



PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

A Report Card on Four Essential Services in the City of Colombo

SOCIAL INDICATOR - CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

This report was prepared with funds provided by:

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) under the Governance and Institutional Strengthening Project, (GISP) Sri Lanka.

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INTRODUCTION

With a resident population of about 640 000 and countless other people jostling for space to live, work and commute in and out of its city limits, it is not an easy task to provide essential services such as healthcare, education and transport to the citizens of Colombo. Therefore, not only are providers of essential services in Colombo responsible for ensuring adequate services for all its citizens, but also for maintaining the quality and efficiency of these services.

While the State, which is duty bound to provide its citizens with essential services, is the chief service provider in the country, the private sector too has a share in the provision of services such as health, education, transport and recently of solid waste management.

However, despite both the Government and Private sector being involved in the provision of these services, they are often riddled with problems and leave users with few or no exit options. Therefore, the average citizen finds himself accepting services that are often inadequate and falling short in terms of efficiency and quality simply because they cannot afford alternatives. This 'coping syndrome' results in a situation where, there is no feedback on the part of service users and a lack of interest on the part of service providers to improve service delivery.

While this is far from the ideal situation, there is no proper mechanism either, at present, that would facilitate citizens to take up their grievances or for service providers to receive user feedback. And though the media has regularly featured citizens' experiences with various essential services, people have not been able to lobby independently and in an organised manner for better services through citizen groups or public protests.

Therefore in the absence of organised citizen action or service provider assessments, it is vital that a device be in place for service providers to receive feedback from those who use their services.

A Report Card is one such device. It is a survey methodology that aims to capture citizen feedback on the quality of public services experienced by them. It can be used to highlight problems or positive experiences faced by people and thereby measure their satisfaction with public services. While citizen groups and civil society organisations can use Report Cards to lobby for the quality and adequacy of public services, Report Cards can be equally useful to service providers. From a service provider's point of view, a Report Card is useful as part of self-assessment as it would capture the results of their good work or bring out any shortcomings.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) was formed in the firm belief that there is an urgent need to strengthen institution- and capacity-building for good governance in Sri Lanka and that non-partisan civil society groups have an important and constructive contribution to make to this process.

The primary role envisaged for the Centre in the field of public policy is a pro-active and interventionary one, aimed at the dissemination and advocacy of policy alternatives for non-violent conflict resolution and democratic governance.

Accordingly, the work of the Centre involves a major research component through which the policy alternatives advocated are identified and developed.

Thus, as part of its role in citizen advocacy, the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) initiated its 'Report Card' on four essential services used by citizens living within the limits of the Colombo Municipality in June 2003. By asking those who live in the city about their actual experiences with the Health, Public Utilities, Education and Transport sectors, CPA seeks to highlight citizens' experiences with the provision of these services. This information could then be used to lobby for better services.

While financial assistance for the survey was provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through the Governance and Institutional Strengthening Project (GISP) of the University of Ottawa, the Report Cards team received its initial training from the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) in Bangalore, India.

METHODOLOGY

The study is carried out using a structured questionnaire, administered through face-to-face interviews amongst a sample of 611 respondents. It covered all five electorates of the Colombo Municipality - Borella, Colombo North, Colombo Central, Colombo West and Colombo East and was conducted from the 14th to the 23rd of June 2003.

The questionnaire was designed in several stages. Members of the Report Card team of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) received their initial training at the hands of the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) one of the pioneering organisations in Report Card methodology based in Bangalore, India. Following this training, an Advisory Committee comprising of leading members of the Government and Civil Society were invited to help initiate Report Cards in Sri Lanka. The members of the Advisory Committee and PAC were then consulted with regard to the development of the questionnaire.

In addition to consulting with members of the Advisory Committee, several Focus Group Discussions (FGD's) were also held with citizens to find out their experiences in their day to day interactions with various service providers. Subsequently, a draft questionnaire was developed and pre-tested before it was finalised for the actual survey.

The 2001 General Election voter list was used as a sample frame and samples were allocated to each of the five electorates according to the proportions of the populations in them. Within each electorate, respondents were chosen randomly using this voter list, thereby giving each citizen of Colombo an equal opportunity to be selected.

Several weeks prior to the start of the fieldwork, letters were sent out to respondents in order to create awareness amongst them of the nature and objectives of the survey.

Seventeen field enumerators, with a minimum Advanced Level qualification, were employed to conduct the interviews. The enumerators were given an intensive field briefing on how to administer the questionnaire. They were also briefed on issues of concern to people and given the names and addresses of the respondents who were chosen randomly from the voter list. If they failed to conduct an interview with the chosen respondent, the enumerators were advised to make at least three attempts to speak with the respondent before choosing an alternative from the list of alternatives given to him/her.

In order to enhance the quality of the fieldwork, two pre-tests were carried out and senior SI staff accompanied the enumerators as they administered the questionnaire.

The findings of this survey are subject to a 4% margin of error.



HEALTH

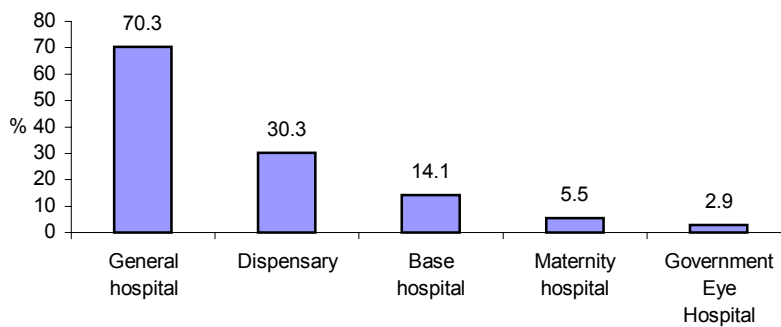
"For the year 2002, the government contributed 48% of the total health expenditure, provisionally estimated at Rs. 24, 946 million. Also in 2002, the total number of government hospitals increased by 20 to 605 and private hospitals by 15 to 175 respectively..."

-Annual Report 2002 – Central Bank of Sri Lanka

GOVERNMENT HEALTH SECTOR

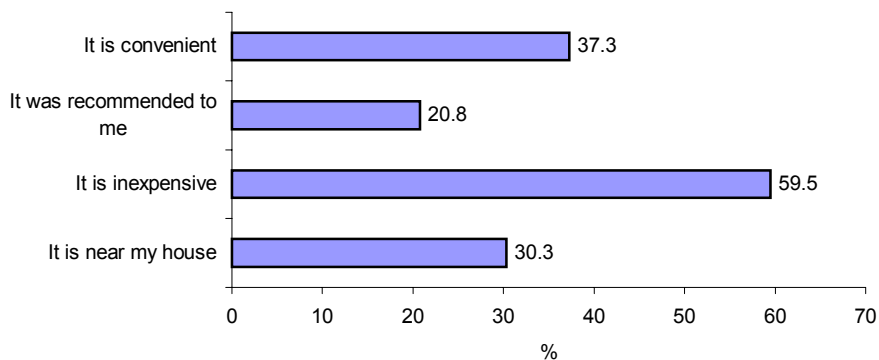
In June 2003, 56.8% of the people living within the Colombo Municipality state that they visited a Government medical institute/centre over the previous six months to obtain treatment for themselves or a member of their family. Of them, a majority (70.3%) had visited a General Hospital, while 30.3% obtained treatment from a Government Dispensary.

