst hit segments of society from the political chaos and armed conflict, during and immediately after the uprising, young people's hopes and aspirations were limitless, however the initial euphoria has subsided in the face of the immense scale of challenges encountered. Young people have to an extent moved from a state of unity and solidarity to polarization and division due to powerful forces of divide. There is a risk that young people might disengage and return to the old state of apathy due to the deteriorating political, economic and social situation, the slow pace of change and disillusionment with the system. It is critical that openness, hope, engagement and belief in making a difference is restored and maintained if the democratic transition is to be achieved.

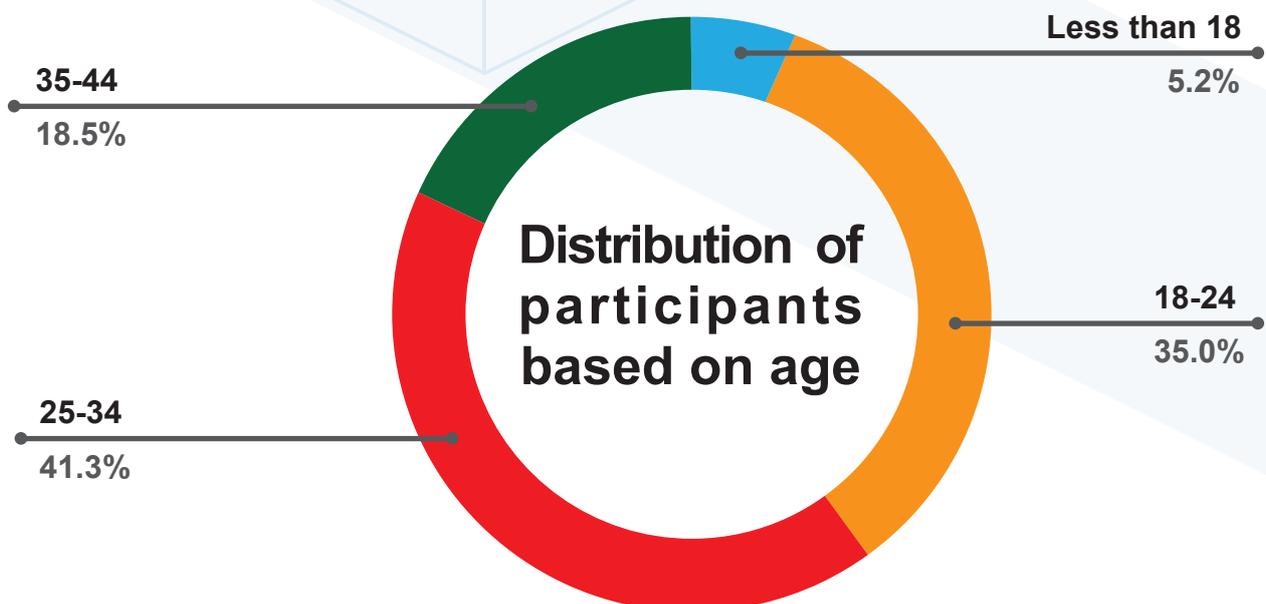
Libya is known for having a young population. According to the 2006 census, Libyans aged between 15 and 44 years old represent more than half the population (51 percent). Some estimate youth to be two thirds of Libya's population. Aside from the minor disagreements on statistics, the undisputed fact remains that young people are the bulk of the country's population and are its most valuable resource. Unfortunately, with the ongoing conflict, Libyan youth were often seen and used as mere tools for warring factions. This has got to stop.

As the United Nations Support Mission in Libya prepares for a new round of political dialogue, it is important that the voice of independent young Libyans is heard. Based on previous experiences, young people are side-lined and are not adequately represented in the political dialogue. Given the failure of the previous political settlement, young people as the main stakeholder in Libya's future, have most to lose. Therefore, it is important that consensus among young people from across Libya is reached and certain points are agreed upon. In any future settlement it is of paramount importance that Young people's concerns are addressed and that young Libyan's perspectives are at the bedrock of any political settlement. The voices of Libyan youth must be heard because the future of the country is their future. This report aims to amplify and deliver these voices.

Our Approach

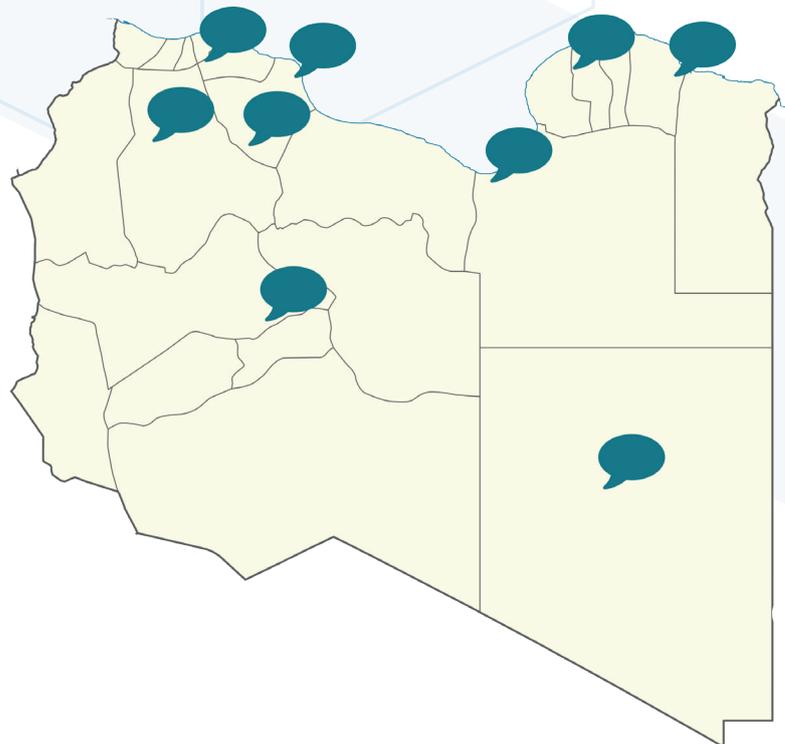
The primary purpose of our efforts was to create a general understanding of what young Libyans thought of the current political arena, what their views were regarding the upcoming political dialogue, and what their aspirations were in terms of outcomes and results from a new political settlement. Our consultation aimed at covering several crucial topics that are all entwined in Libyan Politics. The issues covered are; the political agreement, governance, the constitution, foreign intervention, security and socio-economics.

In the design phase, we elected a three-way consultation methodology that includes a survey, interviews, and focus groups. The reason we sought to combine the three consultation methods is to ensure that our research captures most aspects of the problem. We started with an online survey that went live on 29/09/2020 and remained open for 15 days. The survey was shared with Libyan youth via social media and via direct contacts. By the closing date, 1500 people participated in the survey, mostly aged between 18 and 44 years old. The main age groups were 18 to 24 years old (35 percent) and 25 to 34 years old (41 percent). Our survey sample was biased in terms of gender with males being almost two thirds (64 percent) and females being the remaining 36 percent. We recognize and acknowledge the biases that come with an online survey like ours.



We also conducted interviews with activists and Libyan youth from different parts of the country. The interviews were conducted either in-person or via Zoom video conference between 22/09/2020 and 10/10/2020. We conducted 11 focus groups with a total of around 80 participants, also via Zoom video conference. For both the interviews and the focus groups, we made sure that our participants represent the actual distribution in terms of gender. Notes from the interviews and focus groups were collected, processed, and used to derive recommendations. In total, approximately 1,580 number of people participated in this consultation project. These people come from more than 40 cities across the country; some were Libyan youth residing in other countries.

