

# OPINION POLL ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

TOP LINE REPORT



CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
විකල්ප ප්‍රතිපත්ති කේන්ද්‍රය  
மாற்றுக் கொள்கைகளுக்கான நிலையம்



The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) is an independent, non-partisan organisation that focuses primarily on issues of governance and conflict resolution. Formed in 1996 in the firm belief that the vital contribution of civil society to the public policy debate is in need of strengthening, CPA is committed to programmes of research and advocacy through which public policy is critiqued, alternatives identified and disseminated.

Address: 6/5, Layards Road,  
Colombo 5, Sri Lanka  
Telephone: +94 (11) 2081384-6  
Fax: +94 (11) 2081388  
Web: [www.cpalanka.org](http://www.cpalanka.org)  
Email: [info@cpalanka.org](mailto:info@cpalanka.org)



*Making Social Research Count*

Social Indicator (SI) is the survey research unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) and was established in September 1999, filling a longstanding vacuum for a permanent, professional and independent polling facility in Sri Lanka on social and political issues. Driven by the strong belief that polling is an instrument that empowers democracy, SI has been conducting polls on a large range of socio-economic and political issues since its inception.

Address: 105, Fifth Lane, Colombo 03

Telephone: +94(11)2370472/4/6 Fax: +94(11) 2370475

Web: <http://cpalanka.org/survey-research/> Email: [info@cpasocialindicator.org](mailto:info@cpasocialindicator.org)

# Table of contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Awareness and Communication</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 2. The New Constitution</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 3. Provincial Councils</b>	<b>32</b>

# Executive Summary

- Only 1.1% of Sri Lankans are extremely aware that a Constitutional reform process is taking place at present while 21.9% are somewhat aware. 34.1% are aware that it is taking place but not at all aware about the details and status while almost 25% of Sri Lankans said that they did not know that a Constitutional reform process is taking place at present.
- The Northern and Eastern Provinces show the highest levels of awareness, with 2.8% saying they are highly aware and 42.3% somewhat aware in the Northern Province and 4% highly aware and 34.7% somewhat aware in the Eastern Province.
- Almost 60% in the Sabaragamuwa Province are not aware that a Constitutional reform process is taking place in Sri Lanka at present while almost 50% in the Western Province are aware that it is taking place but not at all aware about the details and status.
- According to this survey, almost 70% of Sri Lankans have not heard of the Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reform (PRC) and its activities. Only 0.7% said that they are extremely aware while 8.7% said that they are somewhat aware. 21% have heard of the PRC but were not aware of its activities.
- At a Provincial level, Uva (83.6%) and North Western (76.8%) showed the highest lack of awareness regarding the PRC. Almost 30% from the Western and Sabaragamuwa Provinces stated that they had heard of the PRC but were not aware of its activities. Awareness was highest in the Northern Province where 30% indicated their awareness of the PRC and its activities.
- Similar, lack of awareness was very high when it came to the Constitutional Assembly as well. 76.8% of Sri Lankans had not heard of the Constitutional Assembly while 14% had heard of it but were not aware of its activities.
- Almost 60% of Sri Lankans said that the Government has not been successful in their communication regarding the Constitutional reform process - such as its importance and progress - to the general public. Only 4.8% said that they have been successful and 21.5% said that the Government has been somewhat successful but could be better.
- Opinion is divided among Sri Lankans when asked if we need a new Constitution. 33.9% said that we need a new Constitution while 33.6% believe that the current Constitution should continue but with some needed changes. It is noteworthy that almost 20% of Sri

Lankans say that they do not know whether we need a new Constitution or whether we should continue with the current one.

- On the question of completely abolishing the Executive Presidential system, a key election promise of the *yahapalanaya* Government, Sri Lankans are once again divided with 35.7% supporting the complete abolition of the Executive Presidential system and 40.3% not supporting it. 24% said that they do not know whether they support it or not.
- Support for complete abolition is highest in the North Central (48.6%) and Sabaragamuwa (44%) Provinces while around 50% in the Southern and Eastern Province stated that they do not support it. Almost 50% from the Central Province remain undecided.
- Article 2 of our current Constitution states that 'The Republic of Sri Lanka is a Unitary State' and 63.6% of Sri Lankans believe that it is important to retain the phrase 'unitary state' in the new Constitution. This opinion is mainly held by the Sinhalese community (77.7%) while only 14.3% from the Tamil, 18.1% from the Up Country Tamil and 28.8% from the Muslim communities stated the same.
- On the question of giving Buddhism a special place in the Constitution, around 77% of Sinhalese strongly agree that Buddhism should be given a special place in the Constitution. In comparison, 73.3% from the Tamil, 89.2% from the Up Country Tamil and 71.4% from the Muslim communities strongly disagree that Buddhism should be given a special place in the Constitution.
- Almost 90% from the Tamil and Muslim communities, 96.4% from the Up Country Tamil community and 63.7% from the Sinhalese community strongly agree that the Constitution should give all religions equal status.
- When asked if the powers of the Provincial Councils should be increased, 44% of Sri Lankans said that they should be increased while 31.6% said that they should not be increased. 24.4% said that they did not know.
- From a Provincial perspective, support for increasing powers of the Provincial Councils is highest in the Northern (77.8%), Eastern (60%) and Sabaragamuwa (59.2%) Provinces. 50% from the Southern Province said that the powers should not be increased.
- Those who said that the powers of Provincial Councils should be increased were given a list and asked which powers they were agreeable to increasing. More than 80% of respondents from all Provinces were agreeable to almost every power on the list being increased, with agreement falling short in comparison for increasing Provincial Councils'

power with regard to (i) inward investment and foreign aid, (ii) law and order and (iii) power to alienate or reallocate State land. However, support from the Northern and Eastern Provinces for increasing powers for these three items were more than 85%.

- Those who said that the powers of the Provincial Councils should not be increased were asked if Provincial Councils should be abolished or whether we should continue with the way things are currently run. Majority support was for continuing with the way things are currently run, except in the North Western Province where half the respondents said that they did not know.
- When asked if powers of the Provincial Councils are increased whether we need to keep the Executive Presidency, 43.6% of Sri Lankans said yes while 15.2% said no to keeping the Executive Presidency. A noteworthy 41.2% said that they did not know.
- Support for keeping Executive Presidency even if the powers of Provincial Councils are increased was highest in the North Western (60.3%) and Sabaragamuwa (58%) Provinces. 43.8% from the Northern Province said that we do not need to keep Executive Presidency if powers of Provincial Councils are increased.

# Introduction

On the 9th of January 2016, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe presented a resolution in Parliament to convert Parliament into a Constitutional Assembly to draft the third Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka, which will replace the current 1978 Constitution. The resolution noted that there shall be a Committee of Parliament referred to as the “Constitutional Assembly” which shall consist of all Members of Parliament, for the purpose of deliberating on, and seeking the views and advice of the people, on a new Constitution for Sri Lanka, and preparing a draft of a Constitution Bill for the consideration of Parliament in the exercise of its powers under Article 75 of the Constitution.

This is the second public opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Policy Alternatives this year that focuses on the Constitutional reform process and it was conducted with the objective of strengthening public discourse and increasing awareness on the reform process in Sri Lanka. This survey report also highlights significant areas that all those involved in the reform process should pay careful attention to at this critical juncture, including shortcomings of the process itself.

While the survey conducted by CPA in January 2016 looked at the broad areas of reform where public opinion was sought on the Bill of Rights, devolution, police and land powers, merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces and other proposals, this survey interrogated deeper into public awareness of the reform process, strengthening of Provincial Councils, the place of religion in the new Constitution, Executive Presidency and other key issues. Data was collected from all 25 districts thereby making this a comprehensive survey with much insight into public perceptions regarding the Constitutional reform process.

This survey was conducted by Social Indicator, the survey research unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives. The research team comprised of Dr. Asanga Welikala, Iromi Perera and M. Krishnamoorthy, with input from Sanjana Hattotuwa, Luwie Ganeshathasan and Dr Ben Schonthal during the questionnaire design phase. Data processing was done by Shashik Dhanushka.

# Methodology

The survey was carried out using a semi-structured questionnaire administered through face-to-face interviews. 34 trained Field Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with 2002 respondents in both the Sinhala and Tamil languages across all Provinces.

## **Questionnaire**

Key issues pertaining to Sri Lanka's current Constitution reform process were taken into consideration when formulating the questionnaire. The questionnaire was translated into Sinhala and Tamil and a pilot survey was conducted by senior field staff. Findings from the pilot survey were taken into account in the finalisation of the questionnaire.

## **Sampling and fieldwork**

In this survey, Social Indicator (SI) used a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique and a sample of 2000 respondents spread across all 25 districts were polled. The Population Proportionate Sampling (PPS) method was used and ethnic proportions were accounted for. The sample size was determined in order to produce results within a 2% error margin at a 95% confidence level. Electorates were chosen as the strata to distribute the sample and polling centres within each electorate were chosen randomly. From each selected polling centre the starting point (first household selected for the survey) of the survey was selected randomly from the 2008 voter registry. Following the completion of an interview at the first household, 19 other households that come under the same polling centre were selected using the right hand rule.<sup>1</sup> At each selected household, a respondent was determined using the last birthday method.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Following a successful interview, the field researcher would select the next following a successful interview, the field researcher would select the next household by skipping a pre determined number of houses (based on the total number of households in the selected polling centre) on his/her right. The route that the field researcher follows from the starting point is guided by this method of always counting the houses on the right as well as selecting the path on the right when faced with more than one possible path. This random sampling technique provides a good coverage of the sample population area, thereby giving all households in the selected area an equal chance of being selected

<sup>2</sup> In a selected household where there is more than one eligible respondent, the person who had their birthday most recently is selected for the survey interview.



Fieldwork for the entire study was conducted from August 29 - September 23, 2016. Delays were experienced in completing the sample allocated to the Muslim community due to the Eid festival in mid September.

### ***Training of Field Researchers***

A total of 34 Field Researchers participated in this study. The Field Researchers consisted of both male and female enumerators from three ethnic communities – Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim. Prior to starting fieldwork, they were given an extensive training on the study, the survey instrument and field techniques. In order to ensure the quality of field research, SI deployed a group of Supervisors to conduct quality control processes during and after fieldwork such as accompanied visits, spot-checks and back-checks to ensure the quality of the data collected.

### ***Data Processing and analysis***

All the completed questionnaires were scrutinised, checked and entered into a database designed for the survey. The dataset was further cleaned prior to it being analysed. Before starting the analysis process, the dataset was weighted in order to reflect actual geographical and ethnic proportion. The data set was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### ***How to read this report:***

- This report presents the top line results of the survey. The graphs presented sets out a descriptive explanation on the basis of National data, and have been divided according to Ethnicity and Province.
- For questions that allowed more than one answer (multiple answer questions) from respondents, figures do not add up to a 100%.

# 1

## Awareness and Communication

When asked about their level of awareness about the current Constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka, it appears that there is little awareness among Sri Lankans. Only 1.1% of Sri Lankans are extremely aware while 21.9% are somewhat aware. 34.1% are aware that it is taking place but not at all aware about the details and status while almost 25% of Sri Lankans said that they did not know that a Constitutional reform process is taking place at present.

From an ethnic perspective, the Up Country Tamil community is the least aware about the reform process, with more than 70% stating that they either did not know a reform process was taking place (10.8%) or that they did not know what their level of awareness is (60.2%).

The Northern and Eastern Provinces show the highest levels of awareness, with 2.8% saying they are highly aware and 42.3% somewhat aware in the Northern Province and 4% highly aware and 34.7% somewhat aware in the Eastern Province. Almost 60% in the Sabaragamuwa Province are not aware that a Constitutional reform process is taking place in Sri Lanka at present while almost 50% in the Western Province are aware that it is taking place but not all aware about the details and status. (*Refer Graph 1.1*)

27.1% of Sri Lankans believe that the President is leading the reform process while 18.5% believe it is the Prime Minister. Another 18.1% also think that Parliament is leading the reform process while almost 35% of respondents did not answer this question. (*Refer Graph 1.2*)

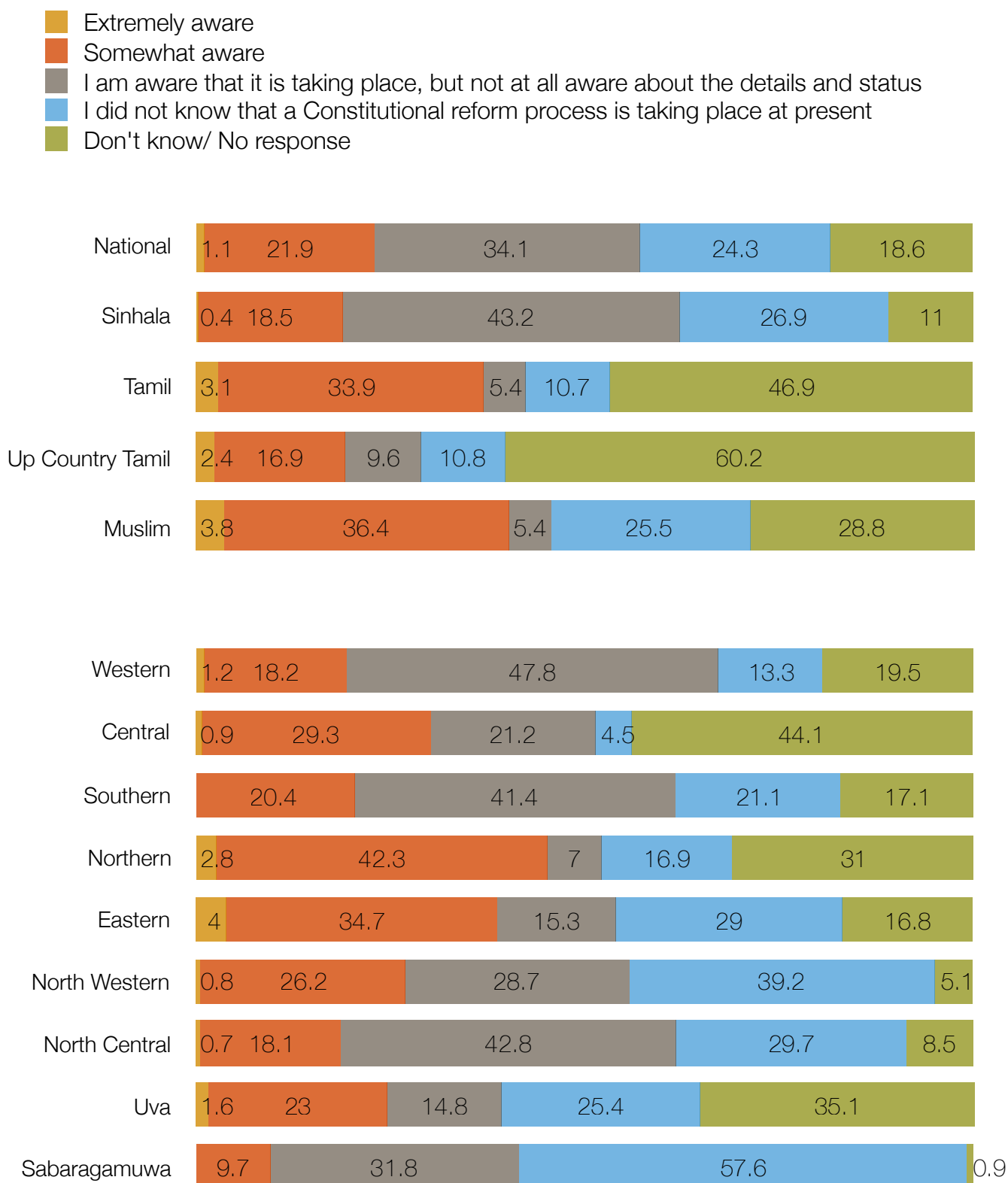
In December 2015, a 20 member Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reform (PRC) was appointed for the purpose of obtaining the views of the public on constitutional reforms. The PRC conducted hearings in every district over the months of February and March 2016 and presented its final report in May 2016.