If yes, your experiences were with a (Multiple answers possible):



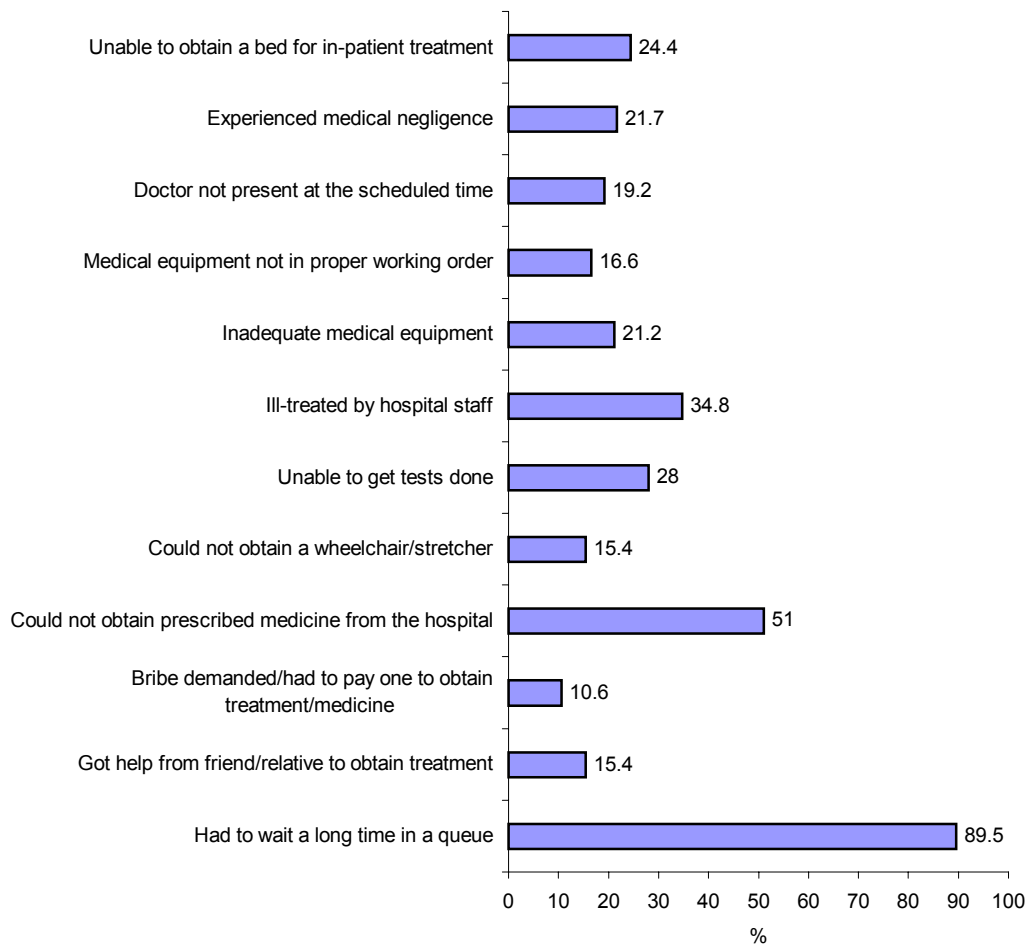
The study reveals that while a majority (59.5%) of Colombo's residents seek treatment at Government medical institutes/centres because it is inexpensive, 37.3% state that it is convenient. 20.8% say they go to Government medical institutes/centres because it is recommended to them.

Why did you seek treatment at the above hospital(s) (Multiple answers possible)?



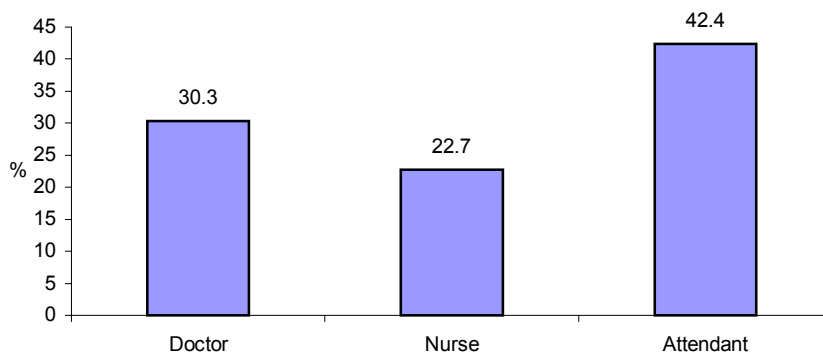
90.5% of Colombo's residents state they encountered some kind of problem at a Government medical institute/centre, with a majority of them (89.5%) having to wait a long time in a queue to obtain treatment or medicine. Of those who had to wait in a queue, 30.2% state they had to wait between half an hour to an hour, while 26.6% had to wait one to two hours. A further 20.5% had to wait between two to three hours and 12.6% had to wait more than 3 hrs.

What type of problem did you encounter? (Multiple answers possible)



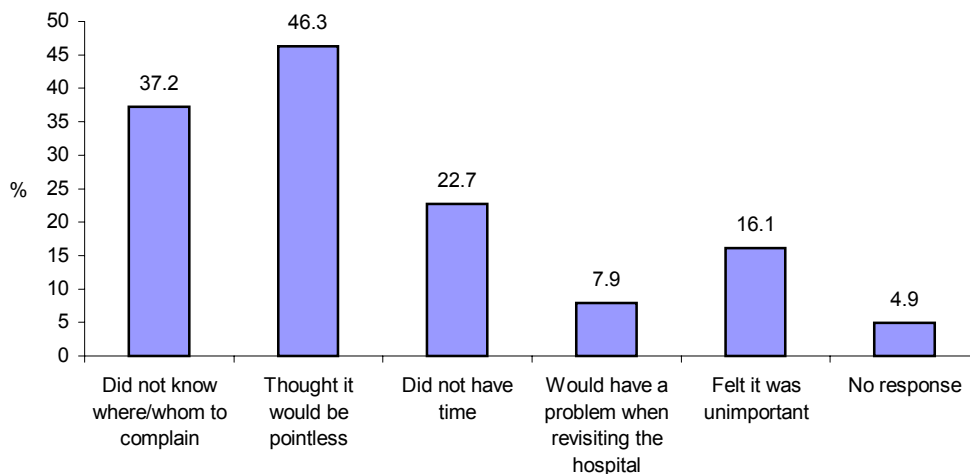
Of those who declare that they were ill-treated (34.8%) at the hospital, a majority (42.4%) say it was at the hands of an Attendant, while 30.3% reveal that they were ill-treated by a Doctor.

**If you were ill-treated at the hospital, by whom was it?
(Multiple answers possible)**



92.5% reveal that they did not make a verbal or written complaint with regard to any problem they faced. Of those who have not complained, a majority (46.3%) thought it would be pointless, while 37.2% say it is because they did not know where or whom to complain to. A further 22.7% did not complain because they did not have time.