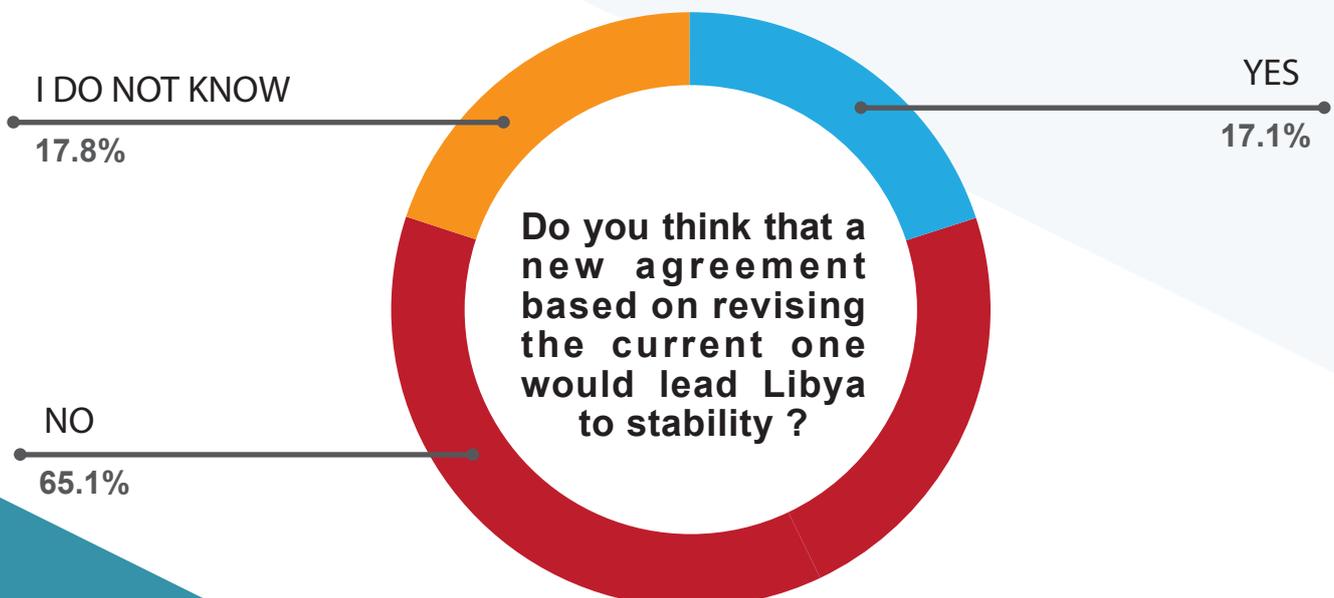
Tripoli, Benghazi, Musrata, Al-Bayda, Zultan, Agelat, Kufra, Al-Khums, Surman, Al-Qatroun, Tarhouna, Az-zawiyah, Darnah, Janzour, Sabratha, Zintan, Al-Marj, Al-Jmail, Zletan, Jalo, Bani Walid, Murzuq, Sirt, Yafren, Gasir Ben-Ghasher, Tajoura, Gheryan, Tobruq, Al-Brega, Qaser Khiar, Ajdabya, Weddan, Sabha, Kabou, Shahat, Mselata, Gara-Bouli, Hun, Juffrah, Zwara.



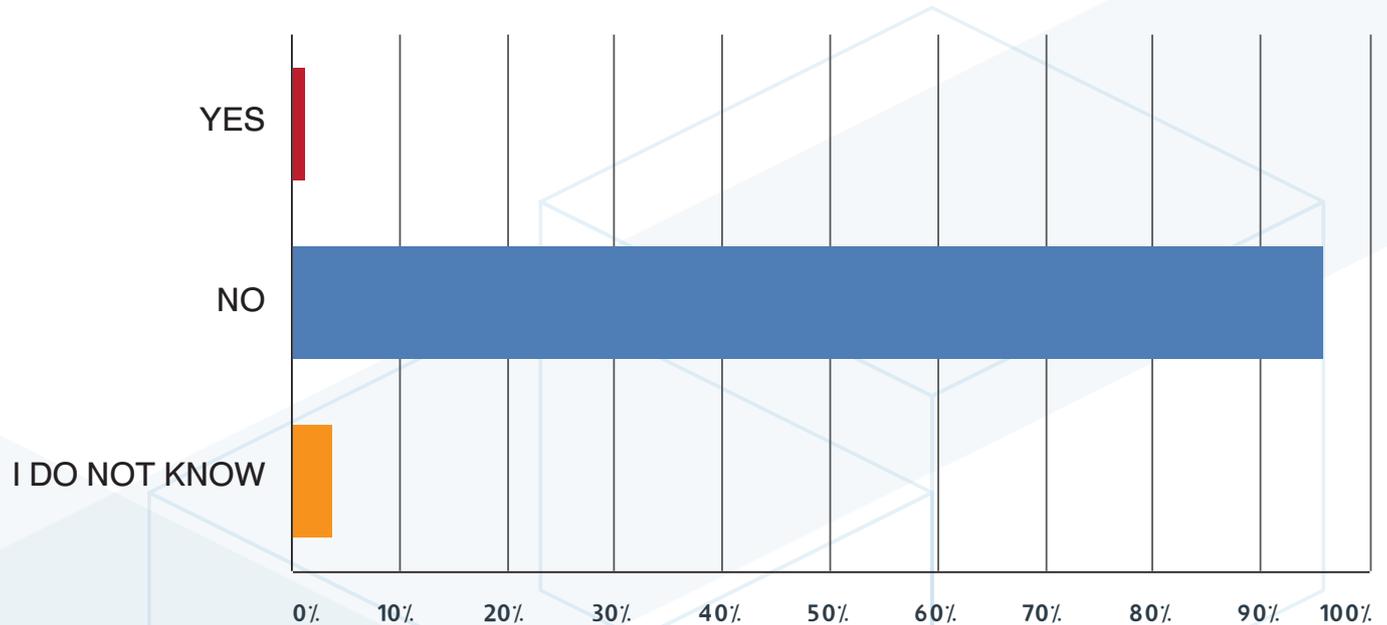
◆ The Political Landscape from a youth perspective

o The Political Agreement

Libya today is drowning in a sea of corruption; political, financial, and administrative corruption have caused the living conditions to deteriorate for most Libyans. People are often seen standing in long lines at the banks to withdraw the allowed small amounts of money or at government agencies to issue a passport or process a document. Political actors and armed groups have been engaging in endless cycles of violence and shady deals that only prolong the suffering of Libyans. It is, therefore, no surprise that almost five years after the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in December 2015, both the agreement itself and the political bodies it created and Legitimized have failed to gain the trust of the public. The Libyan youth, as per the results obtained by this report, are growing dissatisfied with the current governing bodies. An overwhelming majority of respondents holds the belief that the Agreement failed (79 percent) and that the current bodies - the Presidential Council, the House of Representatives, and the High Council of State - are no longer legitimate representatives of the Libyan people (90 percent). It is evident, therefore, that the distrust and frustration among Libyan youth are reaching unprecedented levels. This frustration turns into skepticism toward the prospects of any new agreement that is based on amendments and revisions to the 2015 LPA.



Do you believe that the institutions derived from the political agreement (Presidential Council, High State Council, House of Representatives) have been successful in conducting their duties?



The Way Forward:

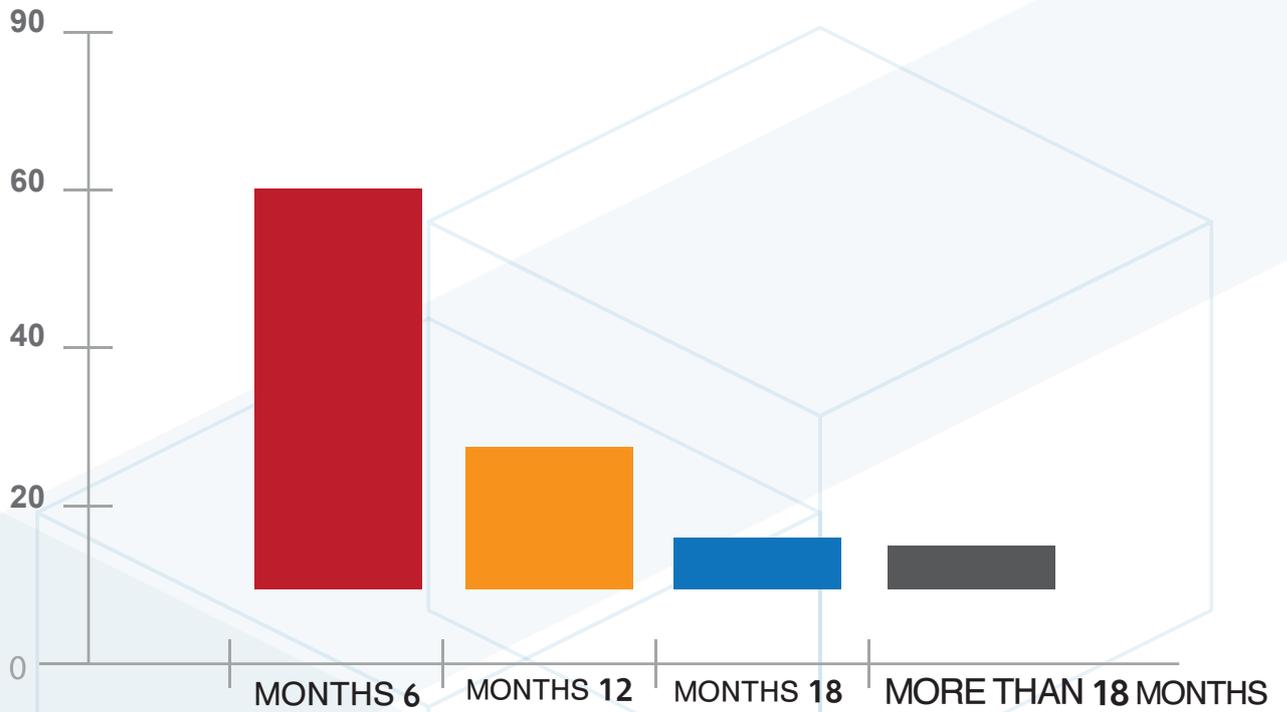
- The Libyan youth insist that any new agreement must avoid recycling the same bodies that previously failed to serve the public. The new agreement must ensure the dissolving of all existing political bodies - the PC, HoR, and HCS - because they have proved incompetent and incapable of putting the public's interest before their own.
- For the new agreement to succeed, it needs to be supported and endorsed by the Libyan people and by all political actors. "Rushing an agreement that is not endorsed is not acceptable," as one participant articulates.
- Transparency and openness are key to success. The political dialogue process must be transparent and avoid the secrecy often associated with shady deals. The transparency is all the more important as the public are extremely skeptical and distrustful of the political elite. One way to achieve this goal is by broadcasting the dialogue sessions for the public to understand the positions and decisions of the participants.

- Accountability is a critical tool that would ensure the successful implementation of the agreement. There must be a mechanism put in place for the purpose of monitoring the work of the various political entities resulting from the agreement. The Libyan youth recognize the need for an independent, perhaps external, actor to conduct the monitoring and evaluation process. Violations of the agreement must be reported, and those who commit the violations must be held accountable.
- The new political agreement must present a clear, concise roadmap that includes the state's priorities and outlines the responsibilities of each branch of government during the new phase of transition.

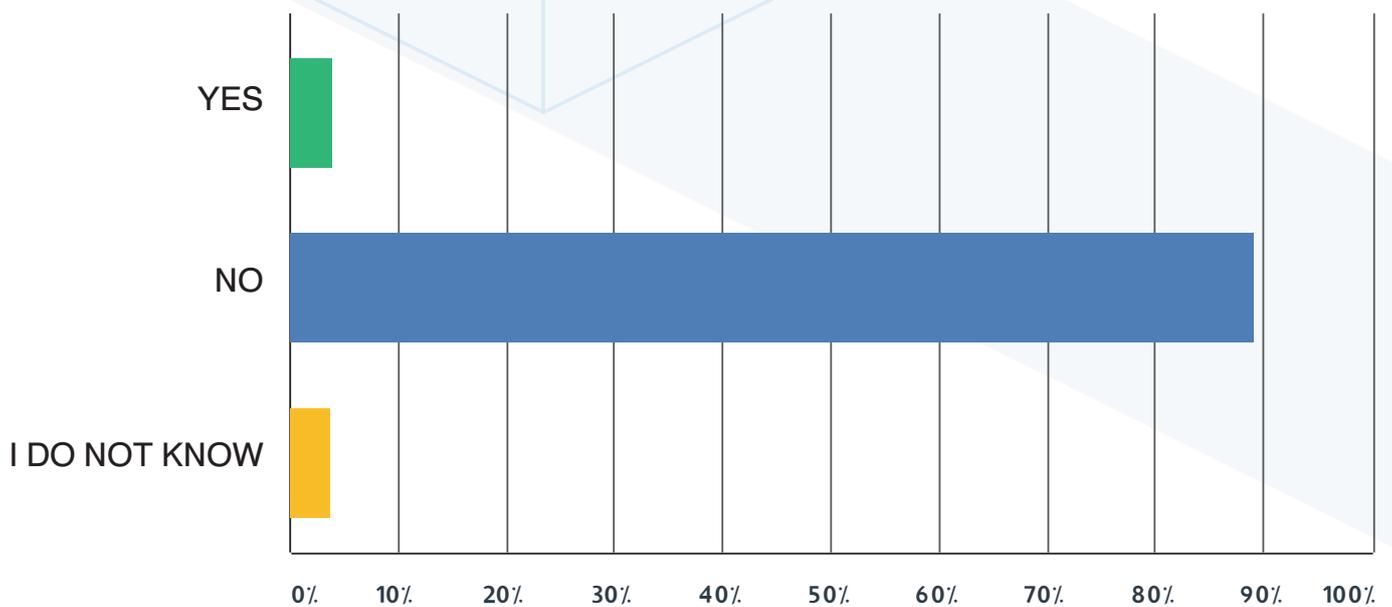
o **The Governance Structure**

The current governance structure is the outcome of the 2015 agreement. It is apparent that the structure is malfunctioning and ineffective. The various governing entities failed to cooperate and keep each other in check. Instead, each body attempted to overrule the other bodies. The lack of clarity in the agreement and its application contributed to the confusing overlap of powers between the Presidential Council, the government, the HoR, and the HCS. In addition, these bodies, through personal and ideological ties, have deployed the independent regulating bodies, such as the Central Bank and the Audit Bureau, as tools of political maneuvers. Libyan youth are eager to see an end to the cycle of “transitional periods” the country continues to find itself in. They want to avoid the repetition of the 2015 agreement scenario in which the Government of National Accord remained in power years more than its agreed-on term, similar to the legislative bodies. Even with a new political agreement, the youth largely prefer a short timeframe, within a year, for the temporary arrangement to end.

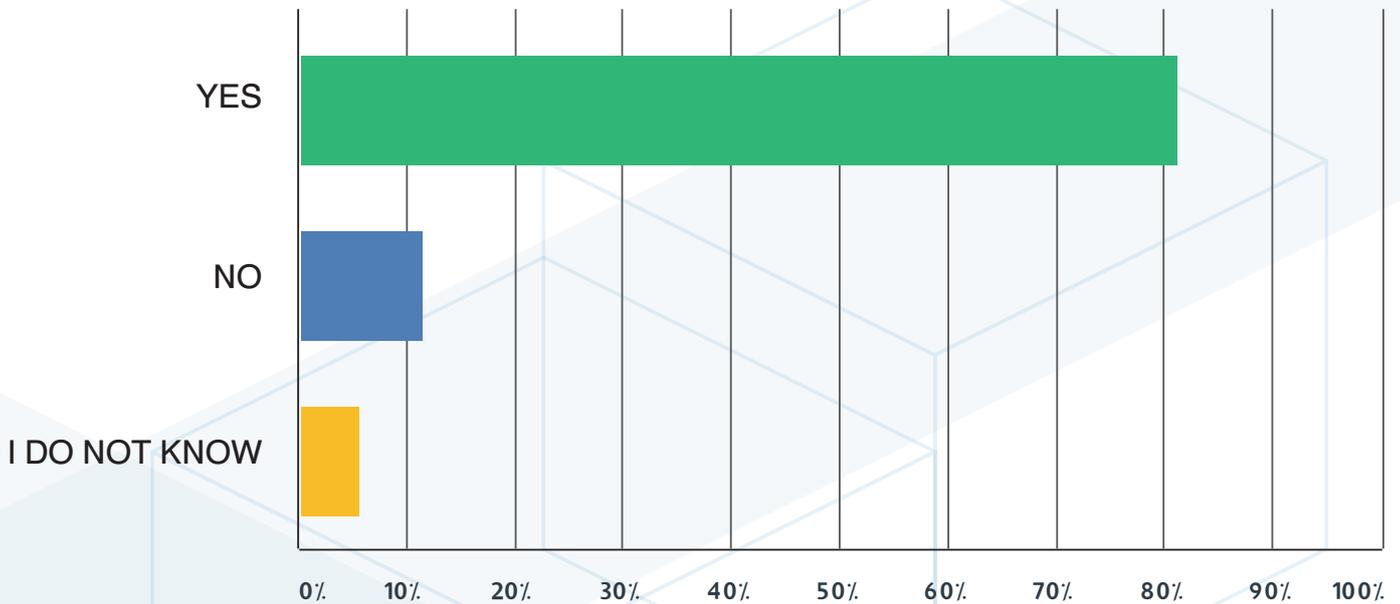
How long the new political agreement last ?