According to this survey, almost 70% of Sri Lankans have not heard of the PRC and its activities. Only 0.7% said that they are extremely aware while 8.7% said that they are somewhat aware. 21% had heard of the PRC but were not aware of its activities.

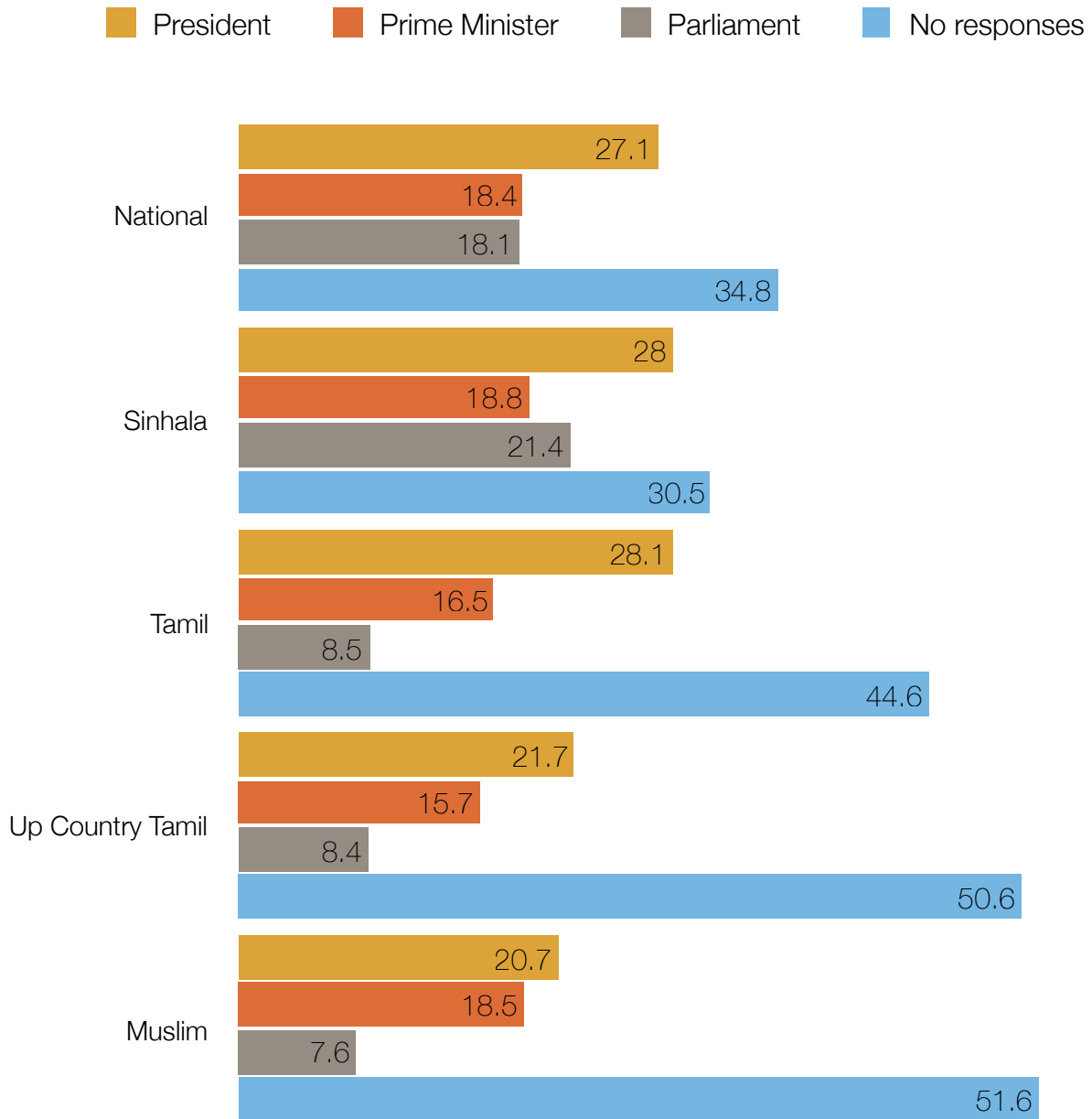
91.6% from the Up Country Tamil community and around 80% from the Tamil and Muslim communities have not heard of the PRC. At a Provincial level, Uva (83.6%) and North Western (76.8%) showed the highest lack of awareness regarding the PRC. Almost 30% from the Western and Sabaragamuwa Provinces stated that they had heard of the PRC but were

not aware of its activities. Awareness was highest in the Northern Province where 30% noted they were aware of the PRC and its activities. (Refer Graph 1.3)

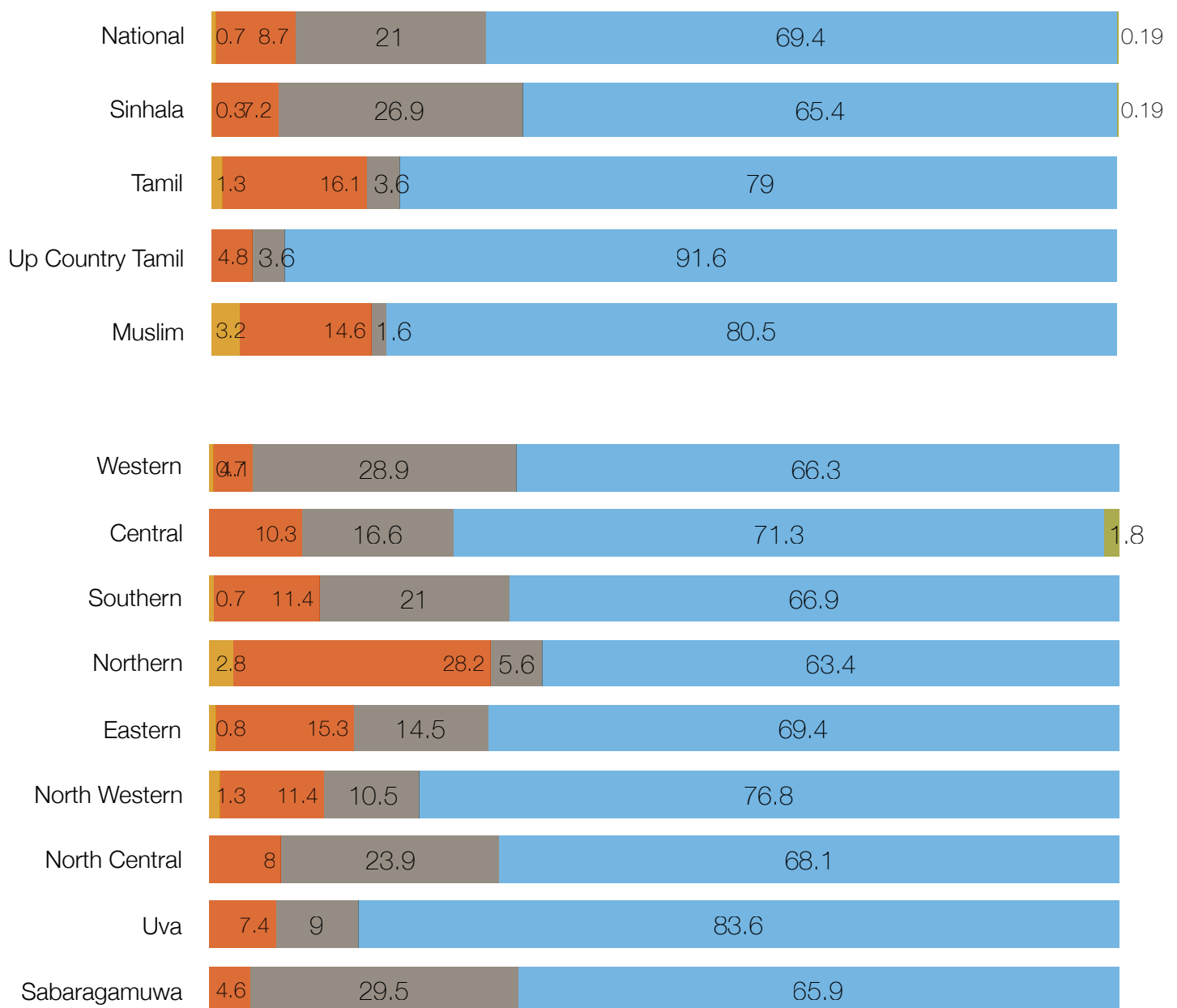
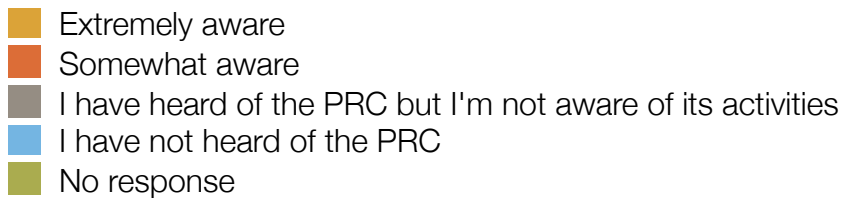
**Graph 1.1: How would you describe your level of awareness about the current Constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka?**



**Graph 1.2: A Constitutional reform process is taking place in Sri Lanka at present. Who do you think is leading the reform process? Is it the President, Prime Minister or someone else?**

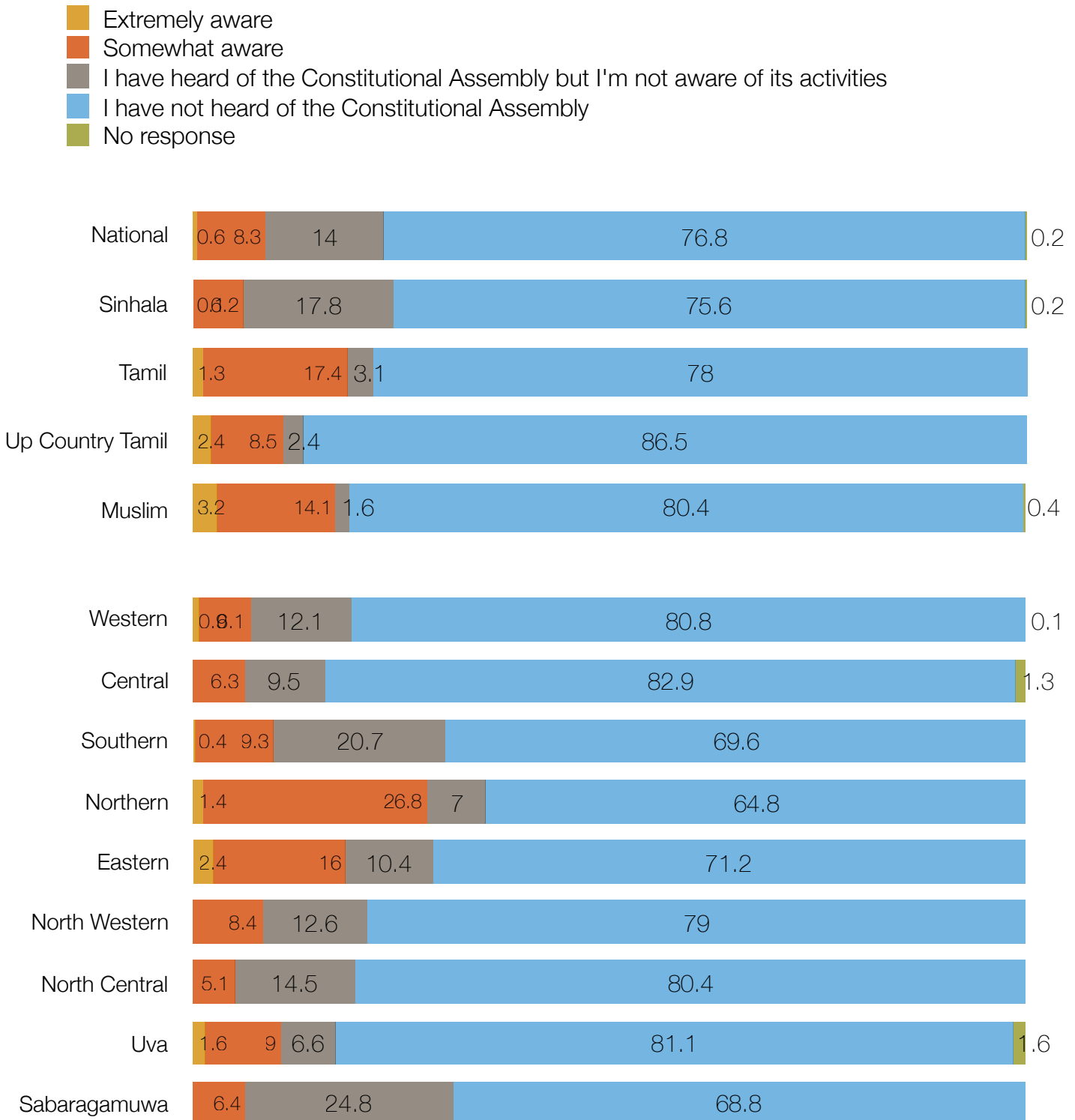


**Graph 1.3: In December 2015, a 20 member Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reform (PRC) was appointed for the purpose of obtaining the views of the public on Constitutional reforms. How aware are you about the Public Representations Committee and its activities?**



Similar, lack of awareness was very high when it came to the Constitutional Assembly as well. 76.8% of Sri Lankans had not heard of the Constitutional Assembly while 14% had heard of it but were not aware of its activities. The Northern Province had the highest level of awareness, with 1.4% stating that they were extremely aware and 26.8% somewhat aware. (Refer Graph 1.4)

**Graph 1.4: How aware are you about the Constitutional Assembly?**



The television is one of the main sources of news for Sri Lankans, with television channels of private media being the main source (82.2%) and television channels of state media at second place (55%). 33.2% also consider radio channels of private media organisations as a source that they get their news from. These three sources are similar across the Provinces, with a few differences in two Provinces. In the Southern Province, the third highest news source was state radio channels while in the Northern Province, the third highest news source was newspapers of private media organisations. (Refer Table 1.1) Interestingly, 15.7% from the Southern Province and 11.1% from the Eastern Province said that Facebook is one of the main news sources while 29.5% from the Northern Province and 15.8% from Sabaragamuwa said that emails from friends/family is a main news source for them.

