

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

ON SRI LANKA'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

MAY 2019

CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - SOCIAL INDICATOR

C O N T E N T S

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Throughout the past three decades, successive governments have stressed the importance of constitutional reform. This has been either as a means of addressing minority grievances which in turn would form part of a solution to the ethnic conflict or as a means of restructuring various contentious aspects within the 1978 Constitution (i.e. the executive presidential system and the electoral system.)

Campaigning on a platform of good governance, the yahapalanaya regime pledged to implement a host of initiatives that ranged from community based reconciliation programmes, to the constitutional reform process. The constitutional reform process officially commenced with public consultations in January 2016. The Public Representations Committee (PRC) for constitutional reforms was formed to seek the views of the people. The PRC comprised of a twenty member committee which included academics and luminaries from different fields nominated by political parties. The overarching feature of the public consultation process, which was carried out across all 25 administrative districts during February to March 2016, was to capture written and oral submissions from the public pertaining to the needs and aspirations of the people - thereby enhancing public participation and a culture of inclusiveness in the constitutional reform process. A report compiled by the PRC following the public consultations was submitted to the members of the Constitutional Assembly, the Steering Committee and the Sub-Committees for their consideration in May and July 2016.

On the 09th of March 2016 a representative body known as the 'Constitutional Assembly' was created where the 225 Members of Parliament sat as a committee to assist with drafting of the proposed constitution. This was followed by a Steering Committee being formed in April 2016 with 21 members reflecting the general political party leadership within parliament, to assist with drafting a new constitutional proposal for consideration by the Constitutional Assembly. These initiatives proposed in relation to constitutional reform triggered much interest and hope among Civil Society Organisations in bringing about a new constitution for Sri Lanka.

However, heightened hopes swiftly disappeared with the President's decision to unconstitutionally sack the incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on the 26th of October 2018. When President Sirisena's newly appointed Prime Minister, Mahinda Rajapaksa failed to muster a parliamentary majority, the President desperately ordered the dissolution of parliament on the 9th of November 2018. The Supreme Court on the 15th of December 2018 ruled that the President's moves in removing the incumbent Prime Minister from office and dissolving parliament was illegal and unconstitutional.

Although there had been many glitches and gaps in proceeding with the constitutional reform process since its initiation – the constitutional crisis that transpired in October 2018 further confirmed the lack of political will within the government to bring about proposed reforms and thereby brought the entire process to a complete halt. Ironically though, the many debates that followed the crisis inadvertently created a heightened level of awareness and interest about the constitution amongst the general public.

It is in this context Social Indicator, the survey research arm of the Centre for Policy Alternatives ventured into this study in order to capture public perception on the manner in which people perceive the contents of the constitution and their perception of the constitutional crisis that occurred in October 2018. Opinion surveys are a powerful medium through which the general public can voice their opinion on issues that matter to them. Furthermore it is also one of the best scientific methods that could help policy makers, academics and those in power understand the pulse of the citizenry. Therefore, we strongly believe that this survey will make an invaluable contribution towards understanding the citizens' knowledge, perception and attitudes towards the constitution and constitutional reform process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Social Indicator would like to thank Dr.Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu and Dr.Asanga Welikala for their valuable input in developing the study structure.

The survey team comprised of Dr.Pradeep Peiris, Sakina Moinudeen and M. Krishnamoorthy. Shashik Dhanushka assisted with the data analysis.

The Public Opinion Poll on the Constitution of Sri Lanka was carried out using a semi structured questionnaire which was administered through face to face interviews with 1300 respondents in both Sinhala and Tamil languages across all 25 districts.

The survey questionnaire incorporated key areas pertaining to the level of awareness, satisfaction and sources of communication the public engage in, in order to obtain information with regard to the constitution of Sri Lanka and also captured public perception in relation to the Constitutional Crisis, which transpired on the 26th of October 2018.

A multi-staged stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample respondents. The sample distribution was done considering the district and ethnic population - using the Population Proportionate Sampling technique. The sample size was determined in order to produce results within a 2% error margin at a 95% confidence level.

Fieldwork for the entire study was conducted from the 24th of January to the 14th of February 2019. A total of 40 field researchers both male and female from three ethnic communities – Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim participated in this study. The interviews were conducted in the first language of both the respondents and the field researcher. The field researchers were given an extensive training on the study, the research instrument and field techniques prior to the commencement of field work. In order to ensure the quality of the data collected - accompany visits, spot-checks and back-checks were done during and after field work. The dataset was weighted in order to reflect actual district and ethnic proportion of the population. The data set was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE ON SRI LANKA'S CONSTITUTION AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Whilst a majority of Sri Lankans (85.5%) indicate that they have some degree of awareness about the constitution of Sri Lanka, only 4% indicate that they are aware about the constitution to a large extent. 10.5% of Sri Lankans state that they do not know that there is something called a 'constitution'¹.

A slightly higher proportion from the rural community (33.2%) in comparison to the urban community (26%), seem to be aware about the constitution, but indicate that they do not have much knowledge about it. Interestingly, a slightly higher proportion among the urban community (12.4%) in comparison to the rural community (10%) indicate that they do not know that there is something called a 'constitution'.

A significant proportion of respondents from between the ages 18 to 29 and above 29 years indicate that they are aware of the constitution of Sri Lanka.