Are the existing bodies' legitimate representatives of the Libyan people?



Do you believe that all existing bodies (PC, HoR, HSC) need to be dissolved and a completely new political agreement (road map) needs to be instated?



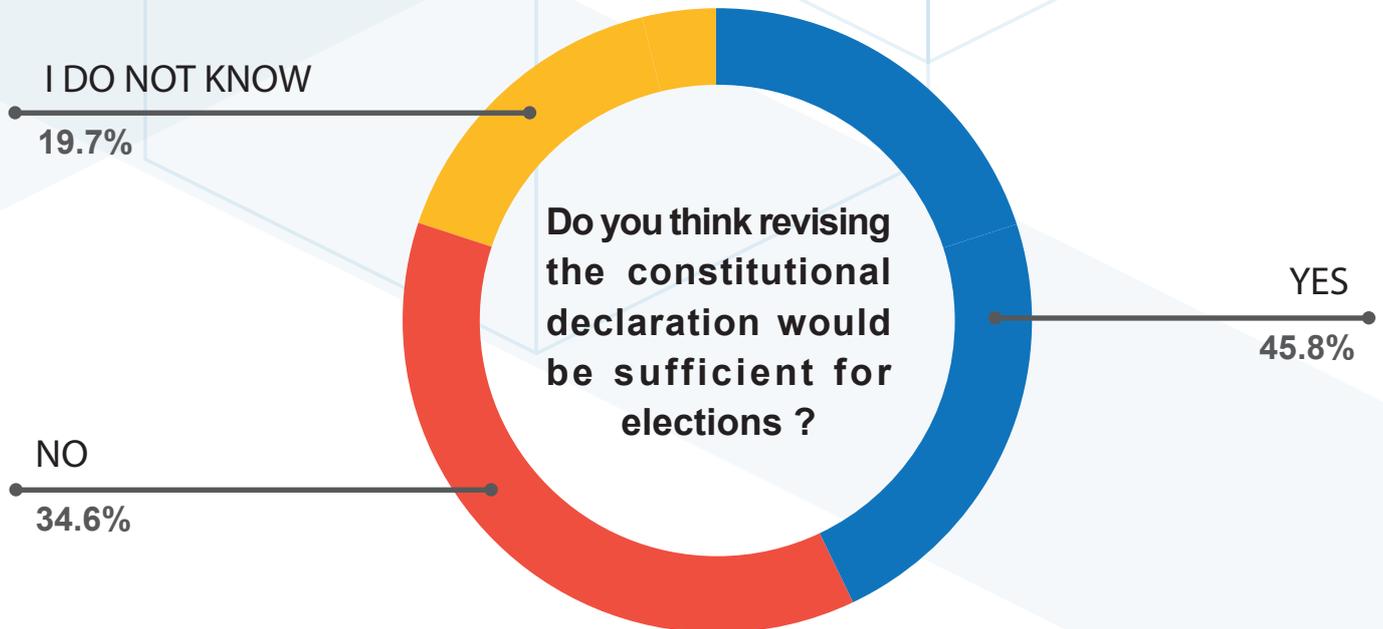
The Way Forward:

- The new government must focus on providing basic services to the public. “Services are not a political tool,” so they should be separated from the political arena.
- The duration of the new government should be based on the tasks and objectives it is required to achieve. Monitoring and evaluation plays an important role in checking the government performance. A mechanism to act if the government fails to achieve its objectives must be put in place.
- There is a need for a legislative body to keep the executive in check. However, this body needs to be restructured either by merging the two current bodies or by naming the national dialogue committee as the sole legislative entity. This entity must have limited legislative powers focused mainly on oversight and legislating for timely issues like elections and referendums.

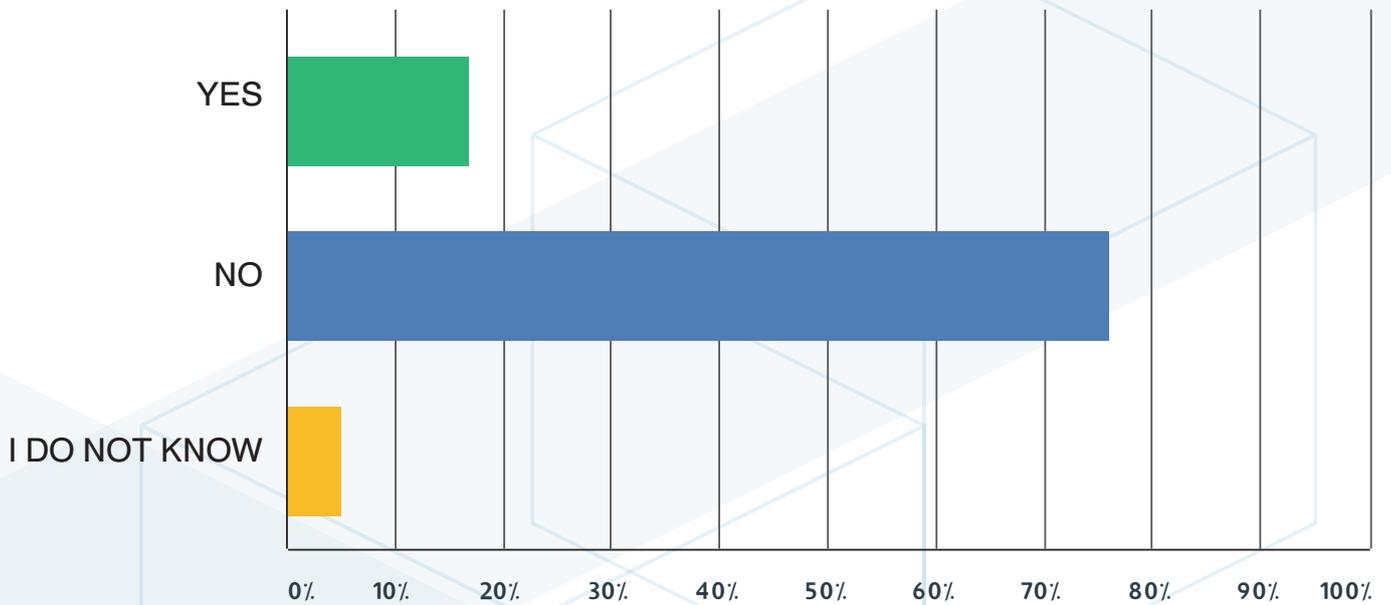
- The independent and sovereign institutions need to be included in the political dialogue process. These institutions should be restructured to ensure inclusivity. Their performance must be monitored with a mechanism to replace leadership if it fails to achieve objectives. Any appointment to such positions must be based mainly on merit.
- Decentralization is key. The government should revisit the different local government legislations and empower municipalities by delegating responsibilities and setting up revenue sources.
- The new government should put fighting corruption on its top priority list. Digitalization and transparency are important for an efficient and effective governance. One way to achieve this is by issuing a law that grants access to information for the public.