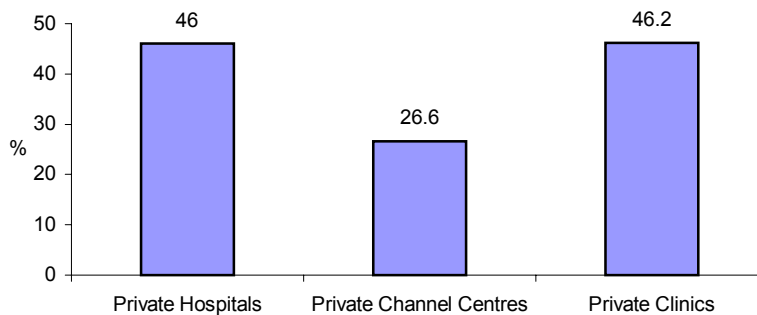
If you did not make a complaint, why was it? (Multiple answers possible)



PRIVATE HEALTH SECTOR

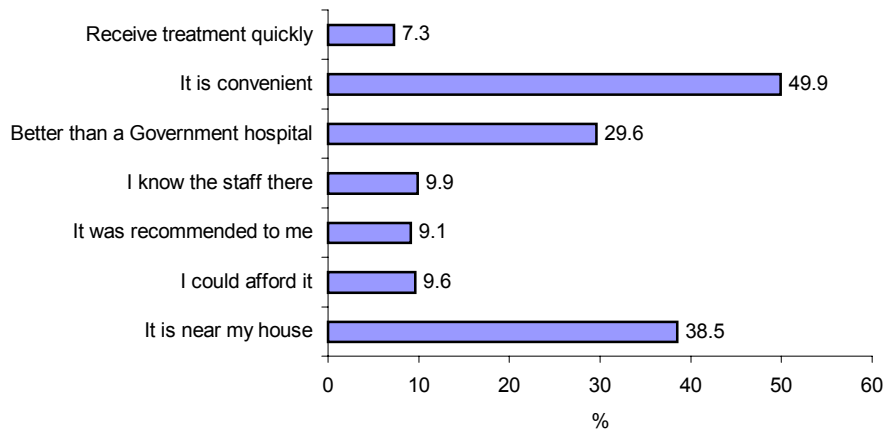
Over the last six months, 65.1% of the residents of Colombo said they had visited a Private medical institute/centre to obtain treatment, with an almost identical number - 46.2% and 46% visiting Private Clinics and Private Hospitals respectively for treatment.

If yes, your experiences were with a (Multiple answers possible):



A majority (49.9%) of those who obtained treatment from Private medical institutes or centres, cite convenience as a reason for seeking treatment from these institutions, while 38.5% say it is because it is near their house. Moreover, 29.6% of the people state that Private medical institutes or centres are better than Government institutions and cite this as a reason to go to them. However, 7.3% of Colombo's citizens declare that they seek treatment from Private medical institutes/ centres because they receive treatment quickly.

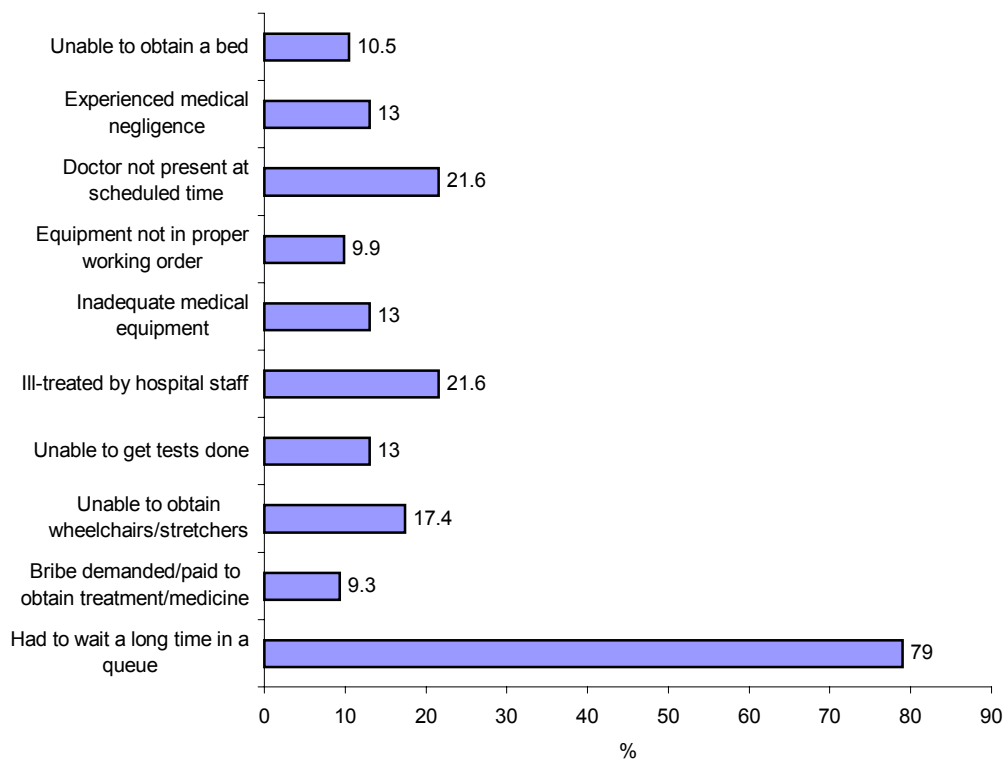
Why did you seek treatment at the above hospital(s) (Multiple answers possible)?



The study reveals that 40.7% of those who obtained treatment at a Private medical institute/centre encountered some kind of problem in their interaction, with a majority (79%) having to wait a long time in a queue. Of those who had to wait in a queue, 52.3% say it was less than half an hour while 33.6% had to wait between half an hour and one hour and 10.2% waiting in a queue from one to two hours.

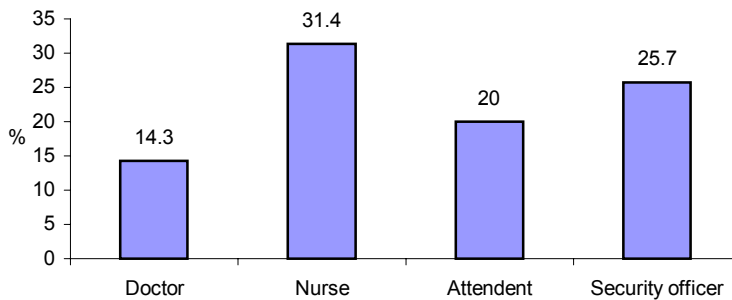
According to 21.6% of the people, the doctor was not present at the scheduled time and they were ill-treated by the hospital staff as well. A further 17.4% declare that they were unable to obtain external aids such as wheelchairs and stretchers.