¹ In Sinhala and Tamil language questions were worded as follows:

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ආණ්ඩුක්‍රම ව්‍යවස්ථාව පිළිබඳ ඔබගේ දැනුවත්කම වඩාත් හොඳින්ම පිළිබිඹු කෙරෙනුයේ පහත කුමන ප්‍රකාශයෙන් ද?

1- ආණ්ඩුක්‍රම ව්‍යවස්ථාව පිළිබඳ මා බොහෝ දුරට දැනුවත්.

2- ආණ්ඩුක්‍රම ව්‍යවස්ථාව පිළිබඳව මා හට යම් තරමක දැනුමක් ඇත.

3- ආණ්ඩුක්‍රම ව්‍යවස්ථාව පිළිබඳව මා දන්නා නමුත් ඒ පිළිබඳ වැඩි දැනුමක් මා හට නැත.

4- ආණ්ඩුක්‍රම ව්‍යවස්ථාව පිළිබඳව මා දැනසිටි මුත් එය කුමක් ද සහ එහි අන්තර්ගතය කවර ආකාරයකින් දැනගැනීමට මම කිසිදාම උත්සාහ කර නැත.

5- "ආණ්ඩුක්‍රම ව්‍යවස්ථාවක්" යනුවෙන් දෙයක් තිබෙනවා කියලා මම දන්නේ නැත.

பின்வரும் கூற்றுக்களில் எந்தக் கூற்று இலங்கையினது அரசியலமைப்பு தொடர்பாக நீங்கள் எவ்வளவு அறிந்திருக்கிறீர்கள் என்பதை நன்கு பிரதிபலிக்கின்றது?

1. அரசியலமைப்பு தொடர்பில் பெருமளவு அறிந்து வைத்துள்ளேன்

2. அரசியலமைப்பு தொடர்பில் ஓரளவு அறிந்து வைத்துள்ளேன்

3. அரசியலமைப்பு தொடர்பில் அறிந்திருக்கின்றேன், ஆயினும் அது பற்றிய அறிவு இல்லை

4. அரசியலமைப்பு தொடர்பில் அறிந்திருக்கின்றேன் ஆயினும் அதன் உள்ளடக்கம் தொடர்பில் அறிவதற்கு எந்த முயற்சியும் எடுக்கவில்லை.

5. 'அரசியலமைப்பு' என்றதொரு விடயம் இருப்பது தொடர்பில் நான் அறிந்திருக்கவில்லை

Figure 1: Which of the following statements best reflects your level of awareness about Sri Lanka's Constitution? (By National)

- I am aware of the constitution to a large extent
- I am somewhat aware about the constitution
- I am aware about the constitution, but I do not have much knowledge about it
- I am aware about the constitution, but I have never made an attempt to know its content
- I do not know that there is something called a 'Constitution'

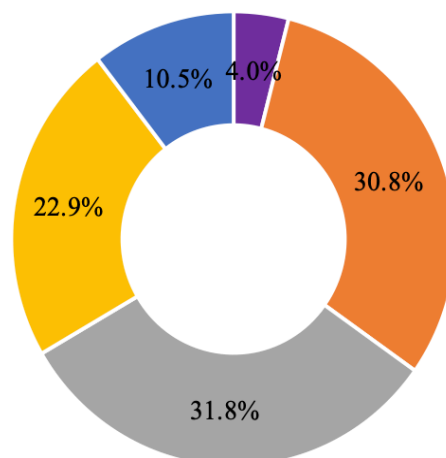
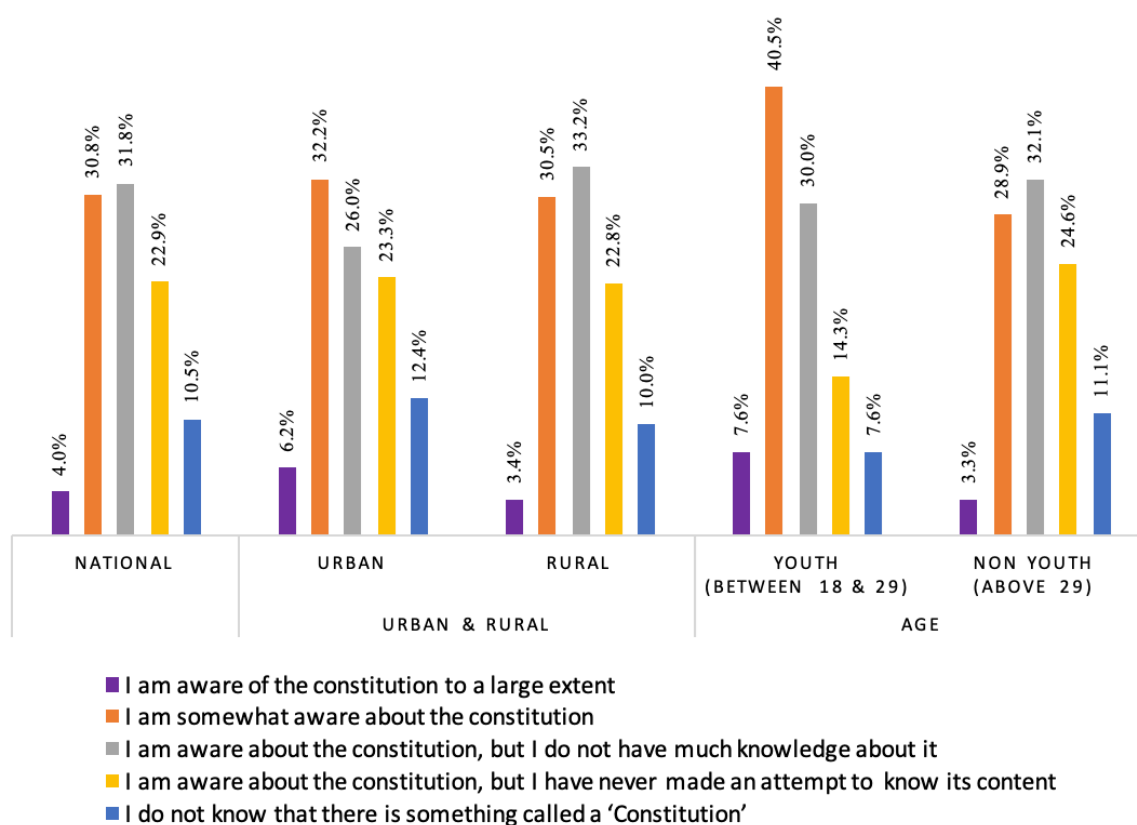