o Constitution

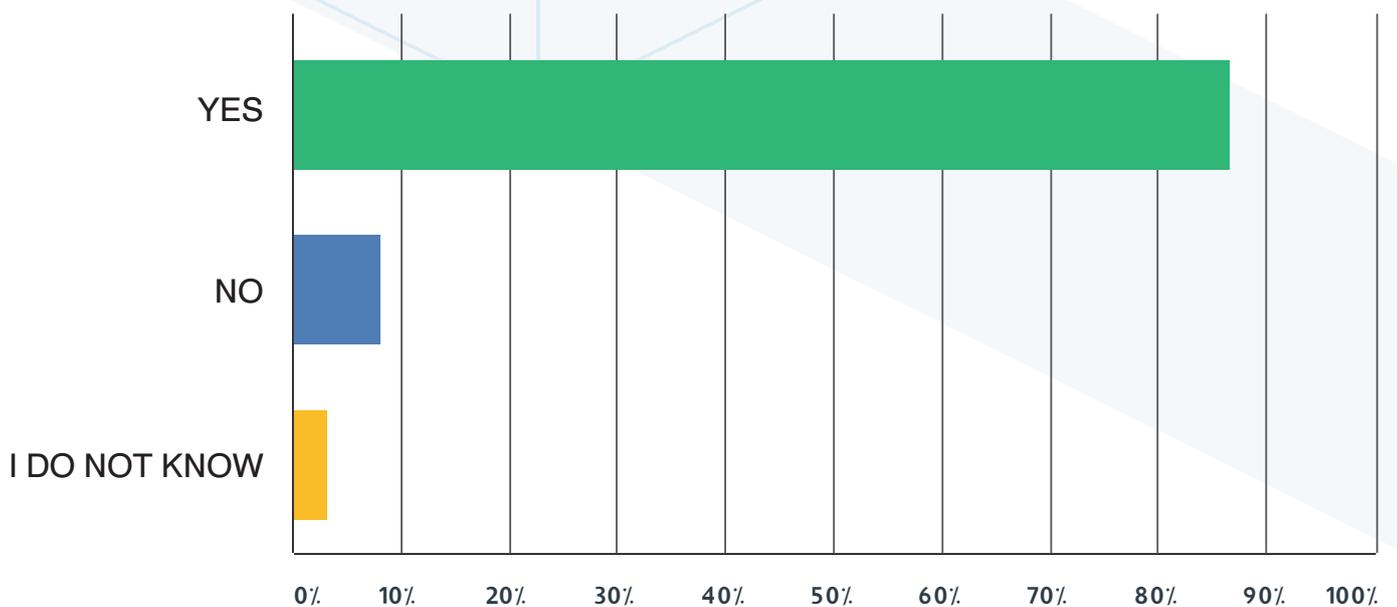
The Libyan youth recognize the importance of the constitution for the future of the country. More than three fourths of respondents say that the constitution must be a part of any political agreement. An overwhelming majority want to see a referendum on the constitution (89 percent) within a year (95 percent). However, only 29 percent of respondents indicate they are aware that the Constitution Drafting Committee submitted its final draft of the new constitution. The youth express their optimism in this matter; 65 percent believe that a new constitution would contribute to ending the ongoing crisis in the country. The majority of respondents oppose the holding of any general elections without a constitutional basis. Whether the current Constitutional Declaration is a sufficient basis is, however, a matter of disagreements.



Would general elections (presidential & parliamentary) without a constitutional basis be acceptable?



Do you believe that the Constitution should be put-out to the public for referendum?



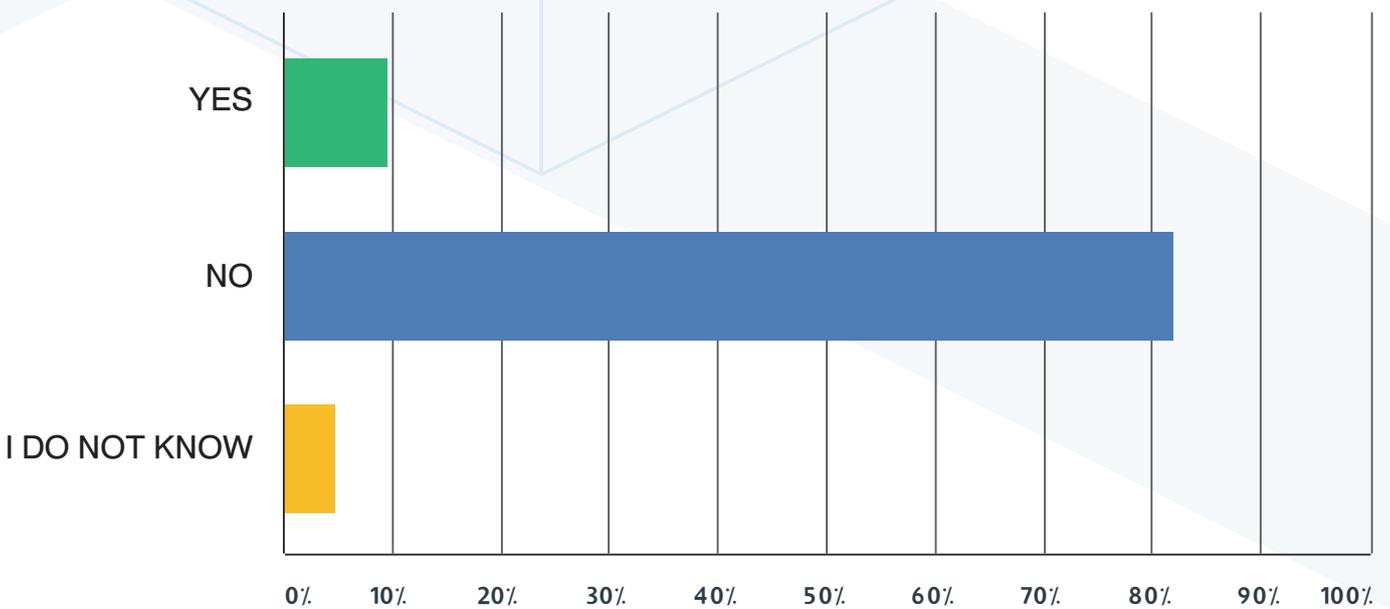
The Way Forward:

- Any new political settlement must be reached within the framework of the Constitutional Declaration.
- The current draft of the constitution needs to be revisited and revised to address the objections presented by minorities and others. There is a need for a national consultation to understand the grievances of local communities and to integrate them in the new constitution.
- The government must prepare for a national referendum on the constitution. Preparations need to feature campaigns to raise awareness and programs of civic education. These efforts must aim to ensure public buy-in to reduce conflict and disagreements over the constitution.
- General elections without a constitutional basis are unacceptable.

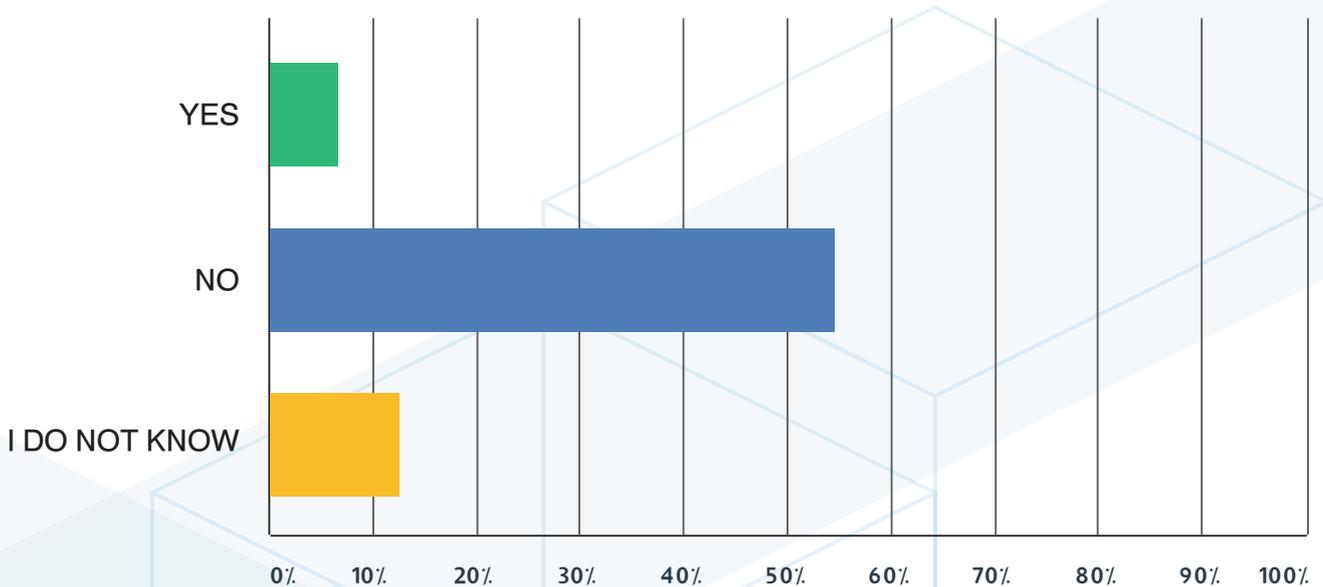
o Security and Rule of Law

The security question remains one of the most complicated issues facing the country today. With various armed groups spread across the country, implementing security measures are rendered nearly impossible. Several armed groups either protect or threaten officials to force them to act in the interest of the armed group itself. They are engaging in organized crime and illegal trade, including trafficking. The respondents view the currently-existing security forces negatively. The majority think that these forces do not support a democratic transition (85 percent) and cannot contribute to building a democratic state (78 percent). The youth attribute that to the forces' loyalty to their own leaders, regions, and interests instead of the country. These groups also benefit from the chaos and instability; therefore, it is expected that they seek to maintain the current status.