What type of problem did you encounter? (Multiple answers possible)



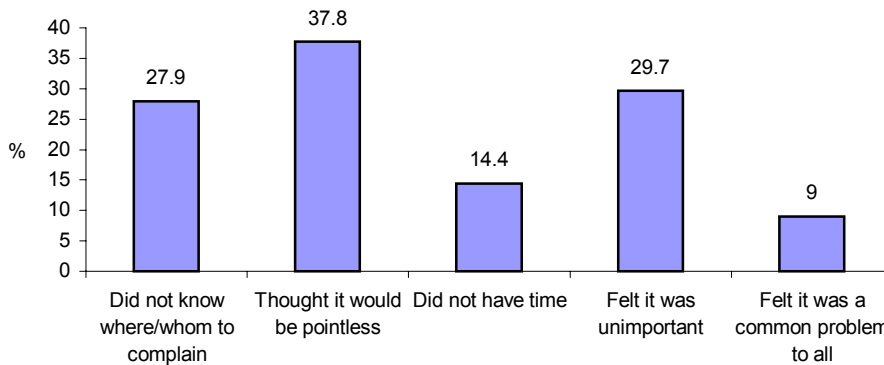
A majority (31.4%) of those who say they were ill-treated at the hospital declare that it was at the hands of a Nurse, while 25.7% say it was a Security Officer. 14.3% say they were ill-treated by a Doctor

If you were ill-treated at the hospital, by whom was it? (Multiple answers possible)



Despite encountering a problem, 92% admit that they did not make a verbal or written complaint. When asked why they did not complain, a majority (37.8%) say that it is because they thought it would be pointless. 29.7% state that they felt it was unimportant, while 27.9% did not know where or whom to complain to. A further 14.4% declared that they did not have time to make a complaint and 9% did not complain as they felt it was a problem common to all.

If you did not make a complaint, why was it? (Multiple answers possible)





PUBLIC UTILITIES

"Colombo has 83, 138 housing units, a road network of 480 km and a sewerage network of 250 kms. The city also generates about 600 tons of solid waste daily. Compared with other local authorities, the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) has a bigger vehicular strength and labour force. In 2002, the CMC's estimated an expenditure of Rs. 506, 878, 000 for solid waste collection alone..."

-Colombo Municipal Budget Report 2002

-<http://www.globenet.org/preceup/pages/ang/>

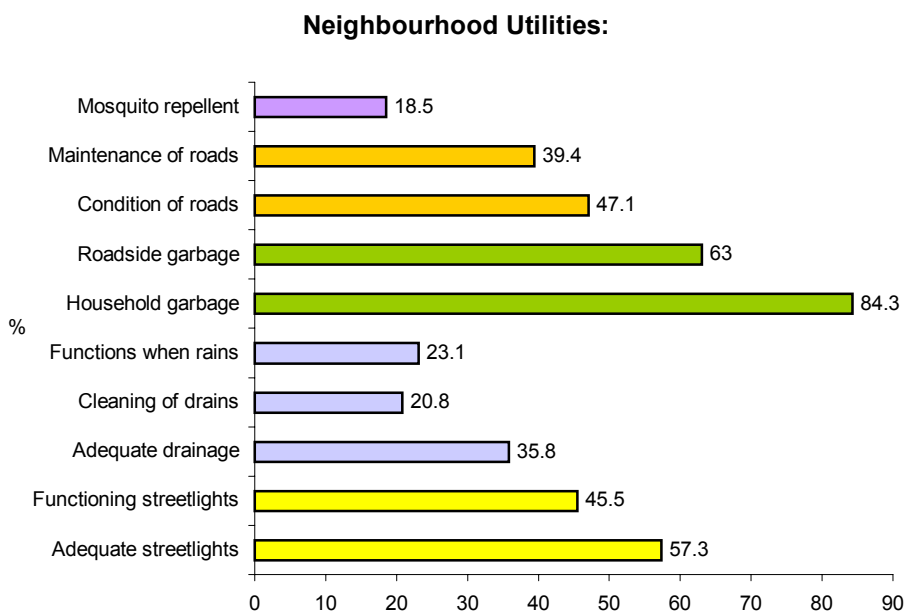
PUBLIC UTILITIES

In June 2003, residents living within the Colombo Municipality were asked about their experiences with some of the utilities in their neighbourhoods. With regard to the clearance of household garbage, an overwhelming majority (84.3%) reveal that it is cleared on a regular basis, while 63% say that garbage on the roadsides in their neighbourhoods are cleared on a regular basis. Though over half of Colombo’s residents (57.3%) state they have adequate streetlights in their neighbourhoods, only 45.5% say that the streetlights in their neighbourhoods function.

The study also asked people about the condition of roads in their neighbourhoods and 47.1% express satisfaction with it while 39.4% say that they are happy with the maintenance of these roads.

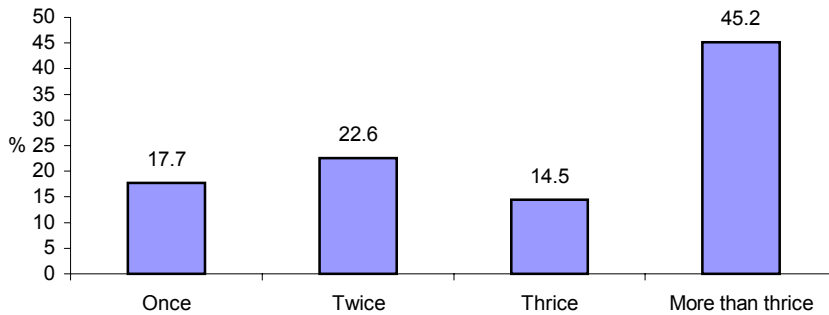
The highest dissatisfaction with utilites was with the spraying of mosquito repellent, with only 18.5% of Colombo residents declaring that their neighbourhoods are sprayed with mosquito repellent on a regular basis.

Satisfaction was low amongst residents of the city with the drainge systems in their neighbourhoods, with only 35.8% indicating that their neighbourhoods have an adequate drainage system. And while 20.8% say that these drains are cleaned regularly, only 23.1% declare that the drains in their neighbourhood function when it rains.



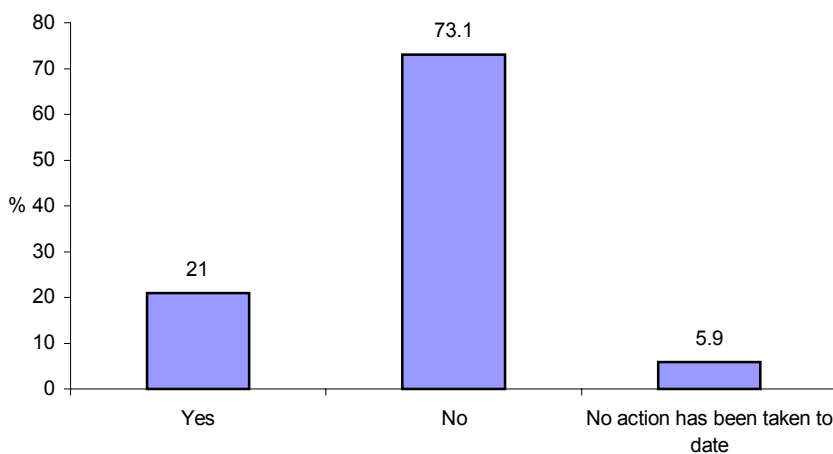
A majority (66.9%) admit that they have not made a complaint with regard to any problem they have with public utilities. Out of those who made a complaint, 57.8% have done so to the Municipal Council at Town Hall, while 29.9% have complained to a Municipal Councillor.