Figure 2: Which of the following statements best reflects your level of awareness about Sri Lanka's Constitution? (By Urban-Rural and Age)



A majority of Sri Lankans (63.3%), indicate that they are aware of the constitutional reform process, whilst 36.7% of Sri Lankans indicate that they are unaware of it.

It is interesting to note that while it is mostly the Sinhala community (67%) and the Tamil community (57.6%) who appear to be aware of the constitutional reform process - it is mostly the Muslim (57.8%) and the Up Country Tamil (56.4%) communities who indicate that they are unaware of it.

There does not seem to be any significant difference between the urban and rural communities in terms of the level of awareness on the constitutional reform process that is currently in progress.

A slightly higher percentage of respondents between the ages 18 to 29 seem to be aware of the constitutional reform process (68.6%) - in comparison to those who are above the age of 29 years (62.4%).

When analysing the data gathered from surveys conducted in the past, there appears to be a fluctuation in the level of awareness the public has, in relation to the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka. Whilst there was an overall increase in the level of awareness among Sri Lankans between October 2016 (57.1%)² to March 2017 (67%)³ – there appears to be a slight drop in the level of awareness in January 2019.

² Social Indicator, 'Opinion Poll on Constitutional Reform', Centre for Policy Alternatives, October 2016

³ Social Indicator, 'Opinion Poll on Constitutional Reform', Centre for Policy Alternatives, March 2017

Figure 3: The Yahapalana government (the government formed after 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections) claims to have been engaged in drafting a new constitution for the country. Are you aware of this process? (By National)

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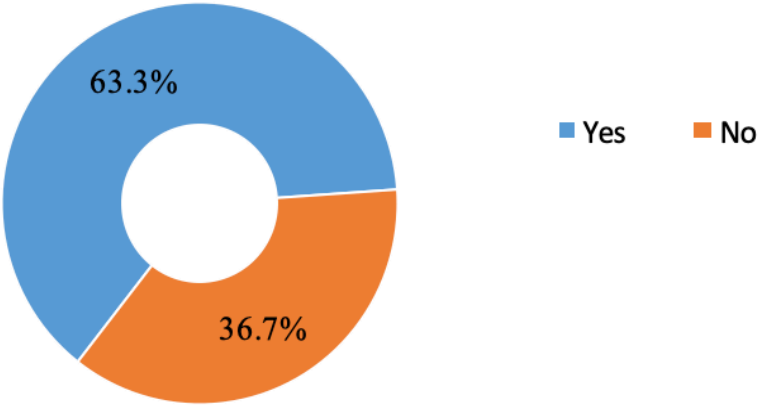
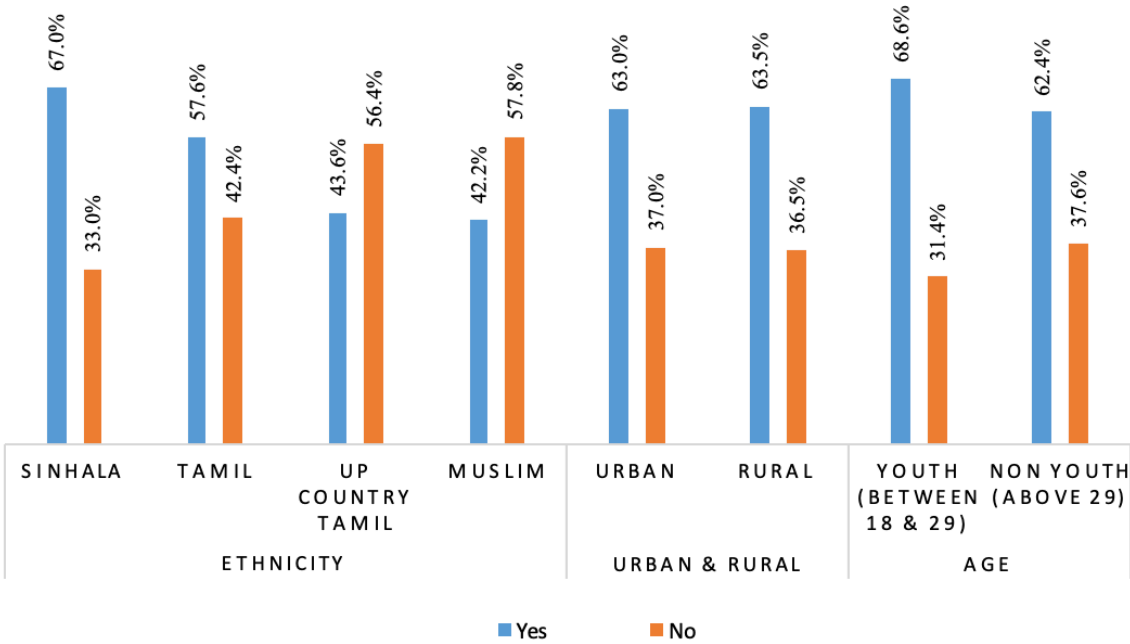