With regards to the security situation; are the current security apparatus fulfill their duties of enforcing law and order and protecting Libya's sovereignty?



Are the existing security formations, supporting the democratic transition of Libya?

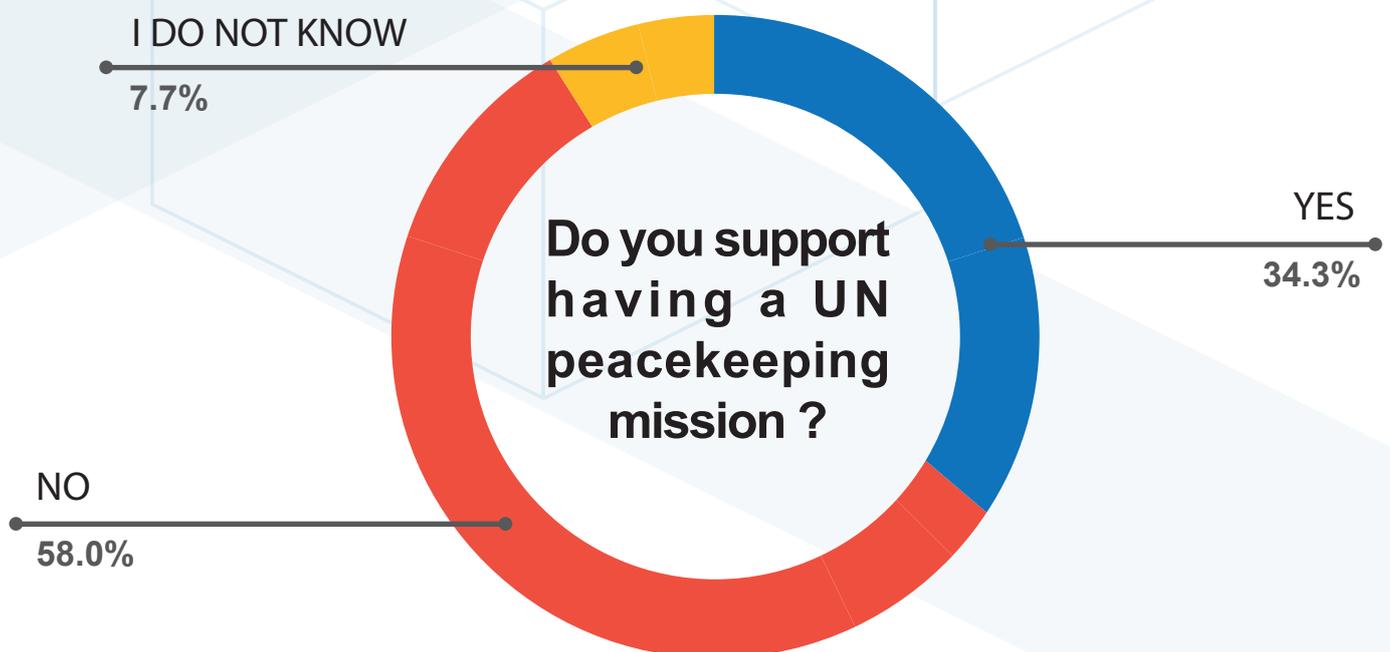


The Way Forward:

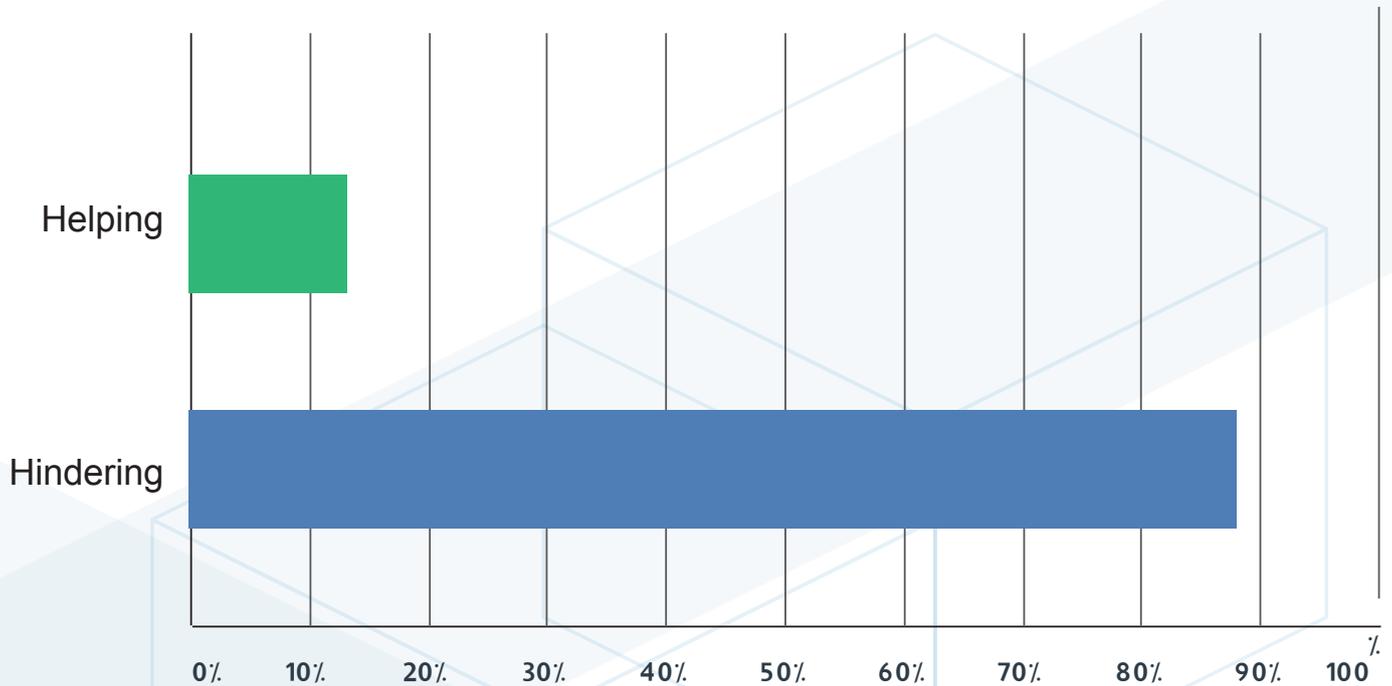
- The first step must be to reunite the divided security forces, let that be the military, police, or other security agencies, through a mechanism that prevents any one side from monopolizing the leadership of these forces.
- These forces must not be allowed to engage in any political activities. They must also be re-trained to improve their efficiency, refocus their loyalty and understand their role.
- Armed groups that do not dissolve voluntarily or join the state agencies must be confronted and dismantled.
- The state must fight corruption within the security forces. Those who have committed crimes must be isolated and punished.

o Foreign Intervention

There is a consensus among survey respondents that foreign interventions are worsening the situation in Libya as many regional and global powers continue to fuel the conflict through the funneling of funds, weaponry, and equipment to the rivals. An overwhelming majority (88 percent) say that such interventions present obstacles for Libyans in the current transitional period. Therefore, most respondents express their opposition to any foreign military intervention. Even the idea of a UN peace-keeping mission does not appeal to young Libyans.