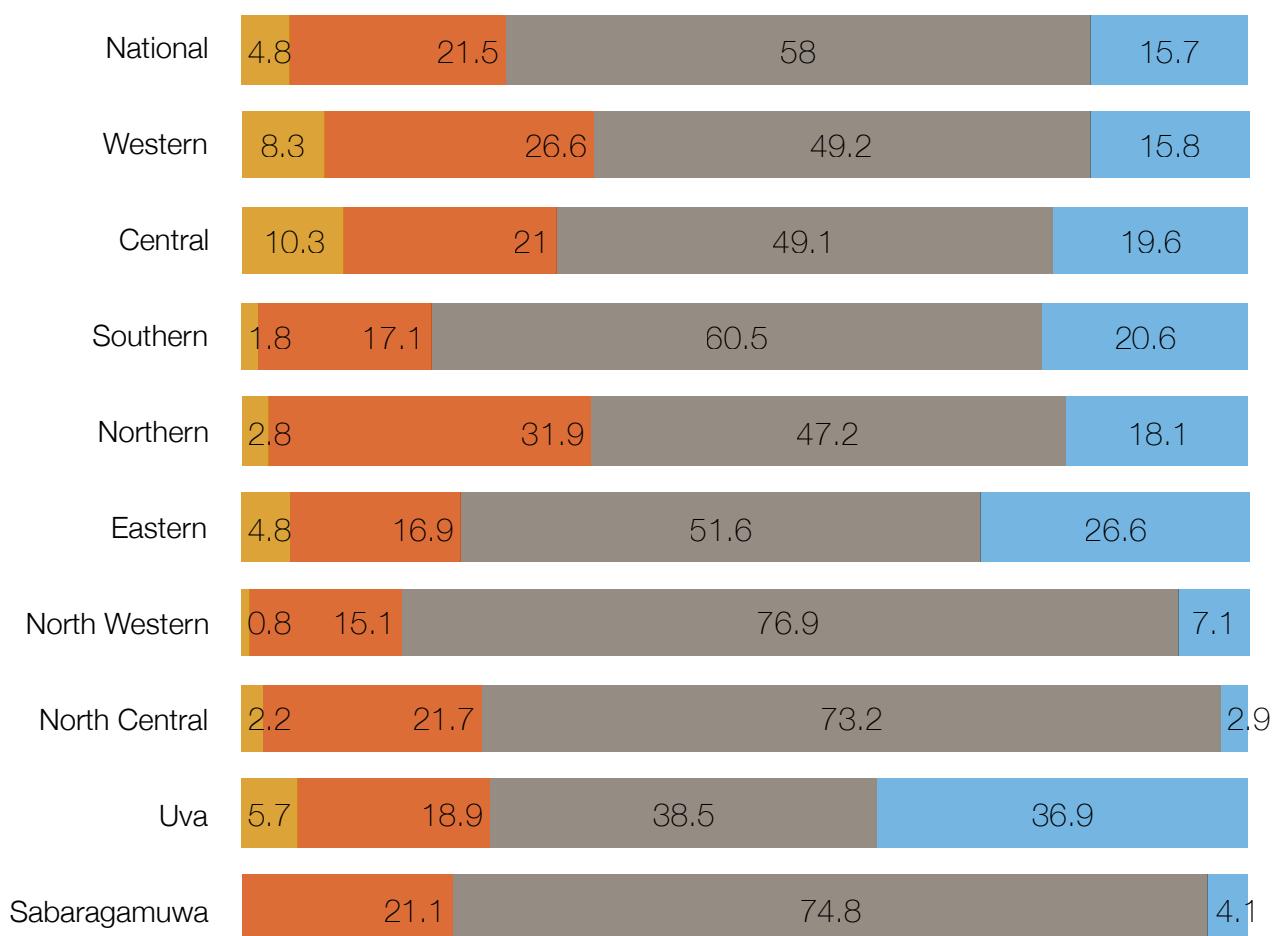
**Table 1.1: What are the top three sources that you get your news from?**

<b>National</b>	Television - Private media 82.2	Television - State media 55	Radio - Private media 33.2
<b>Western Province</b>	Television - Private media 86.2	Television - State media 58.5	Radio - Private media 28.6
<b>Central Province</b>	Television - Private media 80.2	Radio - Private media 43.5	Television - State media 28.8
<b>Southern Province</b>	Television - Private media 67.6	Television - State media 61.5	Radio - State media 33.8
<b>Northern Province</b>	Television - Private media 67.8	Radio - Private media 55.4	Newspaper - Private media 44.1
<b>Eastern Province</b>	Television - Private media 74.5	Television - State media 47.9	Radio - Private media 40.7
<b>North Western</b>	Television - Private media 82.8	Television - State media 60.2	Radio - Private media 37.4
<b>North Central</b>	Television - Private media 90.5	Television - State media 83.5	Radio - Private media 25.7
<b>Uva Province</b>	Television - Private media 87.4	Television - State media 63.2	Radio - Private media 41.2
<b>Sabaragamuwa</b>	Television - Private media 93.1	Television - State media 54.3	Radio - Private media 38.3

Almost 60% of Sri Lankans said that the Government has not been successful in their communication regarding the Constitutional reform process - such as its importance and progress - to the general public. Only 4.8% said that they have been successful and 21.5% said that the Government has been somewhat successful but could be better. Satisfaction is highest in the Northern Province (2.8% said that the Government has been successful and 31.9% said somewhat successful) and Western Province (8.3% said has been successful and 26.6% said somewhat successful). (Refer Graph 1.5)

**Graph 1.5: Do you think the Government is doing a good job in communicating information regarding the reform process – such as its importance and progress - to the general public?**

- Yes, the Government has been successful in their communication so far
- The Government has been somewhat successful, but could be better
- No, the Government has not been successful in their communication
- Don't know





When asked about the best way for the Government or any political party to communicate information regarding the Constitutional reform process to the people in **their neighbourhood**, 28.1% of Sri Lankans said it was through the media. 23.8% said the best way would be through Grama Niladhari officers, the Government administrative level closest to people. 12.2% said it should be communicated through societies and meetings.

At a Provincial level, other than for the above mentioned options, 18.5% from the North Central, 17.5% from the Northern and 10.9% from the North Western Provinces said that they should come directly to their houses and communicate information regarding the reform process while 26.9% from the Sabaragamuwa Province said that politicians and officials from the area should communicate the information to them.

In the months to come, there is a variety of information that people would like to know about the reform process. 60.8% of Sri Lankans would like to know about the importance of a new Constitution, 38% would like to know how the new Constitution affects them, 29.1% the key changes the new Constitution contains, 23.1% the difference between the new Constitution and the current Constitution and 12.1% the progress of the reform process.

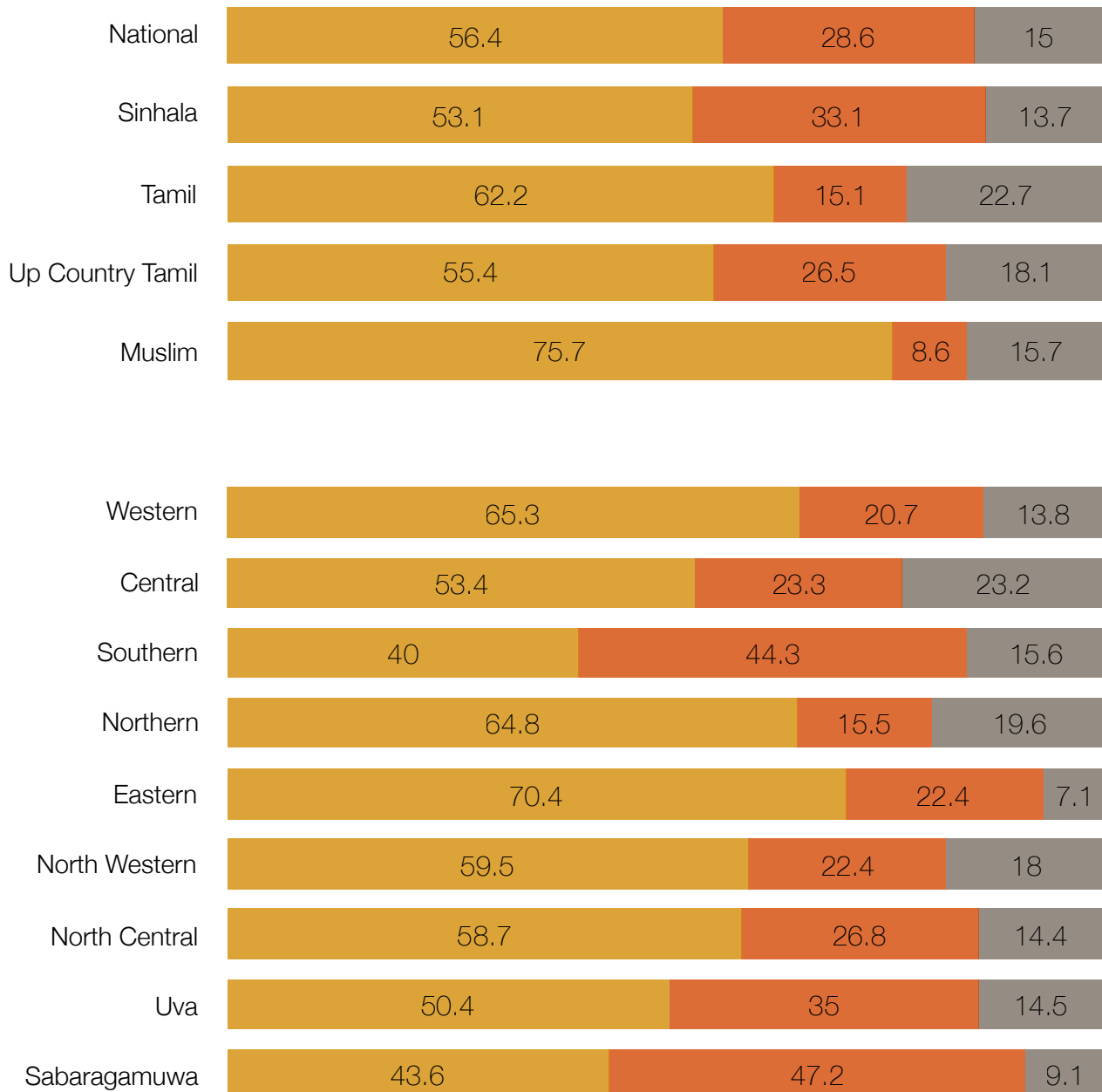
In addition to the above mentioned items, 20.5% from the Western Province and 12.6% from the Eastern Province would like to know who the main people involved in the process are and around 13% from the Western and Central Provinces would like to know the views of the different political parties.