Figure 4: The Yahapalana government (the government formed after 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections) claims to have been engaged in drafting a new constitution for the country. Are you aware of this process? (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



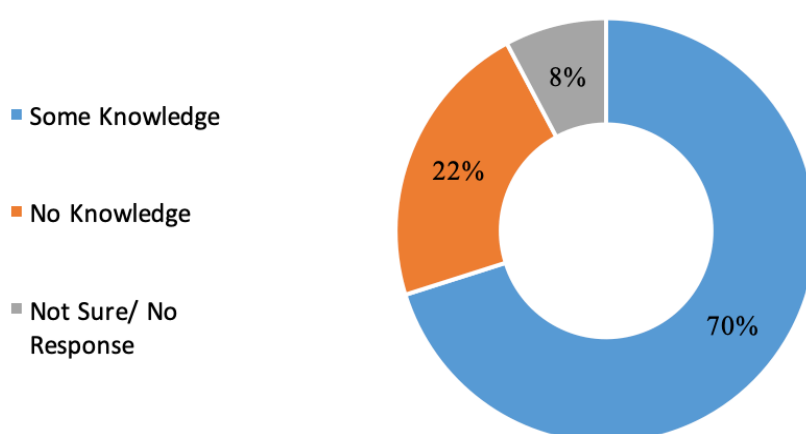
From those who indicate that they are aware of the drafting of a new constitution –70% of Sri Lankans indicate that they have some knowledge about the various aspects involved in the process (i.e. actors involved, measures taken etc.) 22% of Sri Lankans indicate that they have no knowledge at all - 8% of Sri Lankans indicate that they either do not know or are not sure.

From an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Muslim community (79.1%) followed by the Sinhala community (71.1%) who indicate that they have some knowledge about the various aspects involved in the constitutional reform process. From those who indicate that they have no knowledge at all, it is mostly the Tamil community (36.8%) followed by the Up Country Tamil community (25%) who hold this view.

The urban community (74.7%) in comparison to the rural community (68.9%) have more knowledge about the various aspects involved in the constitutional reform process.

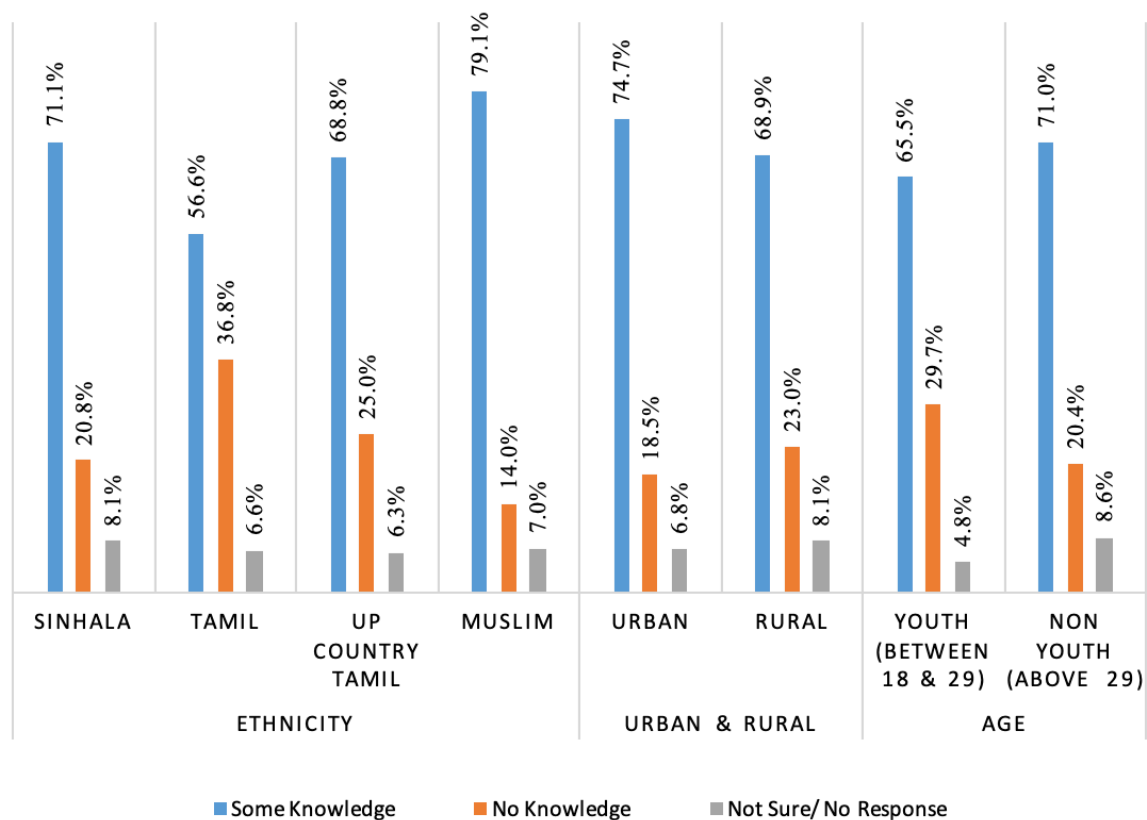
In general, a higher proportion of the respondents above the age of 29 years (71%) appear to be aware of the various aspects pertaining to the constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka than those between the ages 18 to 29 years (65.5%).