Do you believe that the foreign intervention into Libyan domestic affairs is helping or hindering Libya's transition?

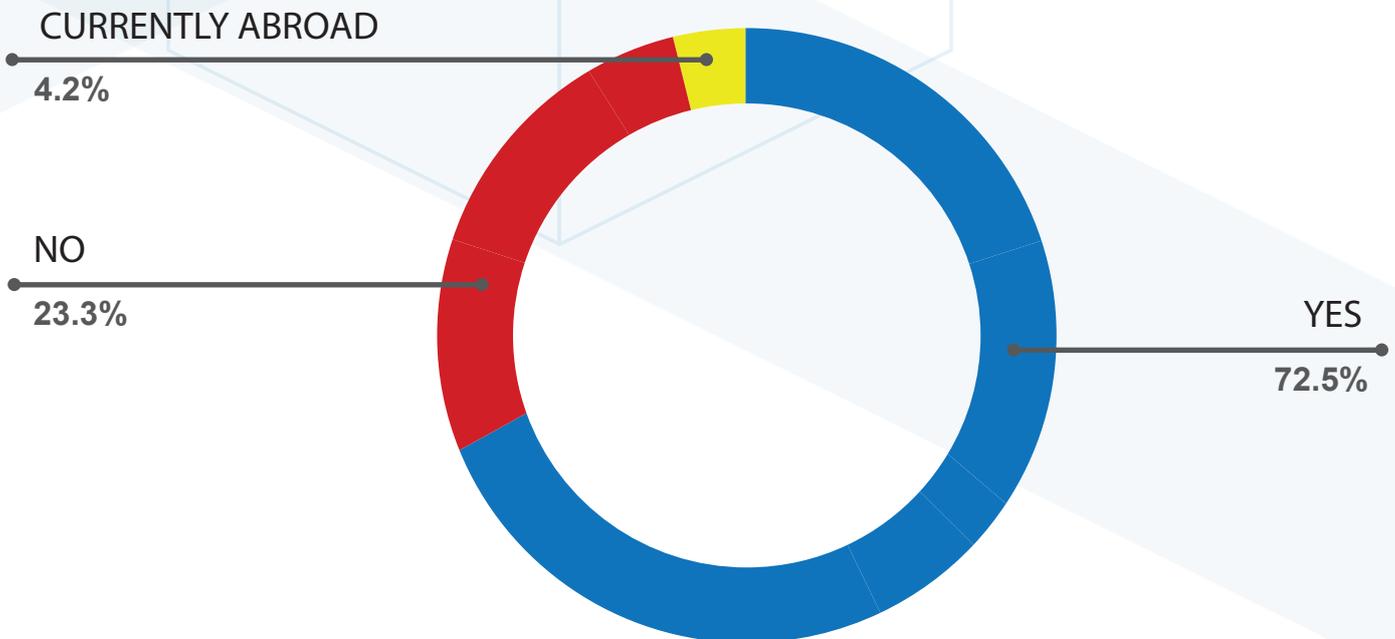


The Way Forward:

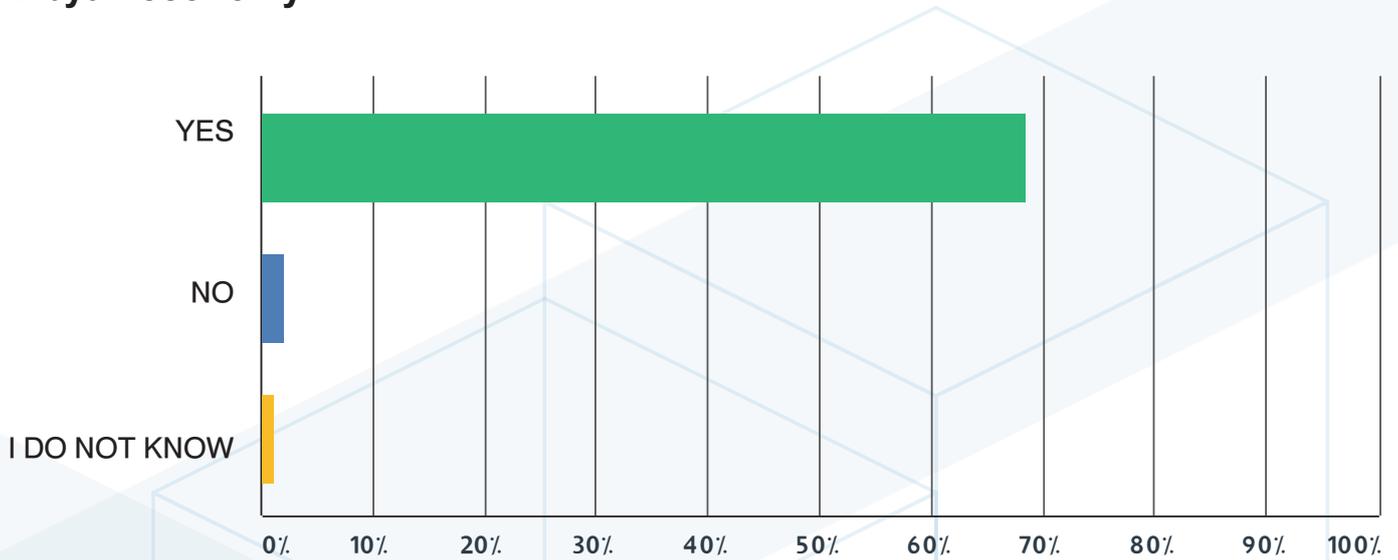
- There is a clear agreement among Libyans that foreign interventions are harmful. Therefore, the government must ensure that all foreign fighters are leaving the country as soon as possible. The security track and the 55+ talks are beginning this process; but it must be completed in order to achieve stability.
- There is a need for a national code of conduct that prevents the different actors from hiring and accepting foreign fighters and mercenaries to fight on Libyan soil.
- The national code of conduct needs to ensure that the various actors do not seek funding or support from foreign governments in waging wars or attacks on fellow citizens.

o Socio-economic Situation

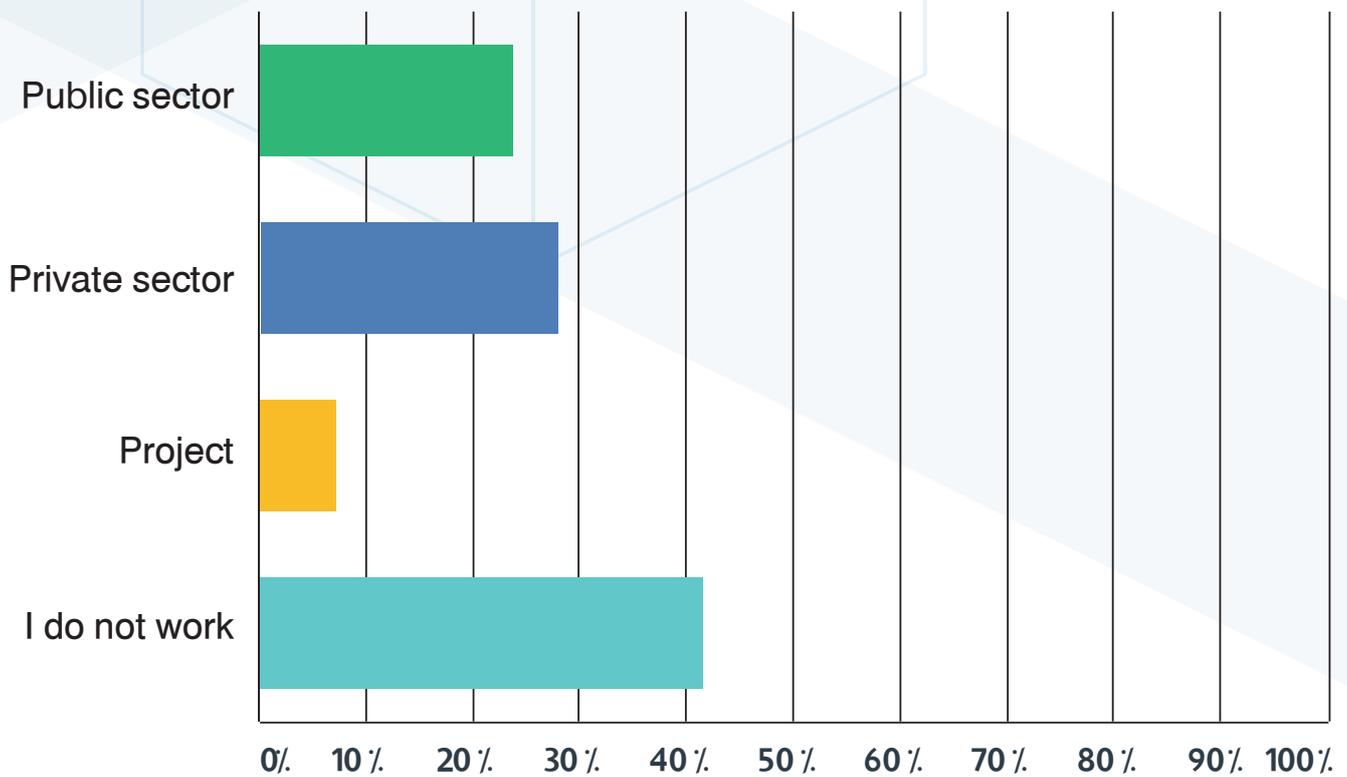
Most participants emphasize the importance of reaching an agreement that ensures an equitable distribution of wealth as a prerequisite for sustainable stability in the country. Some participants from the South and the East state clearly that they perceive themselves as less fortunate and disadvantaged when it comes to economic opportunities. There seems to be a consensus that Libyans do not have an equal access to opportunities in general (93 percent). In addition, 91 percent of respondents say that they face great challenges in terms of movement within the country because of identity-based detention and insecurity generally. It is quite saddening, though understandable, that the majority expressed that they considered or are currently considering immigrating from the country.