56.4% of Sri Lankans believe that it is good that the two main parties (SLFP and UNP) have come together in a National Unity Government while 28.6% do not think it is good. 15% stated that they do not know. From an ethnic perspective, 75.7% from the Muslim community and 62.2% from the Tamil community think it is good that the two main parties have formed a unity Government. 70.4% from the Eastern Province and around 65% from the Western and Northern Provinces think it is good, while 44.3% from the Southern Province and 47.2% from the Sabaragamuwa Province do not think it is good that the two main parties have a unity Government. (*Refer Graph 1.6*)

Almost 50% of Sri Lankans think that the two parties should stay together as a unity Government while 35.3% think that they should separate. Support for the two parties staying together is highest in the Eastern Province (61.3%) while 51.8% from the Southern and 46.8% from the Sabaragamuwa Provinces believe that the two parties should separate. (*Refer Graph 1.7*)

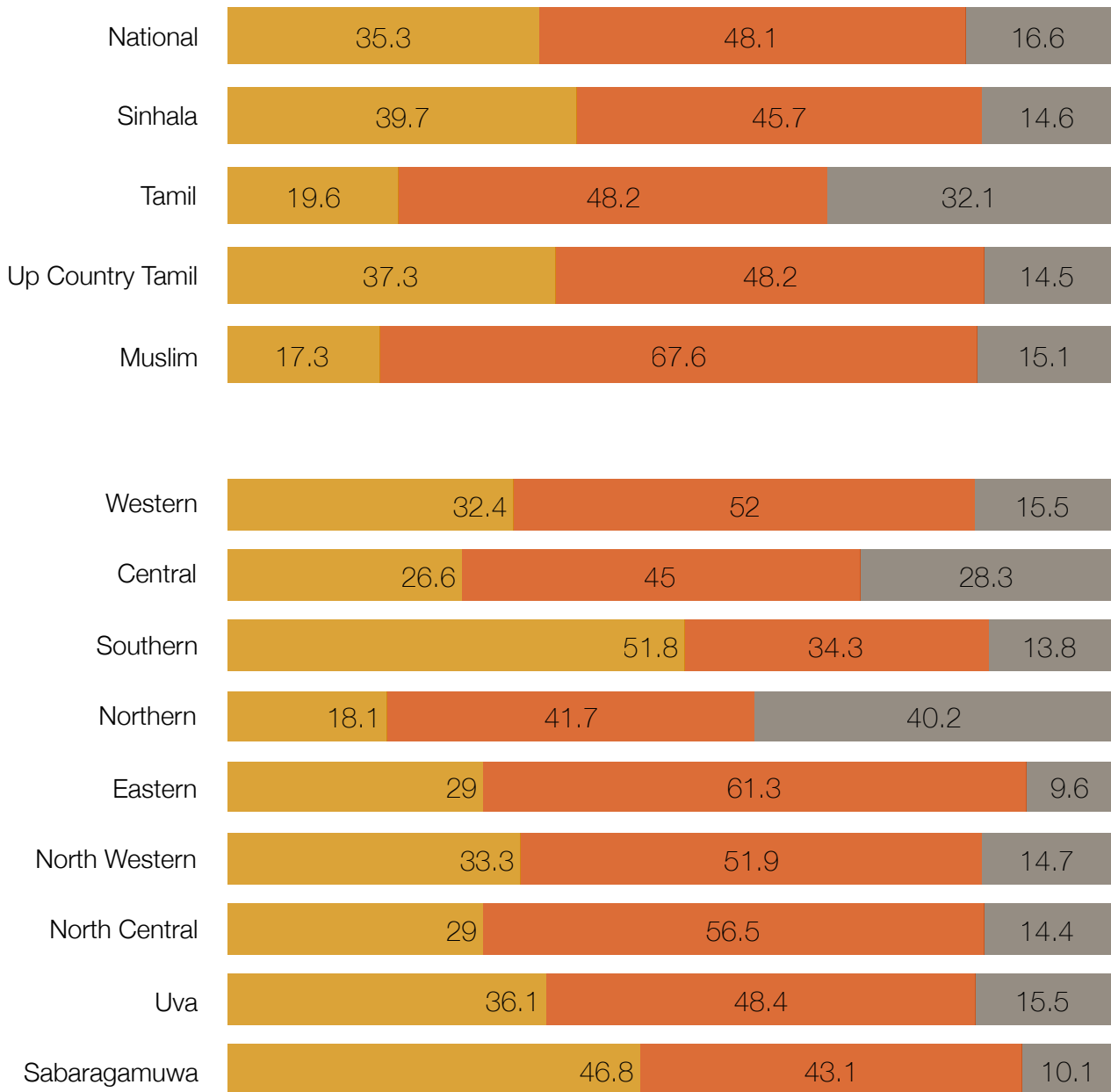
**Graph 1.6: Do you think it is good that the two main parties have come together in a National Unity Government?**

- I think it is good that the two main parties have formed a unity Government
- I think it is not good that the two main parties have formed a unity Government
- Don't know



**Graph 1.7: Do you think the two parties (SLFP and UNP) should separate?**

- Yes, the two parties should separate
- No, the two parties should stay together as a unity Government
- Don't Know



## 2

# The New Constitution

Opinion is divided among Sri Lankans when asked if we need a new Constitution. 33.9% said that we need a new Constitution while 33.6% believe that the current Constitution should continue but with some needed changes. It is noteworthy that almost 20% of Sri Lankans say that they do not know whether we need a new Constitution or whether we should continue with the current one. Support for a new Constitution is highest in the North Central (45.7%), North Western (41.8%) and Western (37.6%) Provinces while almost 50% of respondents in the Northern Province believe that the current Constitution should continue but with some needed changes. (*Refer Graph 2.1*)

On the question of completely abolishing the Executive Presidential system, a key election promise of the *yahapalanaya* Government, Sri Lankans are once again divided with 35.7% supporting the complete abolition of the Executive Presidential system and 40.3% not supporting it. 24% said that they do not know whether they support it or not. Support for complete abolition is highest in the North Central (48.6%) and Sabaragamuwa (44%) Provinces while around 50% in the Southern and Eastern Province stated that they do not support it. Almost 50% from the Central Province remain undecided. (*Refer Graph 2.2*)

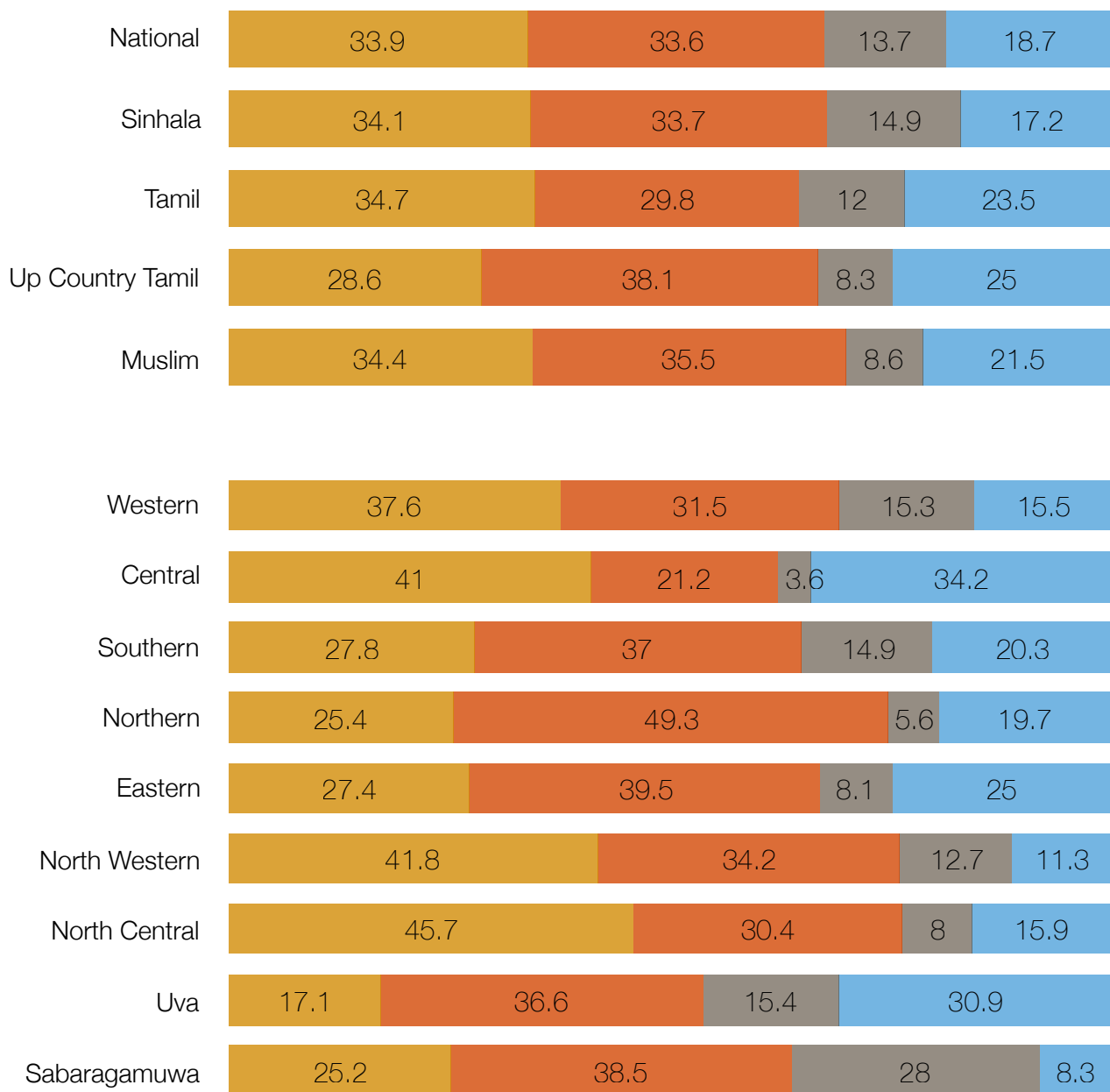
Respondents were given a list of three roles a President of Sri Lanka could play and were asked to select one. 10.1% of Sri Lankans said that a President of Sri Lanka should have no executive powers but be a symbol of national unity, 22.6% said that no executive powers except in protecting the unity of the country while 44.1% said that executive powers should be shared between the President and Prime Minister.

65% from Sabaragamuwa, 63.7% from the North Western Province and 60.9% from the North Central Province said that executive powers should be shared between the President and Prime Minister while 44.4% from the Northern Province said that a President of Sri Lanka should have no executive powers except in protecting the unity of the country. (*Refer Graph 2.3*)

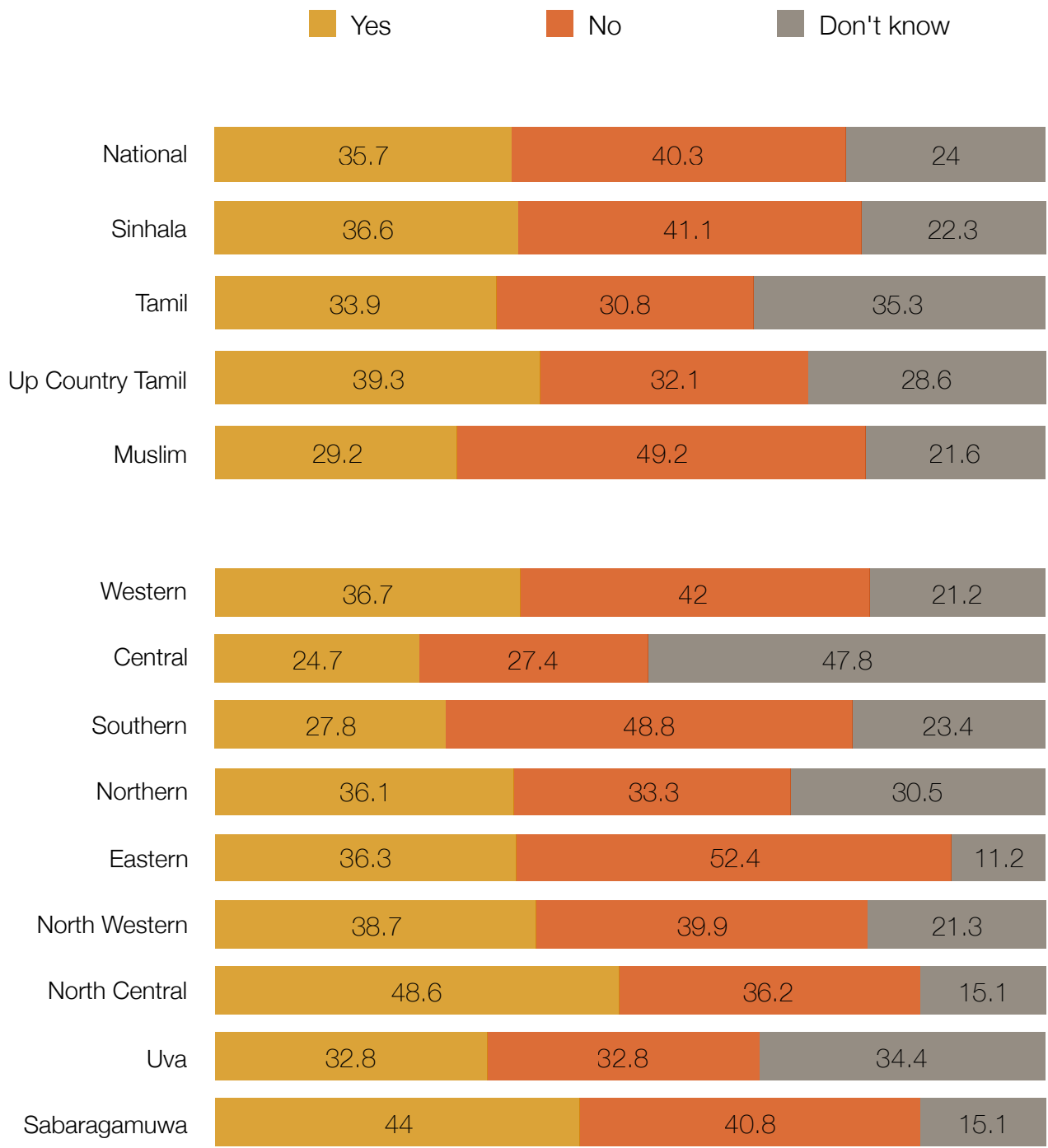
On the role that a Prime Minister of Sri Lanka should play, most Sri Lankans (62.4%) believe that the Prime Minister and Cabinet should run day to day affairs of the Government on the instructions of the President while 18.4% said that the Prime Minister should be the head of the Government, running day to day affairs with other Ministers of the Cabinet. (*Refer Graph 2.4*)

**Graph 2.1: Should the current Constitution be wholly replaced with a new Constitution or should the current Constitution continue but with some needed changes?**

- We need a new Constitution
- The current Constitution should continue but with some needed changes
- The Constitution does not need to be changed
- Don't Know