If you complained, state the number of times you had to complain before action was taken:



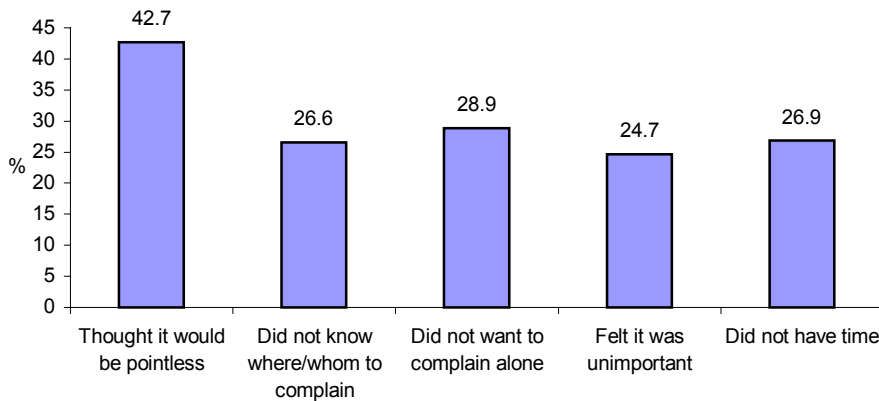
Of those who complained, 45.2% stated that they had to complain more than thrice before any action was taken. When asked whether they were happy with the response to their complaint, 73.1% say they are not, while 21% say they are happy.

Are you happy with the response to your complaint?



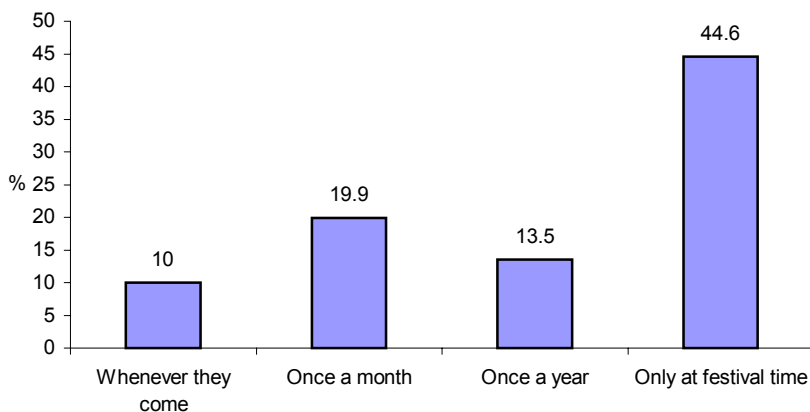
With regard to any shortcomings in Public Utilities in their neighbourhoods, 42.7% of the people did not complain because they thought it would be pointless, while 28.9% say they did not want to complain alone. Not knowing where or whom to complain to proved to be another stumbling block for 26.6% who did not complain.

If you did not complain, why was it?



During the past six months, 41.1% of the residents of Colombo admit to having paid money to those involved in the provision of various Public Utilities to obtain their services. Out of those who have paid, 68.1% say it is voluntary and that they paid it to the relevant employee (86.9%). When asked when they normally pay this money, a majority (44.6%) specifies that they do so only at festival time, while 19.9% say they pay once a month.

When do you normally pay this money?





EDUCATION

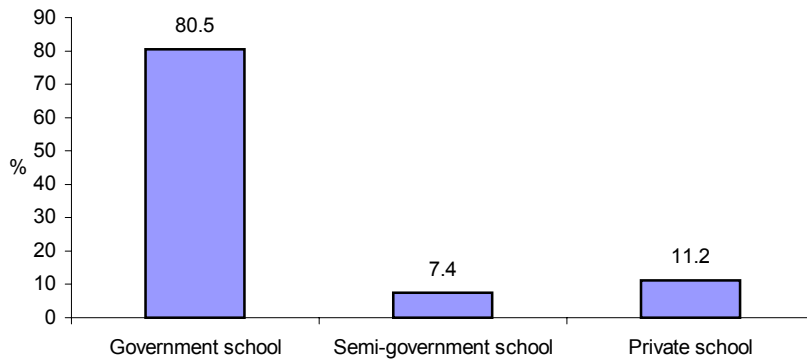
"In 2002, the government's expenditure on general education (including higher education), is provisionally estimated at Rs. 37, 209 million. The public sector continues to be the major supplier of education at all three levels, i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary. The student population in government schools declined by 4 per cent, reflecting enrolment in private and international schools..."

-Annual Report 2002 – Central Bank of Sri Lanka

EDUCATION

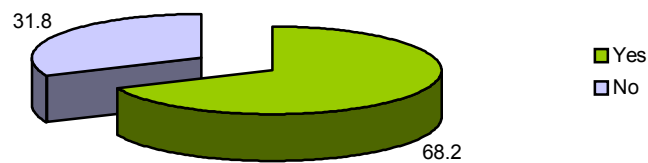
80.5% of the people living in Colombo who have a child in school, send their child to a Government school, while 11.2% send their child to a Private school.

Your experiences were with a:



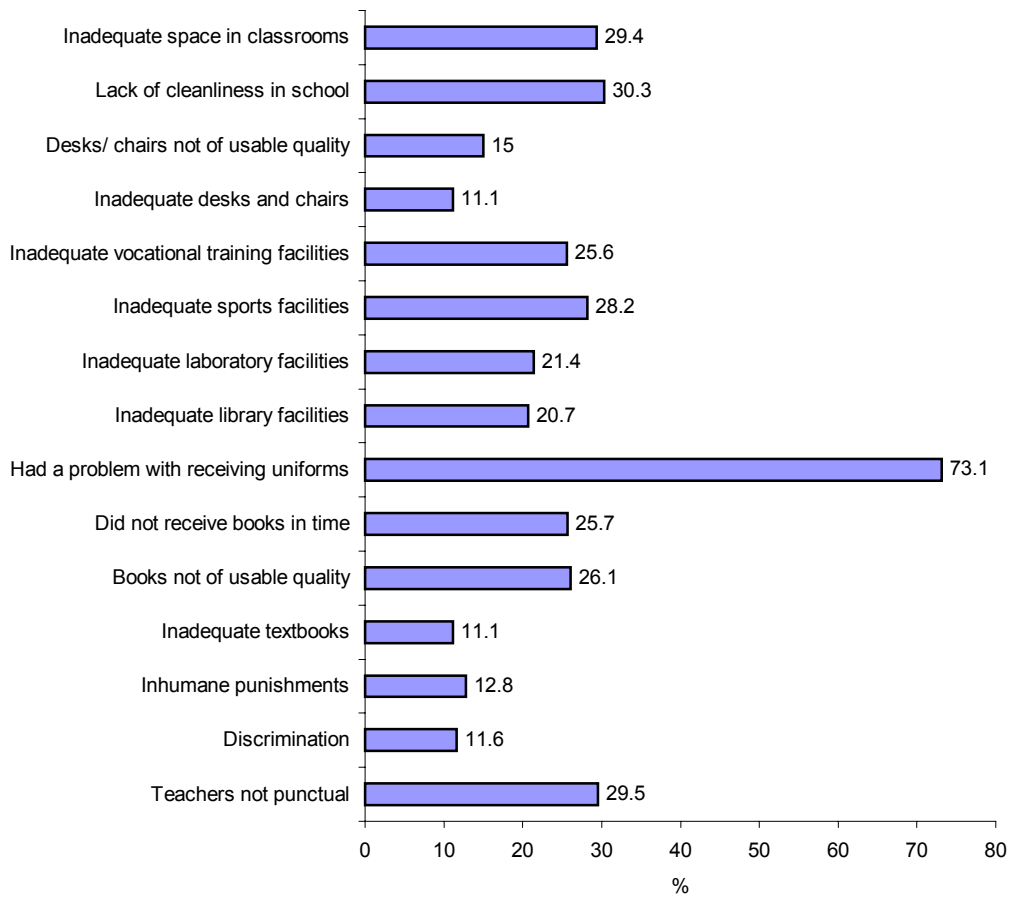
68.2% state that they encountered some kind of problem in their interaction with their child's school, over the last six months.