Figure 5: If yes, how much knowledge do you have in this regard? (I.e. actors involved, measures taken etc.) (By National)



**Figure 6: If yes, how much knowledge do you have in this regard?
(I.e. actors involved, measures taken etc.) (By Ethnicity, Urban – Rural
and Age)**

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A majority of Sri Lankans (53.3%) are of the opinion that the current constitution should continue but with some needed changes, whilst 13.3% indicate that the current constitution does not need any changes. It is important to note that there has been a considerable increase since October 2016 (33.6%)⁴ and March 2017 (38.9%)⁵ among those who indicate that the current constitution should continue but with some needed changes.

When comparing data with surveys conducted in the past it is evident that there has been a decline among those who believe that Sri Lanka needs a new constitution. While 33.9% of Sri Lankans indicated that they need a new constitution in October 2016, this figure decreased to 23.5% in March 2017 and to 21.5% in January 2019.

On an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Tamil community (67.4%) who indicate that Sri Lanka needs a new constitution. A significant proportion from the Sinhala (57.6%) and Muslim (57.8%) communities believe that the current constitution should continue but with some needed changes. From those who believe that the current constitution does not need any changes, it is mostly the Sinhala (15.2%) and Up Country Tamil (15%) communities who hold this view.

Although there does not seem to be any significant disparities between the urban and rural communities, a slightly higher proportion of the rural community (54.2%) in comparison to the urban community (49.8%) indicates that the current constitution should continue, but with some needed changes. It is also evident that a higher proportion from the urban community (27.6%) in comparison to the rural community (19.9%) believe that Sri Lanka needs a new constitution.

⁴ Social Indicator, 'Opinion Poll on Constitutional Reform', Centre for Policy Alternatives, October 2016

⁵ Social Indicator, 'Opinion Poll on Constitutional Reform', Centre for Policy Alternatives, March 2017

Figure 7: Should the current Constitution be wholly replaced with a new Constitution or should the current Constitution continue but with some needed changes? (By National)

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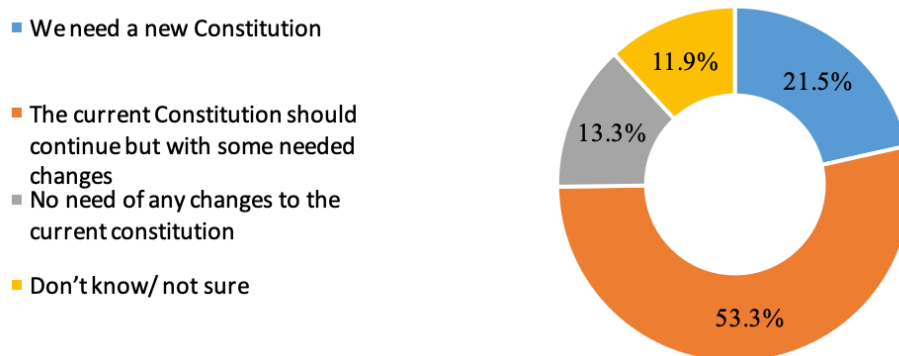
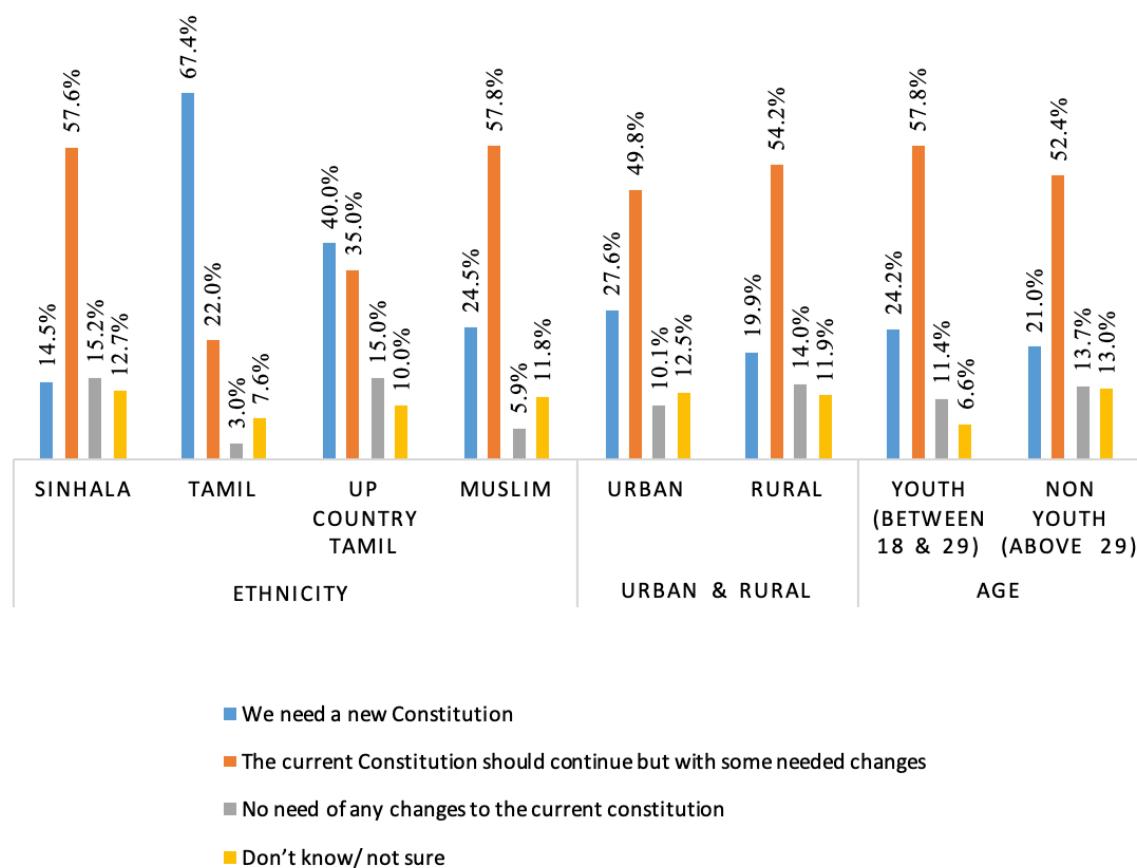