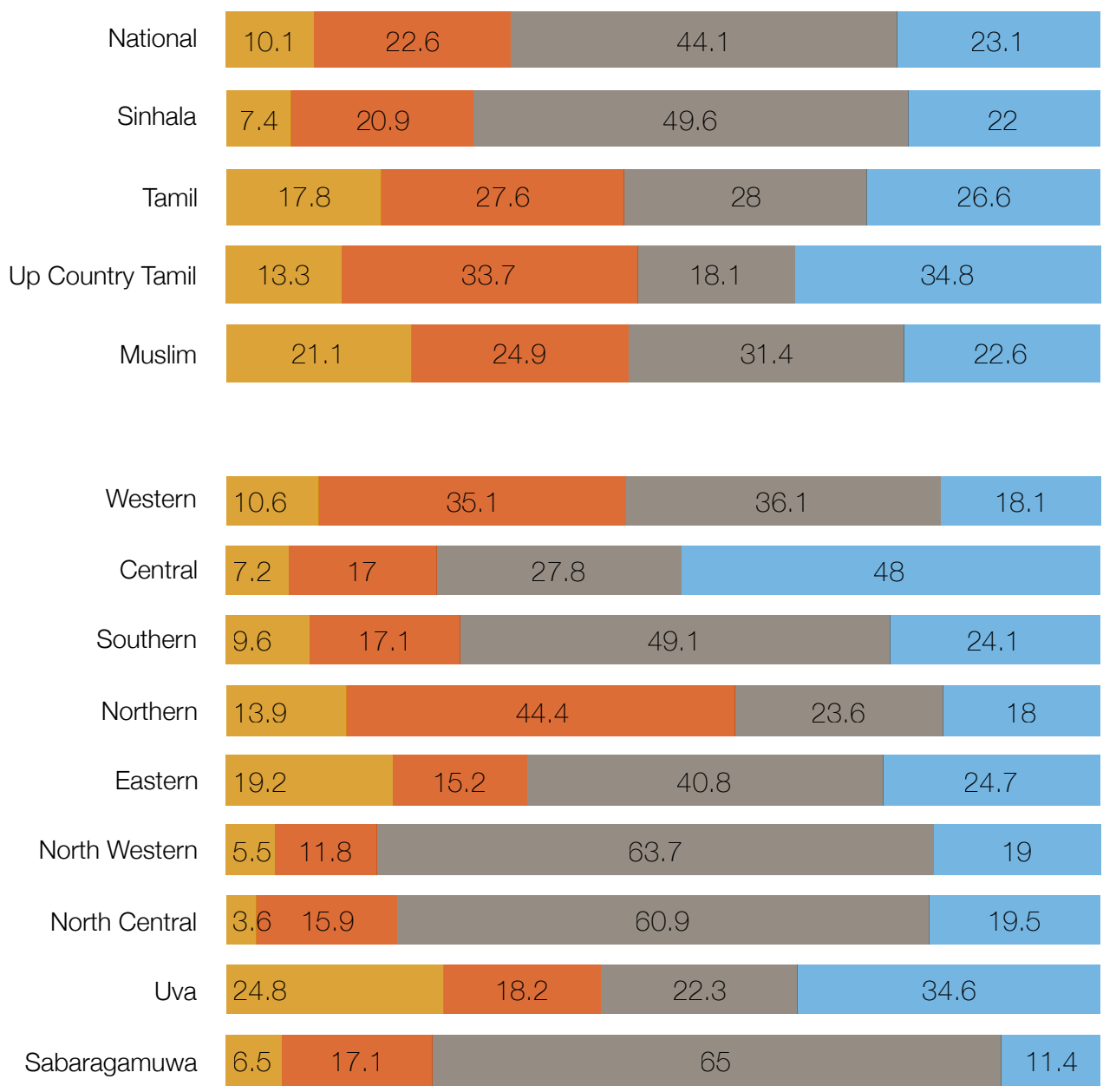


**Graph 2.2: Do you support the complete abolition of the Executive Presidential system?**

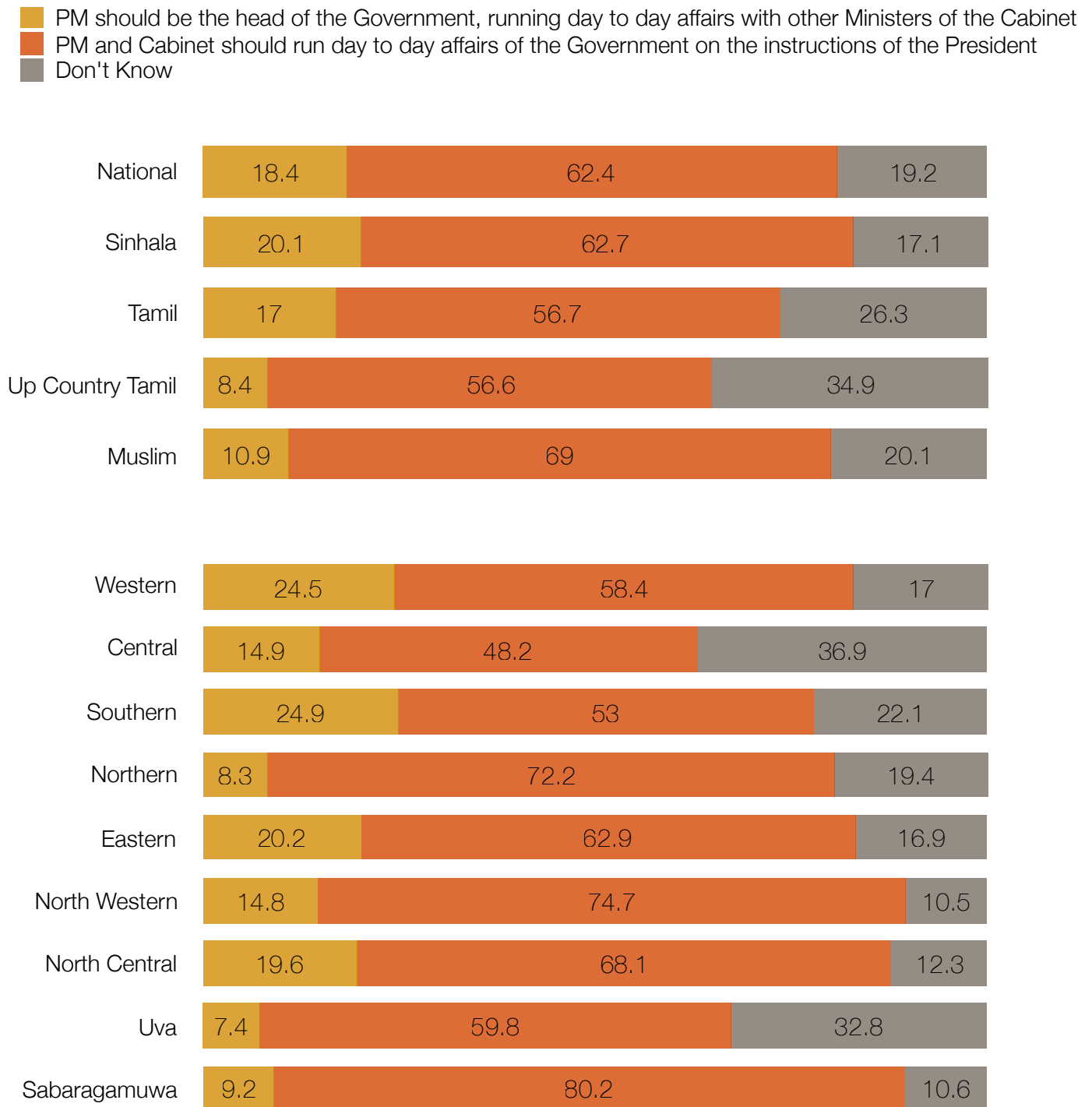


**Graph 2.3: In your opinion, what role should a President of Sri Lanka play? Please select one answer from this list.**

- No executive powers but be a symbol of national unity
- No executive powers except in protecting the unity of the country
- Executive powers should be shared between President and Prime Minister
- Don't Know



**Graph 2.4: In your opinion, what role should a Prime Minister of Sri Lanka play? Please select one answer from this list.**





Article 2 of our current Constitution states that ‘The Republic of Sri Lanka is a Unitary State’ and 63.6% of Sri Lankans believe that it is important to retain the phrase ‘unitary state’ in the new Constitution. This opinion is mainly held by the Sinhalese community (77.7%) while only 14.3% from the Tamil, 18.1% from the Up Country Tamil and 28.8% from the Muslim communities stated the same. It is important to note that almost 60% from the Tamil, Up Country Tamil and Muslim communities said that they do not know whether it is important to retain the phrase in the new Constitution. Around 75% from the North Central, Sabaragamuwa and Western Province said that it is important to retain the phrase while 29.2% from the Northern Province said that it is not important. However, 54.1% from the Northern Province remain undecided. (Refer Graph 2.5)

When asked if the Constitution should not mention any label, such as ‘unitary state’, ‘federal state’, etc. in its description of the State, 46.2% of Sri Lankans said that the Constitution should mention labels while 15.8% said that it should not mention labels. Almost 40% of Sri Lankans said that they do not know whether the Constitution should or should not mention labels. The opinion that the Constitution should mention labels is mainly held by the Sinhalese community (55.7%) in comparison to the Tamil (15.2%), Up Country Tamil (11.9%) and Muslim (22.2%) communities. Around 25% from the Northern, Uva, Eastern and Sabaragamuwa Provinces said that the Constitution should not mention labels while 59.1% from the North Western Province, 55.9% from the Southern Province and 52.8% from the Sabaragamuwa Province said that it should mention labels. Almost 60% in the Central and Northern Provinces said that they do not know. (Refer Graph 2.6)

Because the term ‘unitary state’ means different things to different people, respondents were given a list of ideas of what the term means and asked to select the one closest to what unitary state means to them. The list included -

*One united indivisible country*

*Where there is only one Central Government and Parliament and no Provincial Councils*

*Where some powers are exercised by the Central Government and Parliament and other powers are exercised by the Provincial Councils*

*A system in which all final decisions are made by the Central Government*

*A system of Government in which power is shared within one united indivisible country*

*A country in which the primacy of the Sinhala-Buddhists is protected*

49.3% of Sri Lankans said that unitary state means one united indivisible country while 24.4% said that they did not know. 9.6% selected a system in which all final decisions are made by the Central Government while selection of other items on the list were less than 6%.

From an ethnic perspective, 58.1% from the Sinhala community, 27.4% from the Tamil community, 22% from the Up Country Tamil community and 16.2% from the Muslim

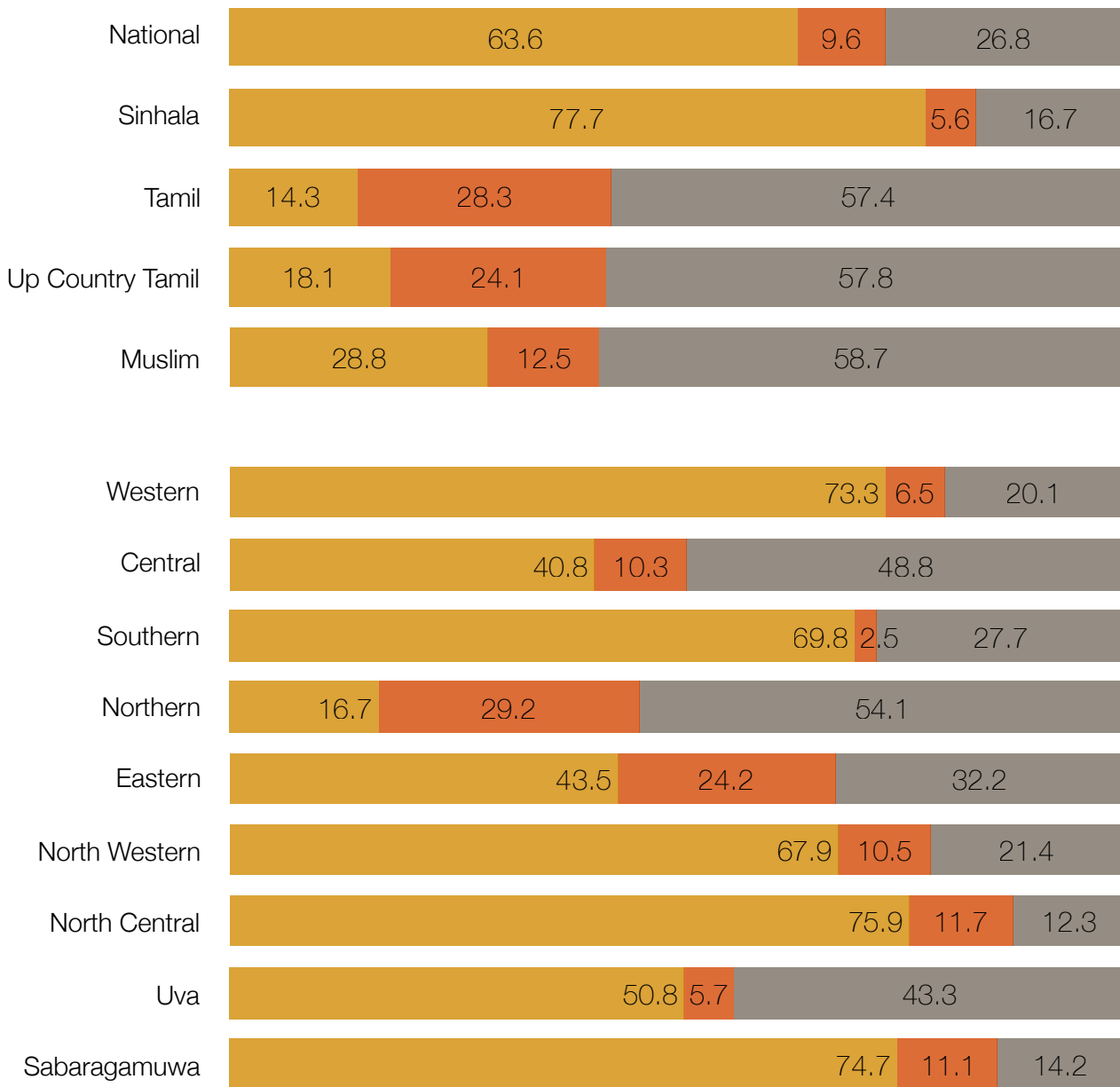
community said that it means one united indivisible country. It is important to note that 40.7% from the Tamil, 42.7% from the Up Country Tamil and 58.4% from the Muslim communities said that they did not know (Refer Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: The term 'unitary state' means different things to different people. I will read a list of ideas that we have heard in the past - please tell me which of these is closest to what the term unitary state means to you?**

	National	Sinhala	Tamil	Up Country Tamil	Muslim
One united indivisible country	49.3%	58.1%	27.4%	22.0%	16.2%
Where there is only one central Government and Parliament and no Provincial Councils	1.2	1.4%	0.9%	1.2%	0.5%
Where some powers are exercised by the Central Government and parliament and other powers are exercised by the Provincial Councils	4.7%	3.8%	5.8%	6.1%	10.8%
A system in which all final decisions are made by the Central Government	9.6%	9.5%	11.1%	15.9%	5.9%
A system of government in which power is shared within one united indivisible country	5.4%	4.8%	8.8%	4.9%	7.0%
A country in which the primacy of the Sinhala-Buddhists is protected	5.3%	5.7%	5.3%	7.3%	1.1%
Don't Know/No Responses	24.4%	16.7%	40.7%	42.7%	58.4%