Have you encountered any problems in your interaction with your child's school over the last six months?



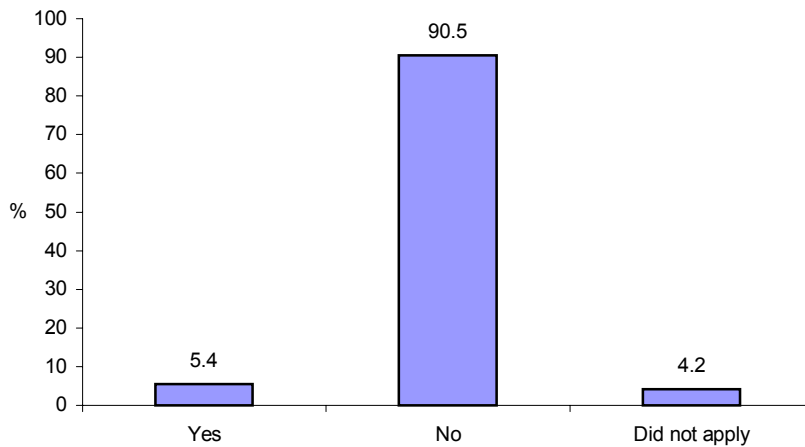
When people were asked about problems they encountered in their interactions with their child’s school, similar numbers cite that there is inadequate space in classrooms (29.4%), books are not of usable quality (26.1%), there are inadequate teachers (27.8%) and that teachers are not punctual (29.5%). However, the study reveals that it was with receiving school uniforms that an overwhelming majority (73.1%) had a problem.

What kind of problem did you encounter? (Multiple answers possible)



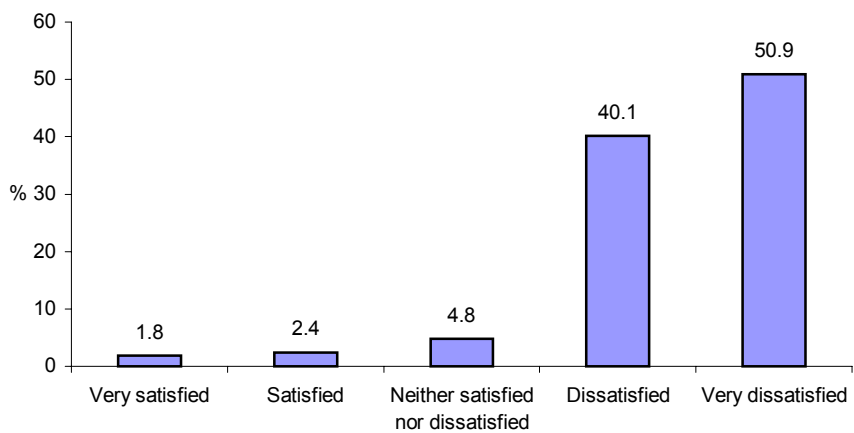
90.5% of those who had a problem with receiving school uniforms, did not receive them in time for the new school year.

Did your child receive the school uniforms in time for the new school year?



Overall, over 90% express dissatisfaction with the procedures involved in acquiring school uniforms.

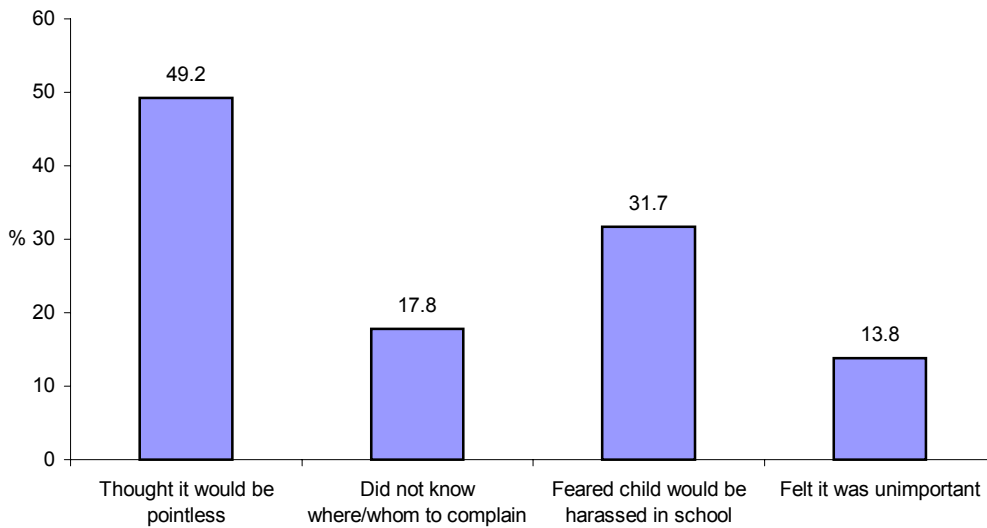
Please state your level of satisfaction with the procedures involved in acquiring school uniforms?



When asked whether they complained about any of the problems they faced in their interaction with their child's school, 87.2% admit they did not.

A majority (49.2%) of those who did not complain say it is because they thought it would be pointless while 31.7% did not complain because they feared their child would be harassed in school. A further 17.8% declare that they did not know where or whom to complain to.

If you did not complain, why was it?





TRANSPORT

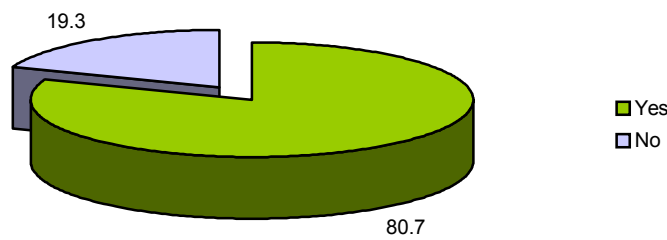
"Although the number of buses operated by the private sector increased, the average number of buses operated daily declined in 2002. The bus fleet belonging to both private bus operators and Regional Transport Companies (RTC) stood at 24 689 in 2002. The share of private bus operators in the total fleet was about 64%. In 2002, the average number of RTC buses operated per day declined by 310, whereas the number of private buses increased by 117..."