Do you think that not reaching a political settlement will have an impact the Libyan economy?



Do you have a stable Job?



The Way Forward:

- Economically, the state must assume its responsibility in developing the necessary financial tools for the youth to launch economic projects in a safe environment by ensuring protection for small-scale projects. One way to do this is by standardizing the exchange rates, eliminating tax restrictions on such projects, and easing the process of obtaining loans for young people.
- The state needs to support the establishment of business incubators to provide technical support and training for young entrepreneurs.
- There is an imminent need for a comprehensive community-wide dialogue between the various actors involved in the conflict. A process of national reconciliation and the implementation of transitional justice are a must.
- The government must focus on eliminating security threats against civilians, especially gangs and militias that engage in identity-based kidnappings and harassment.

Conclusion

Our consultation shows that the Libyan youth are becoming more frustrated than ever with the current situation in the country. Distrust in state institutions, especially those that emerged from the 2015 Skhirat Agreement, is growing. These results are consistent with previous studies, including a larger survey in Libya conducted by the Arab Barometer project in 2019. Despite the fact that the participants in this consultation come from different backgrounds and different parts of the country, there seems to be a general consensus on several key issues. Participants agree on the assessment that the current agreement failed to lay a firm basis for a smooth political transition, and that there needs to be fundamental changes within the current governance structure, that draws out clear and concise duties for each branch of government, with a firm mechanism of monitoring and accountability, during the next phase of transition. Young people have also clearly stated that the current political actors are not legitimate representatives of the will of Libyan people, therefore, are not mandated to determine Libya's destiny, any agreement must ultimately aim to achieve a general election that is based within a strong constitutional framework, hence, a permanent democratic state.

Therefore, youth emphasize the importance of utilizing the upcoming period to building a solid constitutional framework to govern the political game in the country and initiate a national reconciliation process. Young Libyans strongly believe that the duration of the new settlement must have a strict time frame, and a clause that allows for the removal of underperforming public officials. They also stressed that the role of the state throughout the duration of the settlement must only focus on the key issues of providing basic services, fighting corruption, national reconciliation, the constitution, a general election, and helping the youth economically.

Recommendations

Throughout the report we have suggested numerous recommendation that young Libyans believe would ease the poor living conditions, and contribute to ending the ongoing conflict and political turmoil, in an effort to consolidate our recommendations we have listed several key recommendations for both; decision makers and the wider Libyan public.

o **Recommendations to decision-makers:**

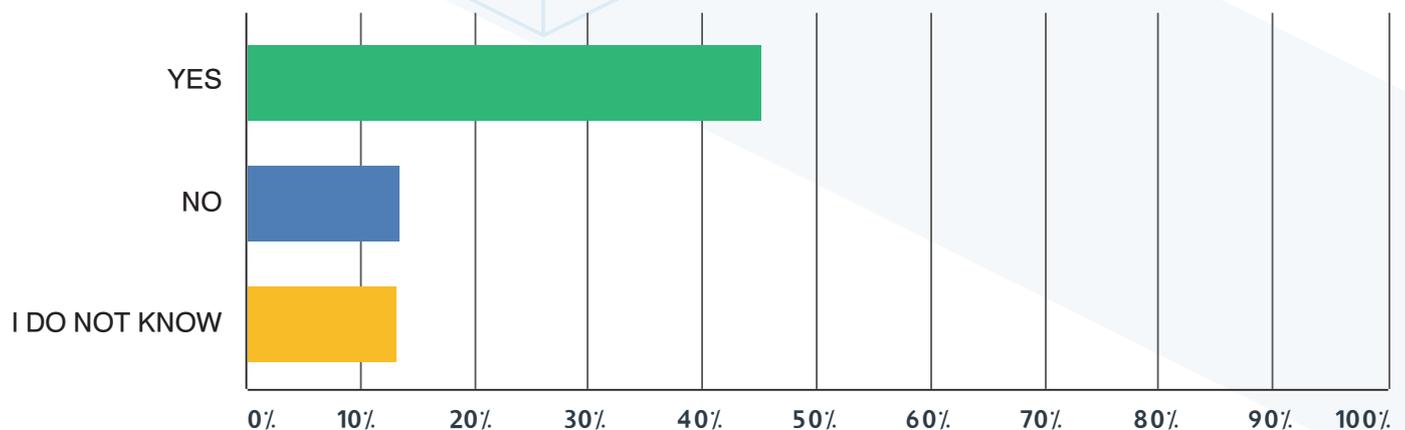
- Any new agreement must bring an end to the ill-functioning political bodies that led the country to its current state of division and fragmentation.
- General elections must not happen without a solid constitutional basis. Therefore, there should be a referendum on the constitution within a year at most.
- The new government's mandate must focus on specific issues related to the current priorities for ending the transition, (basic services, fighting corruption, national reconciliation, the constitution, a general election)
- The government needs to work towards building a decentralized state by empowering local governments. All state institutions must be monitored and held accountable if they fail to serve the Libyan people.
- As part of the settlement, a stringent independent monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanism needs to be incorporated within the agreement, violations and underperformance needs to be managed and dealt with swiftly and decisively.

- An independent commission needs to be created, to combat all forms of corruption, (financial, administrative, etc.), and reassess the internal governance of state institutions and organizations.
- The new government should unite and restructure the security forces. These forces need to be filtered and trained both physically and mentally to put the interest of the general public before their own, their leaders, or their regions' interests.
- All warring factions must end the presence of mercenaries and foreign fighters in Libya. Factions need to refrain from engaging in proxy wars that bring nothing but destruction to the country.
- An internationally supported National Reconciliation initiative must be launched and adopted by all parties to address grievances, and achieve lasting peace.
- The new government needs to create an inviting, welcoming environment for young people to launch economic projects and engage in entrepreneurship.

o **Recommendation for wider society**

- Libyans must insist on having their voices heard in regards to the constitution. Public figures and civil society organizations need to educate the public on the importance of the constitution and to explain its content in preparation for a referendum.
- The public needs to hold the government accountable for its actions, and underperformance.
- Civic engagement needs to increase significantly, to ensure better representation, and the voices of Independent young Libyans is heard at all levels of government.
- The Libyan people are required to engage in a national conversation to address grievances and all the suffering they went through in recent years. A process of national reconciliation must take place at the, national, regional, local and community levels to ensure success.

Would you enroll in a body, that represents Youth, for example a “national youth Council”, if it exists?



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