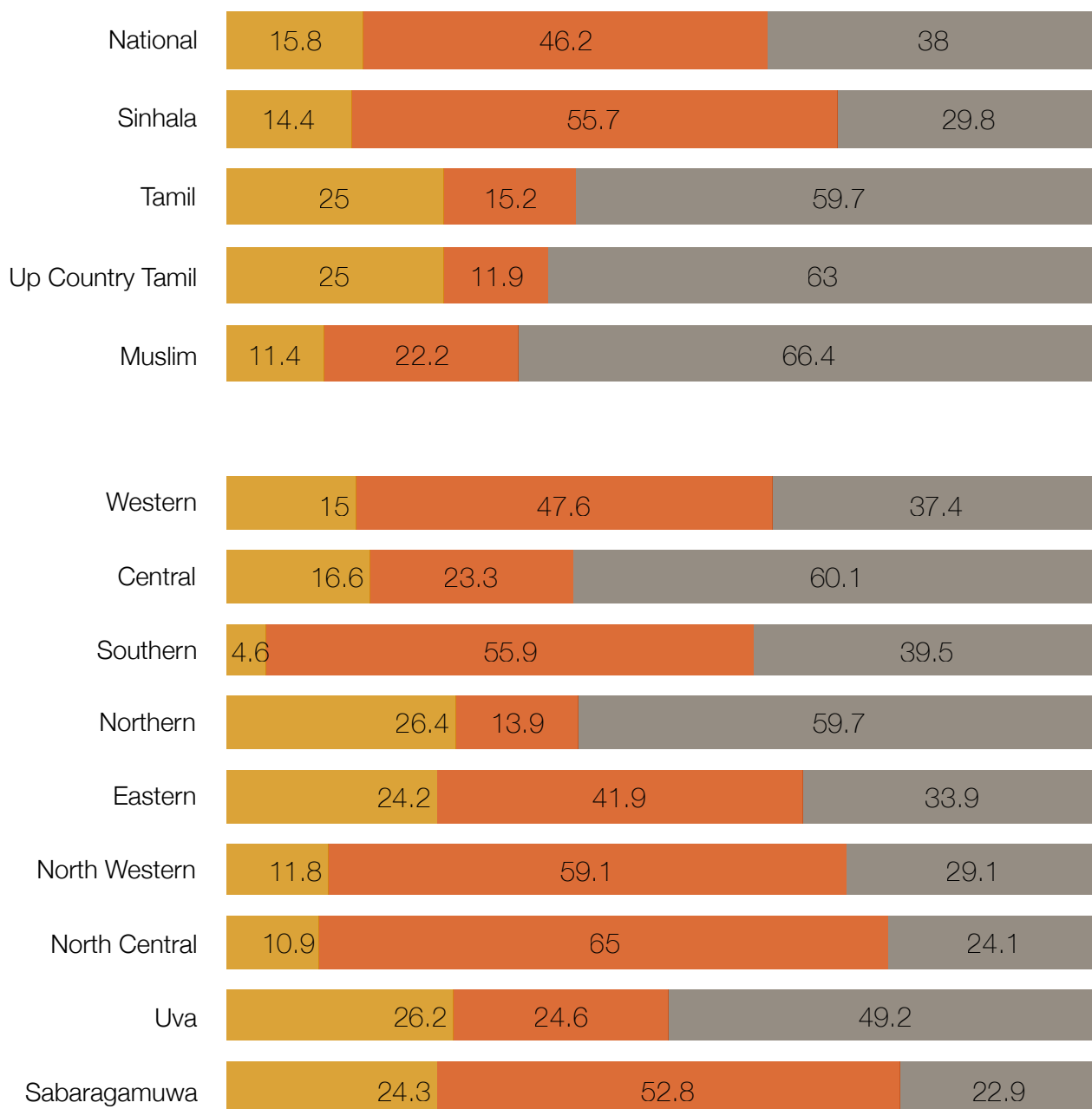
**Graph 2.5: Article 2 of our current Constitution states that ‘The Republic of Sri Lanka is a Unitary State’. Do you feel it is important to retain the phrase ‘unitary state’ in the new Constitution?**

- Yes, I think it is important to retain the phrase ‘unitary state’ in the new Constitution
- No, I do not think it is important to retain the phrase ‘unitary state’ in the new Constitution
- Don't Know



**Graph 2.6: Do you think that the Constitution should not mention any label, such as 'unitary state', 'federal state', etc. in its description of the State?**

- The Constitution should not mention any label in its description of the State
- The Constitution should mention labels in its description of the State
- Don't Know



Respondents were given a list of statements on the question of religion and the Constitution and asked to state their level of agreement for each statement. The five statements were -

**A** - Buddhism should be given a special place in the Constitution

**B** - The Constitution should give Buddhism a special place while guaranteeing the religious freedom of others

**C** - The Constitution should protect freedom of religion as a Fundamental Right

**D** - The Constitution should avoid all mention of religion, other than guaranteeing rights to religious freedom

**E** - The Constitution should give all religions equal status

From the five statements, agreement was highest for the statement that the Constitution should protect freedom of religion as a Fundamental Right, with 74.4% Sri Lankans saying that they strongly agree and 15.4% agreeing. 70.6% of Sri Lankans strongly agree that the Constitution should give all religions equal status.

The disparity in opinion on religion and the Constitution is evident from the ethnic breakdown. On the question of giving Buddhism a special place in the Constitution, around 77% of Sinhalese strongly agree that Buddhism should be given a special place in the Constitution. Around 54% of Sinhalese agree that the Constitution should give Buddhism a special place while guaranteeing the religious freedom of others. In comparison, 73.3% from the Tamil, 89.2% from the Up Country Tamil and 71.4% from the Muslim communities strongly disagree that Buddhism should be given a special place in the Constitution. 50% from the Tamil community, 68.3% from the Up Country Tamil community and 52.7% from the Muslim community also disagree that the Constitution should give Buddhism a special place while guaranteeing the religious freedom of others.

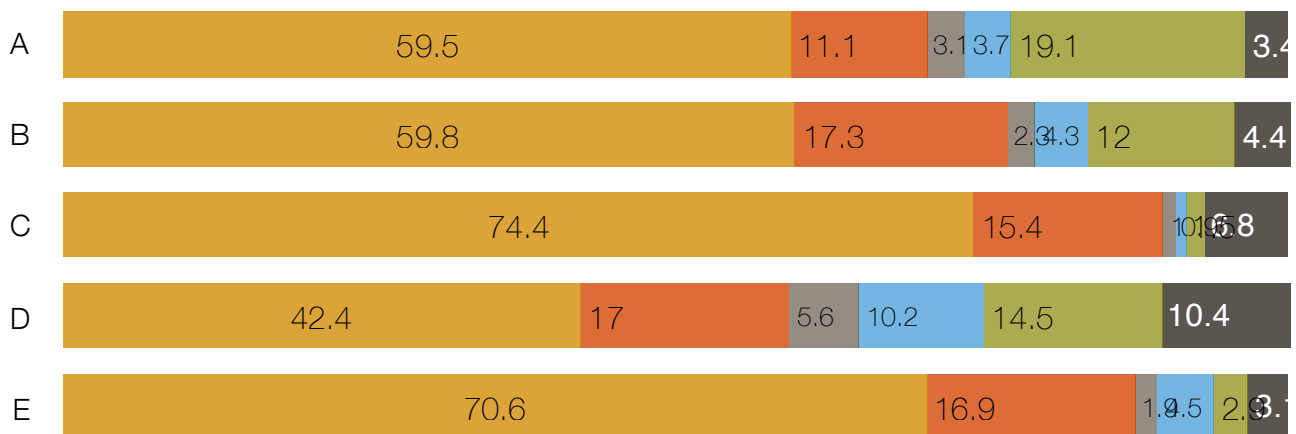
Almost 90% from the Tamil and Muslim communities, 96.4% from the Up Country Tamil community and 63.7% from the Sinhalese community strongly agree that the Constitution should give all religions equal status. (*Refer Graph 2.7*)

**Graph 2.7: Please state your level of agreement for the following statements -**

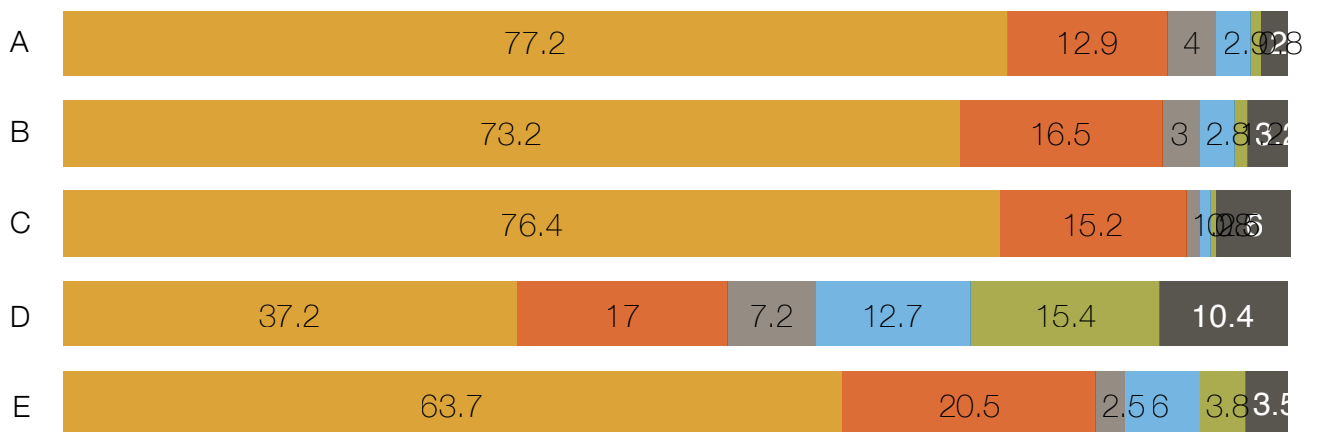
- A** - Buddhism should be given a special place in the Constitution
- B** - The Constitution should give Buddhism a special place while guaranteeing the religious freedom of others
- C** - The Constitution should protect freedom of religion as a Fundamental Right
- D** - The Constitution should avoid all mention of religion, other than guaranteeing rights to religious freedom
- E** - The Constitution should give all religions equal status