Figure 8: Should the current Constitution be wholly replaced with a new Constitution or should the current Constitution continue but with some needed changes? (Ethnic, Urban, Rural and Age)



PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR REFORM PROPOSALS

On the status of religion in the constitution, a majority of Sri Lankans (57.1%) believe that it is alright for the majority religion to be given the foremost place in the constitution.

However, there also appears to be a considerable proportion of Sri Lankans (40.1%) who are of the opinion that in order to maintain every citizen's right to equality no religion should be given the foremost place in the constitution.⁶

On an ethnic perspective, while a majority from the Sinhala community (70.4%) believe that it is okay for the majority religion to be given the foremost place in the constitution – it is mostly the minority communities (a substantial majority among the Tamil, Up Country Tamil and Muslim communities) who believe that in order to maintain every citizens' right to equality no religion should be given the foremost place in the constitution.

A majority of respondents among the rural community (60.2%) believe that it is okay for the majority religion to be given the foremost place in the constitution. On the contrary, a majority of respondents among the urban community (51.8%) believe that in order to maintain every citizens' right to equality, no religion should be given the foremost place in the constitution.

There appears to be a clear divide in opinion among the respondents between ages 18 to 29 in relation to those who believe that it is okay for the majority religion to be given the foremost place in the constitution (48.8%) and those who believe that in order to maintain every citizens' right to equality, no religion should be given the foremost place in the constitution (48.3%).

As for respondents who are above the age of 29 years – it is evident that they are in clear support of the majority religion being given the foremost place in the constitution (58.7%).

⁶ it is interesting to note that in 2013, 'Survey on Democracy in Post War Sri Lanka', 14.3% of Sri Lankans indicated that the constitution should have no mention of religion, except to guarantee the freedom of religion to all while in 2014, Survey on Democracy in Post War Sri Lanka' this figure slightly decreased to 11.1%.

Figure 9: Public Perception on the Status of Religion in the Constitution (By National)