-Annual Report 2002 – Central Bank of Sri Lanka

TRANSPORT

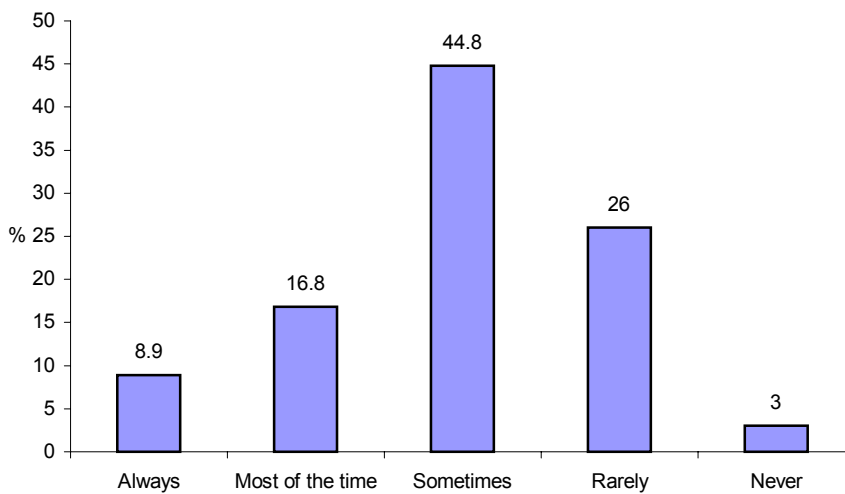
In June 2003, 80.7% of Colombo's residents reveal they use peoplised or private buses for their regular transport needs.

Do you use peoplised or private buses for your regular transport needs?



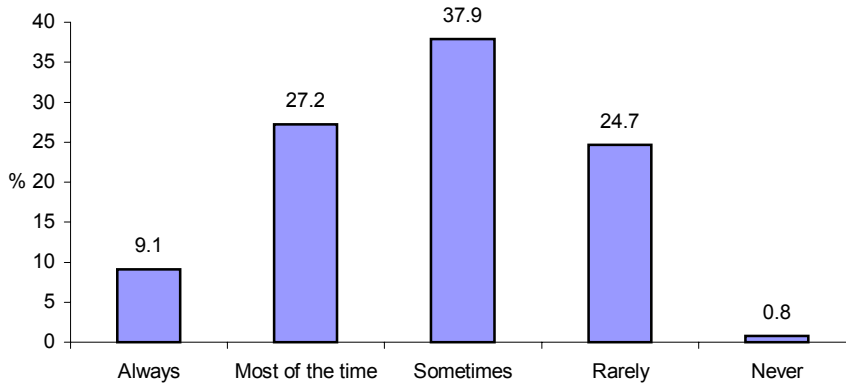
A majority (44.8%) state that they sometimes obtain a seat for the entire duration of their journey, while 26% say they rarely obtain a seat.

Do you usually obtain a seat for the entire duration of the jouney?



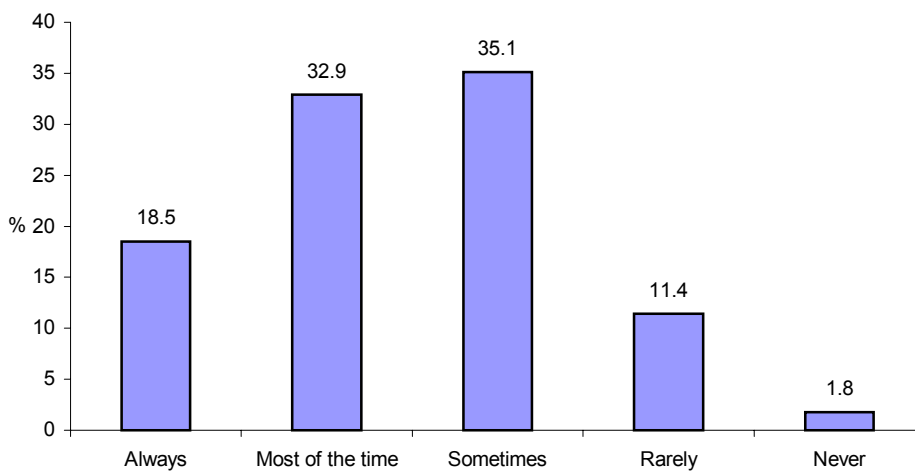
37.9% of the residents of Colombo who travel by bus say they sometimes receive a ticket for the bus fare they pay, while 27.2% state that they receive a ticket most of the time. However, 24.7% state that they rarely receive a ticket.

Do you usually receive a ticket for the bus fare you pay?



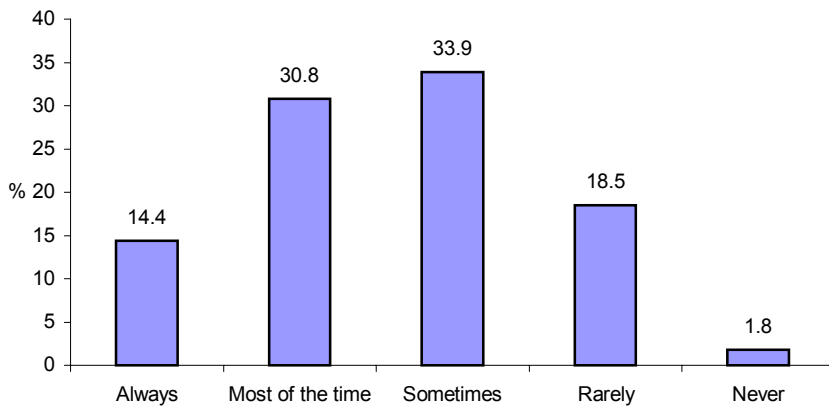
When asked whether the buses they travel in, stop for unnecessary periods of time, 35.1% reveal that they do sometimes, while 32.9% say it happens most of the time. A further 18.5% state that buses always stop for unnecessary lengths of time.

Do the buses you travel in, stop for unnecessary periods of time?



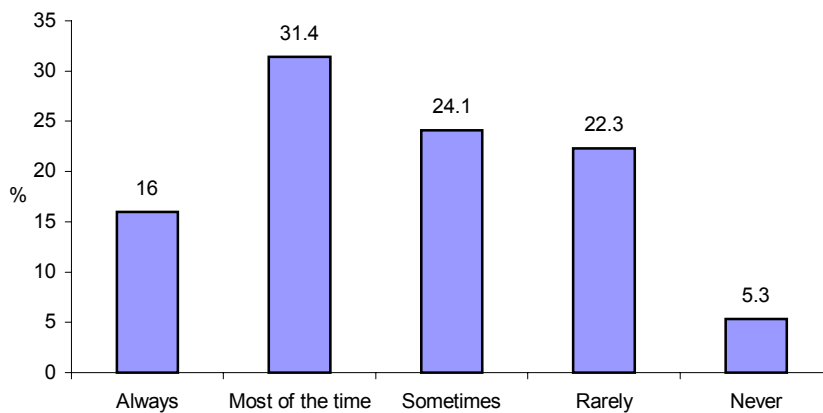
A majority (33.9%) of the commuters reveal that buses sometimes pick up passengers outside of regular bus halts. 30.8% say this happens most of the time, while 14.4% say that buses always pick up passengers outside of regular bus halts.