*National*

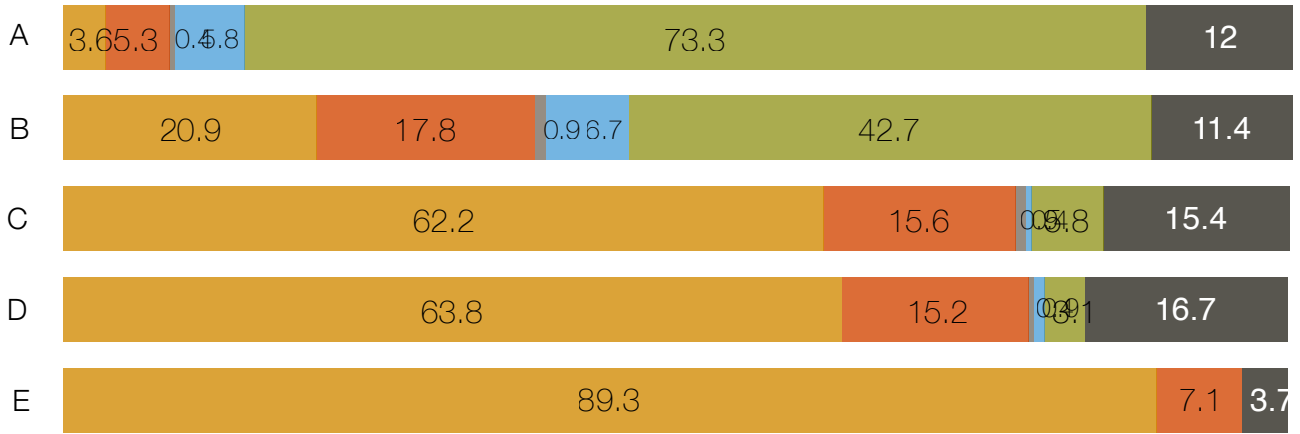


*Sinhala*

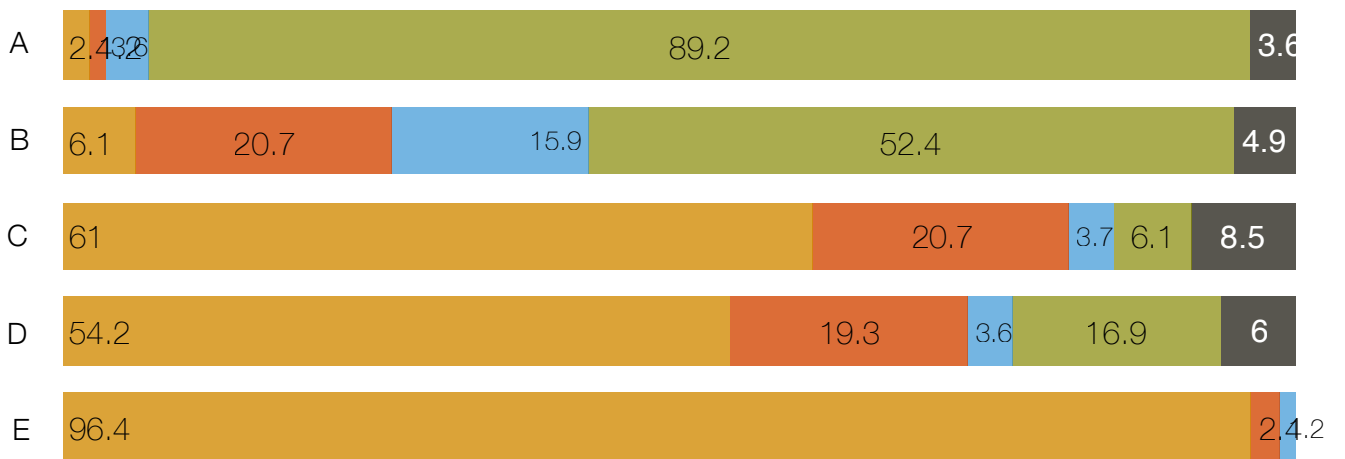




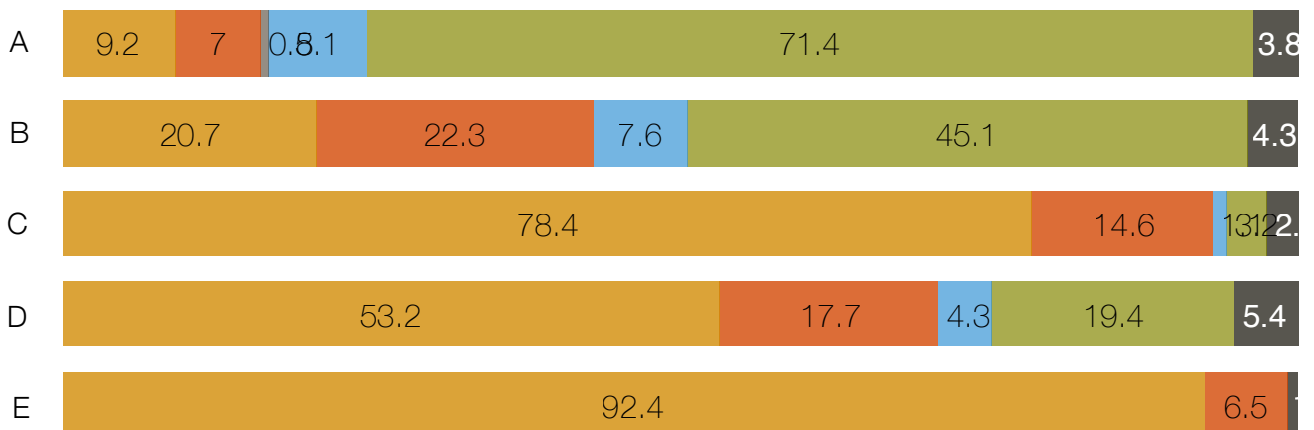
*Tamil*



*Up Country Tamil*



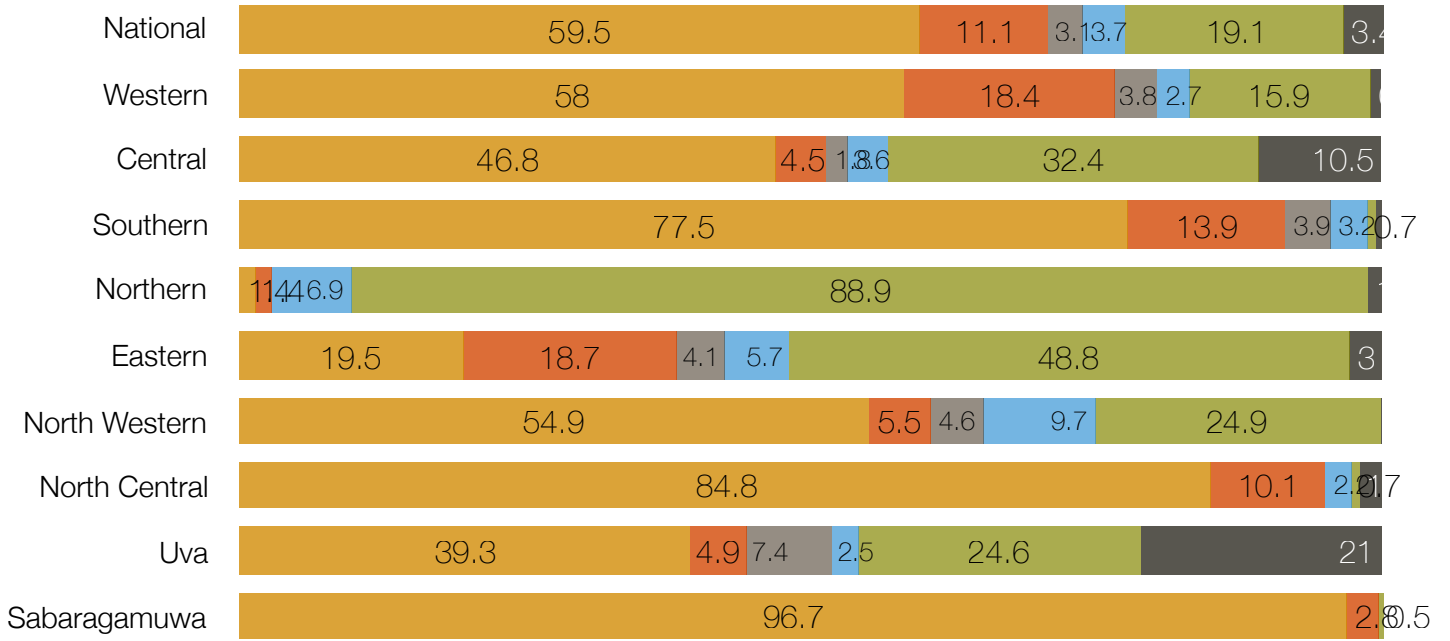
*Muslim*



**Graph 2.8: Please state your level of agreement for the following statements -**

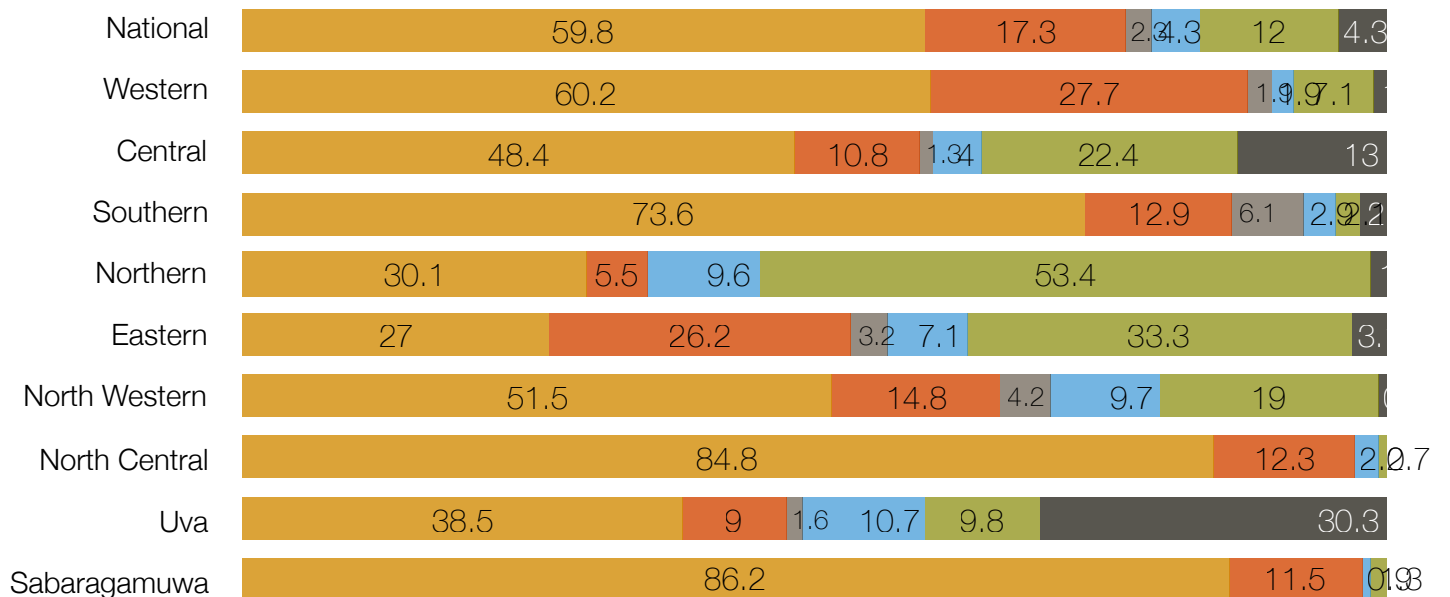
**A - Buddhism should be given a special place in the Constitution**

■ Strongly Agree     ■ Agree     ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree  
■ Disagree     ■ Strongly Disagree     ■ Don't Know



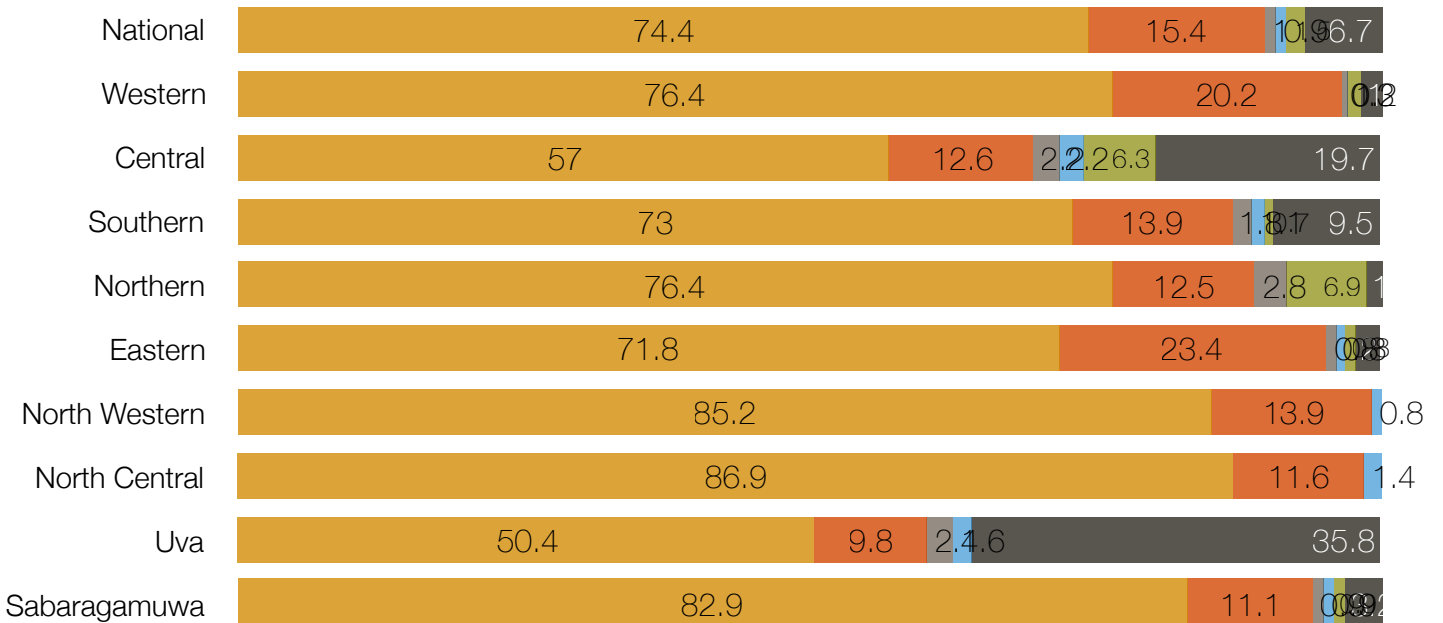
**B - The Constitution should give Buddhism a special place while guaranteeing the religious freedom of others**

■ Strongly Agree     ■ Agree     ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree  
■ Disagree     ■ Strongly Disagree     ■ Don't Know