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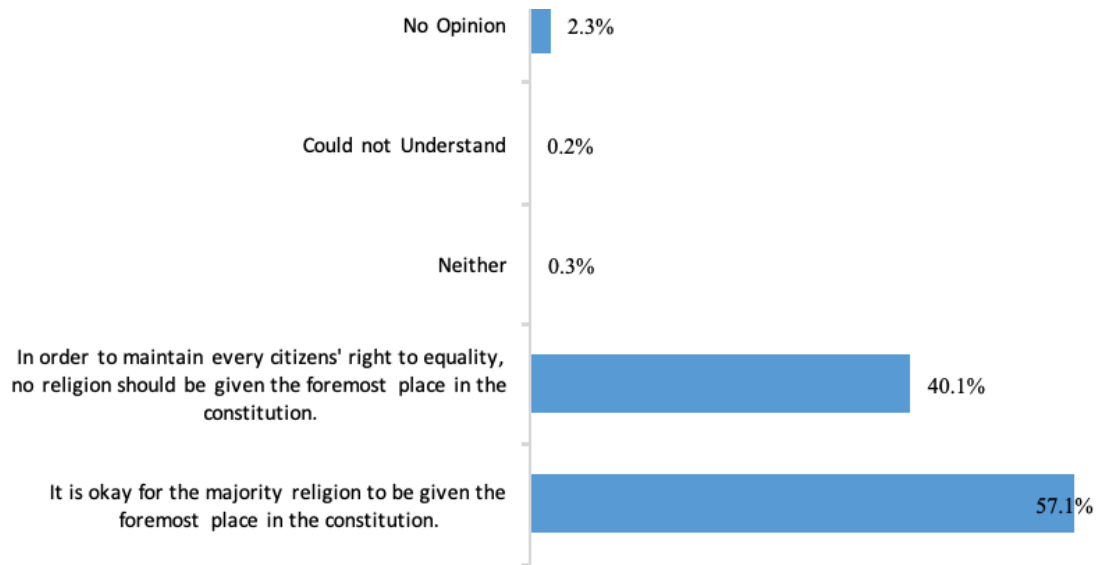
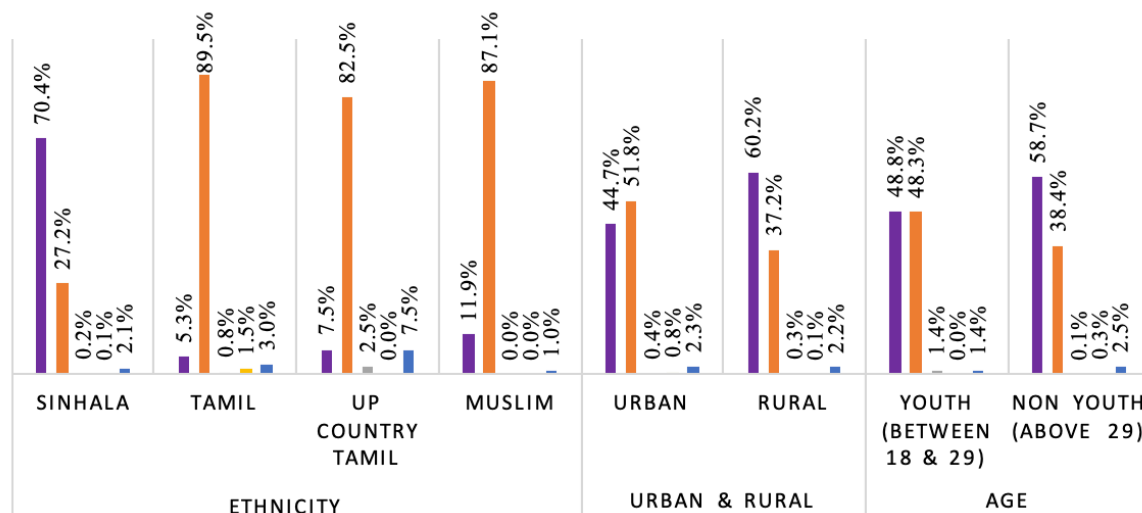


Figure 10: Public Perception on the Status of Religion in the Constitution (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



- It is okay for the majority religion to be given the foremost place in the constitution.
- In order to maintain every citizens' right to equality, no religion should be given the foremost place in the constitution.
- Neither
- Could not Understand
- No Opinion

On devolution of power, a higher proportion of Sri Lankans (48%) support decentralisation of certain powers but indicate that powers of the central government should not be reduced. 29.5% of Sri Lankans indicate that power needs to be devolved to the provincial councils while reducing the power of the central government.

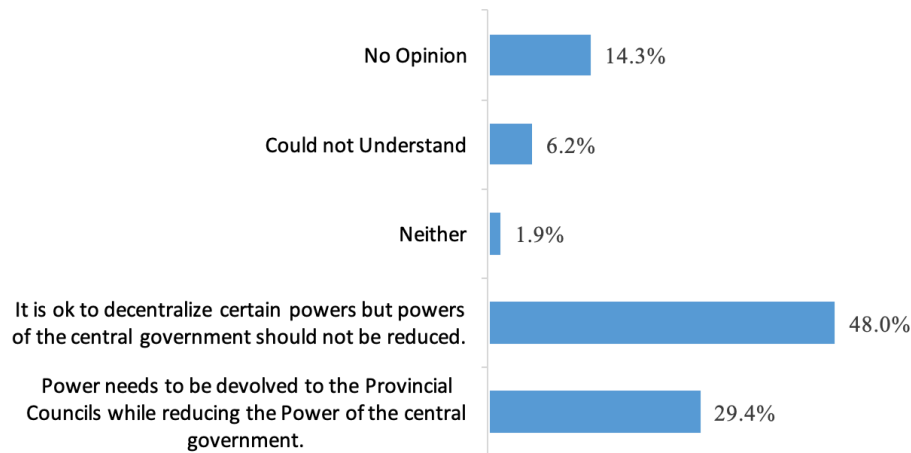
From an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Tamil community (62.1%) who indicate that power needs to be devolved to the provincial councils while reducing the power of the central government. This figure is followed by 48% from the Muslim community indicating the same.

It is mostly the Sinhala (52.4%) and Up Country Tamil (52.5%) communities who indicate that certain powers need to be decentralised but powers of the central government should not be reduced.