Do the buses you travel in, pick up passengers outside of regular bus halts?



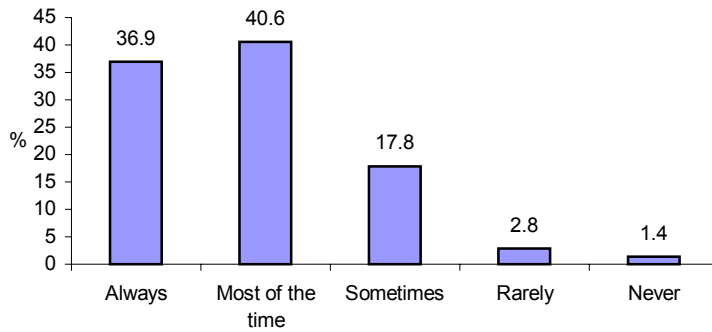
31.4% of the people say that the buses they travel in, are in a suitable condition most of the time to carry out the transport of passengers. On the other hand, 22.3% of the people state that buses are rarely in a condition to carry out the transport of passengers.

Are the buses you travel in, in a suitable condition to carry out the transport of passengers?



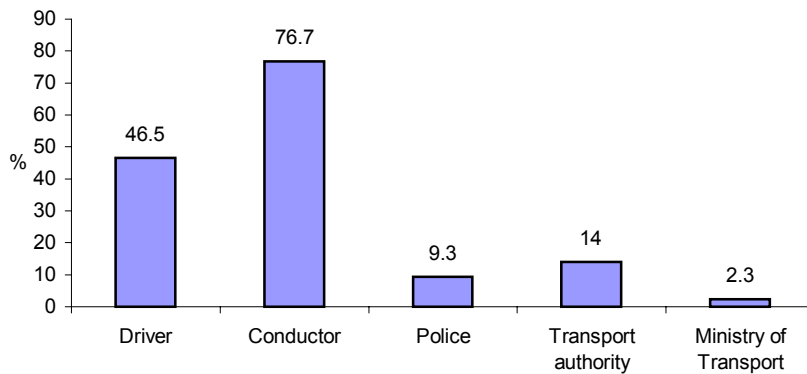
40.6% and 36.9% of those commuters residing in Colombo declare that the buses they travel in are overcrowded most of the time and always, respectively.

Are the buses you travel in, overcrowded?



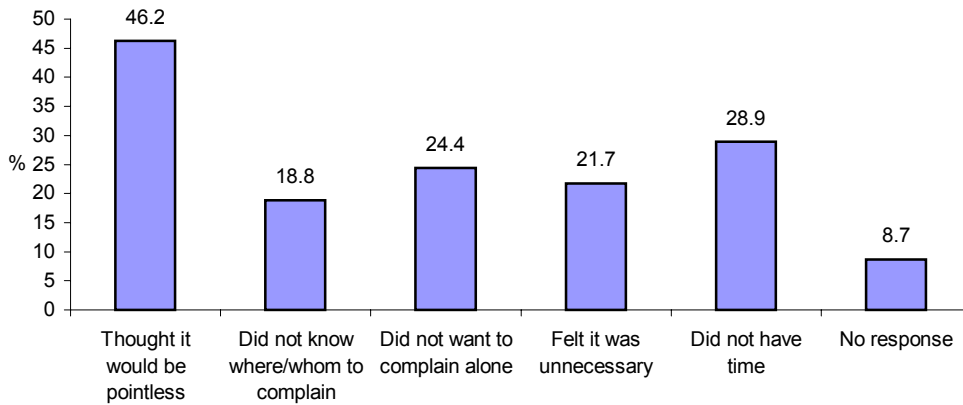
Only 8.5% reveal that they have complained with regard to any problem they had. Out of them, a majority (76.7%) complained to the Conductor, while 46.5% complained to the Driver.

If you have complained, to whom was it? (Multiple answers possible)



Out of those who did not complain, a majority (46.2%) declare that they did not do so because they thought it would be pointless. 28.9% did not complain because they did not have time and 24.4% state that they did not want to complain alone.

If you did not complain, why was it? (Multiple answers possible)



ANNEX

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

ELECTORATE	TOTAL
Colombo East	122
Colombo West	117
Colombo Central	114
Colombo North	131
Borella	127
	611

DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

SEX	(%)
Male	47.1
Female	52.9
	611

AGE	(%)
15 - 25 yrs	3.1
26 - 35 yrs	12.9
36 - 45 yrs	26
46 - 55 yrs	26
56 - 65 yrs	19
66 yrs +	13.1
	611

INCOME	(%)
Below Rs 5000	15.9
Rs 5001 – Rs 10 000	36.5
Rs 10 001 – Rs 15 000	21.9
Rs 15 001 – Rs 20 000	9
Rs 20 001 – Rs 25 000	0.3
Above Rs 25 001	6.2
Cannot say	6.2
	611

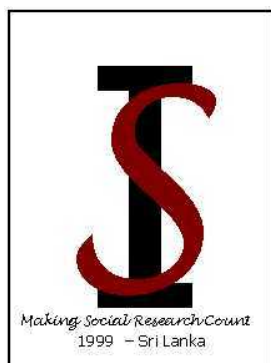
OCCUPATION	(%)
Executives, Managerial and Administrative Professionals	2.6
Professionals	3.9
Technicians & Associate Professionals	6.2
Clerk	1
Travel, Restaurant, Protective Service Workers & Sales Workers	5.1
Agricultural and Fisheries Workers	0.3
Armed forces	2.3
Housewife	19
Retired	8.5
Business	14.9
Self employed	11.5
Elementary Occupations	4.6
Unemployed	10.1
Driver	2.1
Other	3.6
	611

EDUCATION	(%)
Cannot read & write	2.6
Literate but no formal education	2.1
Up to grade 5	11.3
Grade 6-9	26.2
Up to O' Level	13.4
O' Level	20.5
Up to A' Level	4.4
A' Level	11
Vocationally trained	0.5
Technically trained	1
Professional	1.1
Undergraduate	0.8
Graduate and above	4.3
	611

Social Indicator (SI) is an independent social research organisation, which conducts polls on socio-economic and political issues.

Operating under the Board of Directors of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), SI was established in September 1999, and filled a longstanding vacuum for a permanent, professional and independent polling facility in Sri Lanka on social and political issues.

Polling is an instrument of empowerment, a means by which the silent majority of the public can express their opinions on issues affecting them. Our mission is to conduct surveys on key social issues, thereby providing a means through which public opinion can influence the public policy debate.



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