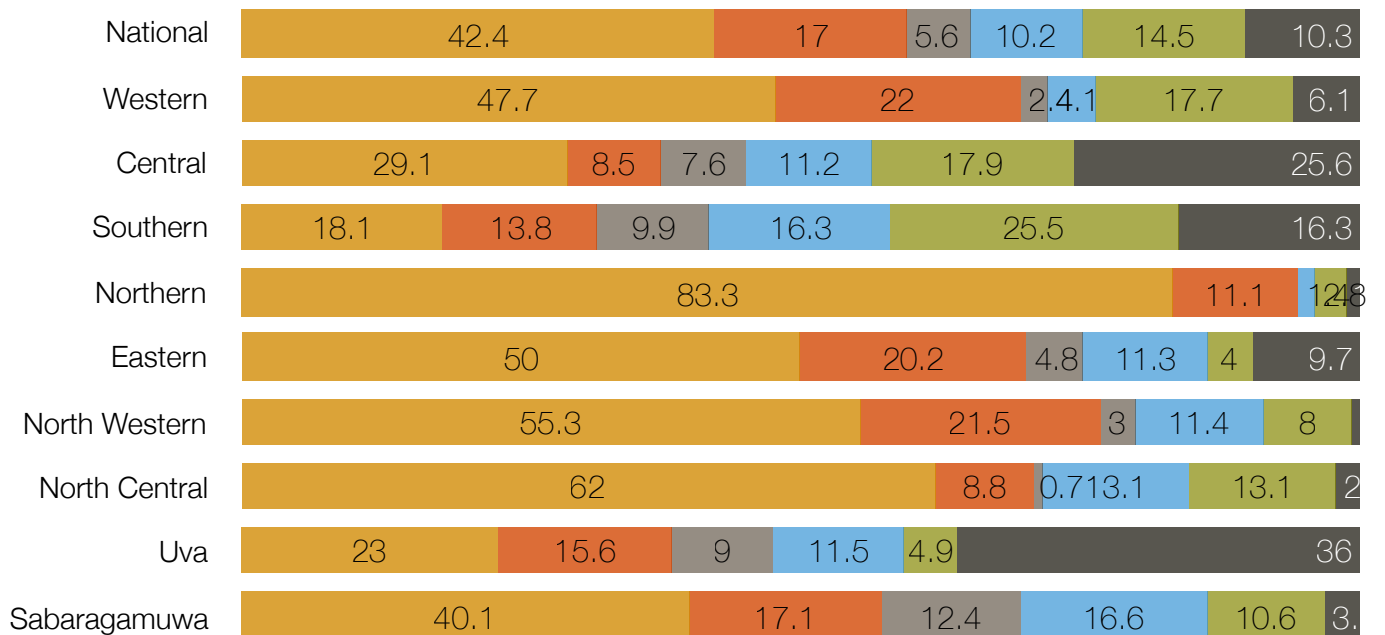




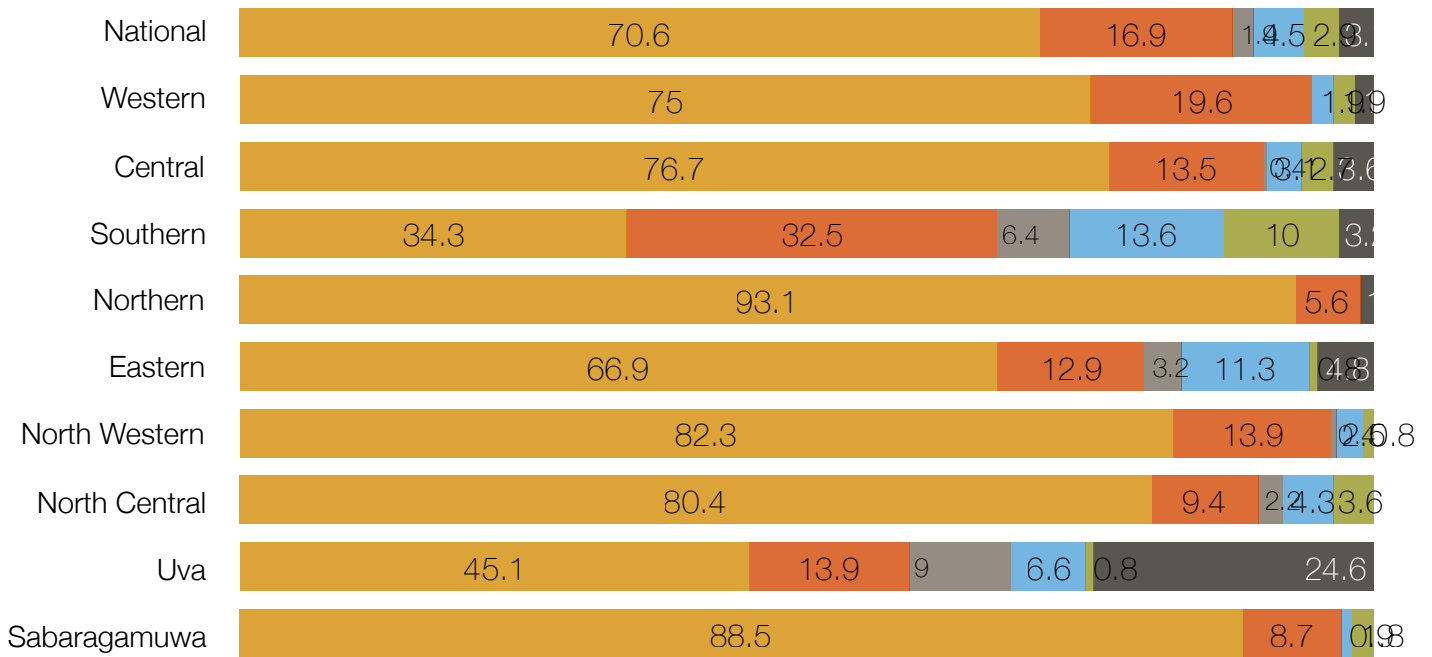
### C - The Constitution should protect freedom of religion as a Fundamental Right



### D - The Constitution should avoid all mention of religion, other than guaranteeing rights to religious freedom



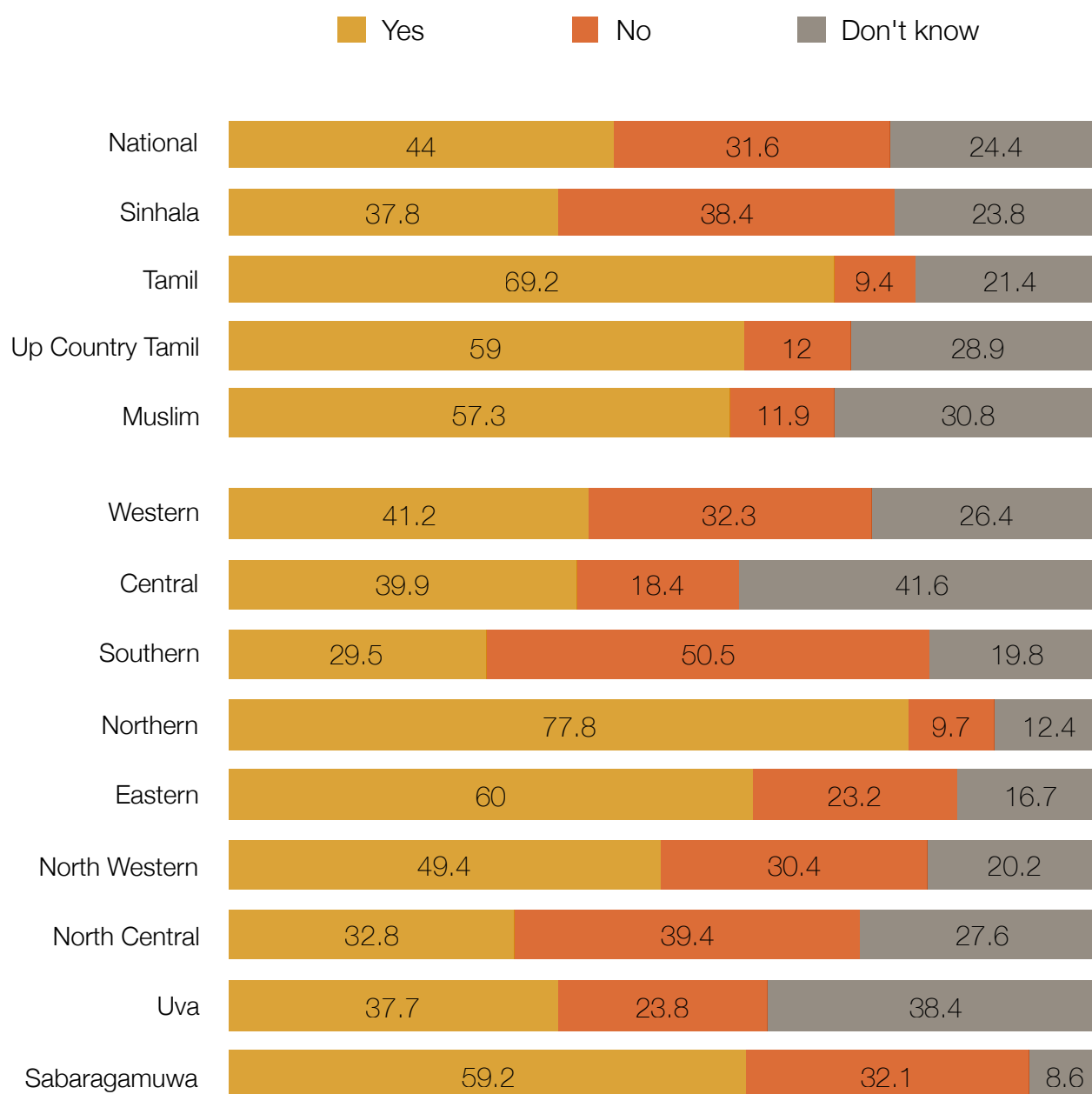
## E - The Constitution should give all religions equal status



### 3 Provincial Councils

When asked if the powers of the Provincial Councils should be increased, 44% of Sri Lankans said that they should be increased while 31.6% said that they should not be increased. 24.4% said that they did not know. From a Provincial perspective, support for increasing powers of the Provincial Councils are highest in the Northern (77.8%), Eastern (60%) and Sabaragamuwa (59.2%) Provinces. 50% from the Southern Province said that the powers should not be increased while around 40% from the Central and Uva Provinces said that they do not know. (Refer Graph 3.1)

**Graph 3.1: Do you think the powers of Provincial Councils should be increased?**



Those who said that the powers of Provincial Councils should be increased were given a list and asked which powers they were agreeable to increasing (*Table 2.1*). More than 80% of respondents from all Provinces were agreeable to almost every power on the list being increased, with agreement falling short in comparison for increasing Provincial Councils' power with regard to (i) inward investment and foreign aid, (ii) law and order and (iii) power to alienate or reallocate State land. However, support from the Northern and Eastern Provinces for increasing powers for these three items were more than 85%.

In the Southern Province, support for increasing powers in the Provincial Councils' ability to increase more financial resources (63.9%) and powers with regard to rivers and forest (67.5%) was lower when compared to other Provinces. (*Refer Table 3.1*)

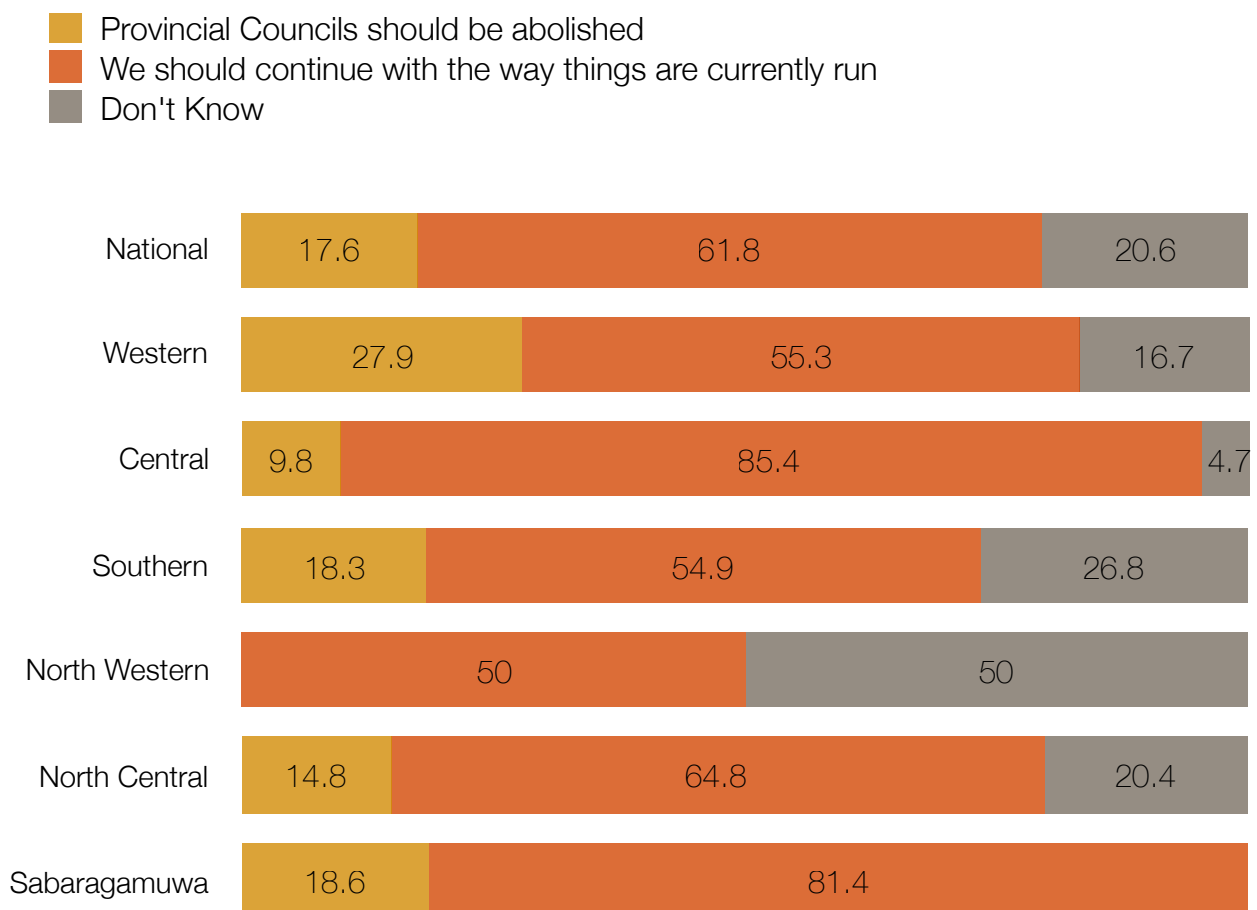
**Table 3.1: 'Yes' answers to list of powers that should be increased (Asked only from respondents who answered 'yes' to increasing powers of Provincial Councils)**

	National	Western	Central	Southern	Northern	Eastern	North Western	North Central	Uva	Sabaragamuwa
Ability to increase more financial sources	88.3	89.3	79.5	63.9	92.7	97.3	98.3	93.5	62.2	100.0
Hospitals	96.4	98.8	94.4	98.8	92.9	93.2	96.6	100.0	78.3	100.0
Schools	95.7	96.3	96.6	95.2	91.1	92.0	95.7	100.0	84.8	100.0
Roads and bridges	94.0	93.8	93.2	94.0	89.1	89.3	91.5	100.0	95.7	100.0
Rivers and forest	82.6	85.5	71.6	67.5	82.1	80.0	82.2	100.0	71.1	93.8
Electricity and power generation	88.3	94.6	77.5	74.7	82.1	86.7	87.1	97.8	71.7	100.0
Water & sanitation	94.2	97.1	96.6	89.0	89.3	90.7	88.0	97.8	89.1	100.0
Industries that are important within the Province	93.6	97.5	79.5	92.8	91.1	94.6	94.9	97.8	77.8	100.0
Inward investment and foreign aid	74.2	87.2	49.4	58.5	87.7	89.2	76.9	60.9	42.2	76.7
Law and order powers	73.6	77.7	56.2	61.9	94.5	88.0	74.4	51.1	40.0	86.0
Power to alienate or reallocate state land	72.4	72.3	58.4	50.0	92.9	90.7	76.1	48.9	53.2	89.1

Those who said that the powers of the Provincial Councils should not be increased were asked if Provincial Councils should be abolished or whether we should continue with the way things are currently run. Majority support was for continuing with the way things are currently run, except in the North Western Province where half the respondents said that they did not know. (Refer Graph 3.2)

When asked if powers of the Provincial Councils are increased whether we need to keep the Executive Presidency, 43.6% of Sri Lankans said yes while 15.2% said no to keeping the Executive Presidency. A noteworthy 41.2% said that they did not know. Support for keeping Executive Presidency if the powers of Provincial Councils are increased was highest in the North Western (60.3%) and Sabaragamuwa (58%) Provinces. 43.8% from the Northern Province said that we do not need to keep Executive Presidency if powers of Provincial Councils are increased. (Refer Graph 3.3)

**Graph 3.2: If powers of the Provincial Councils should not be increased, do you think -**



*\*Northern, Eastern and Uva Provinces have been removed from the graph as the total number of respondents were below 30*

**Graph 3.3: If powers of the Provincial Councils are increased do we need keep the Executive Presidency?**