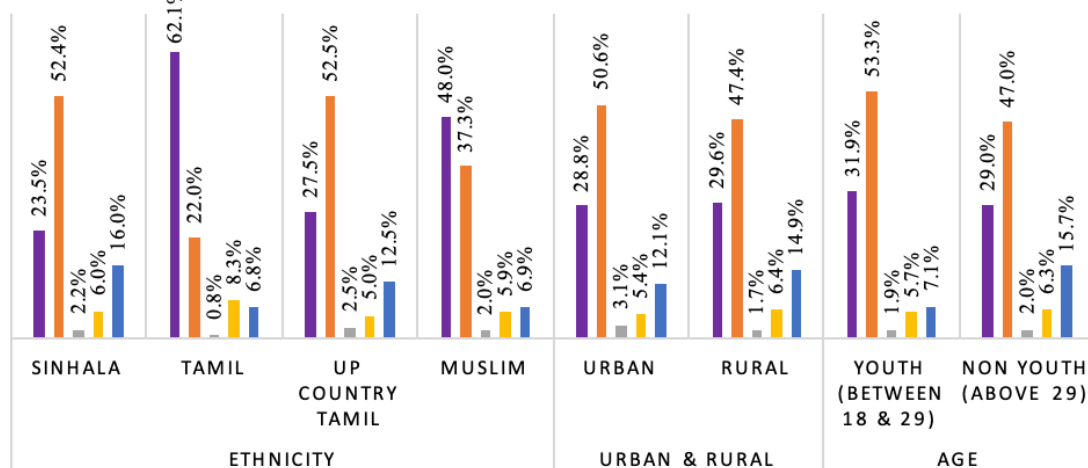
An almost equal proportion amongst both the urban (28.8%) and the rural (29.6%) communities believe that power needs to be devolved to the Provincial Councils, while reducing the power of the central government. This pattern recurs amongst both the urban (50.6%) and rural (47.4%) communities who believe that it is alright to decentralise certain powers but powers of the central government should not be reduced.

**Figure 11: Public Perception on Devolution of Power
(By National)**

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**Figure 12: Public Perception on Devolution of Power
(By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)**



- Power needs to be devolved to the Provincial Councils while reducing the Power of the central government.
- It is ok to decentralize certain powers but powers of the central government should not be reduced.
- Neither
- Could not Understand
- No Opinion

On whether Sri Lanka should be referred to as a 'Unitary State' or 'United Republic' in the new constitution – 55% of Sri Lankans believe that Sri Lanka should be referred to as a 'Unitary State' whilst 22.9% of Sri Lankans believe that Sri Lanka should be referred to as a 'United Republic' in the new constitution.

From an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Sinhala community (60.3%), closely followed by the Up Country Tamil community (59%) who believe that Sri Lanka should be referred to as a 'Unitary State' in the new constitution. In terms of Sri Lanka being referred to as a 'United Republic' – it is mostly the Tamil community (51.9%), closely followed by the Muslim community (47.6%) who hold this view.

A higher percentage among the rural community (57.3%) in comparison to the urban community (45.7%) believe that Sri Lanka should be referred to as a 'United Republic' in the new constitution. On Sri Lanka being referred to as a 'Unitary State' in the new constitution, a slightly higher proportion of the urban community (28.1%) in comparison to the rural community (21.6%) hold this view.

A slightly higher proportion among respondents between the ages 18 to 29 years (30.5%) in comparison to those above the age of 29 years (21.4%) believe that Sri Lanka should be referred to as a 'Unitary State'.

Figure13: Public Perception on the status of Unitary State vs. United Republic (By National)

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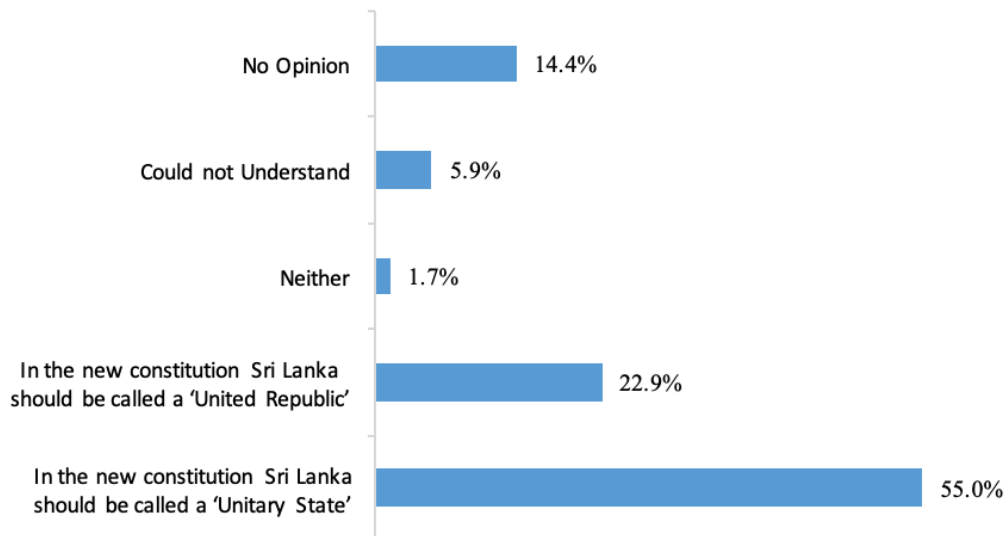
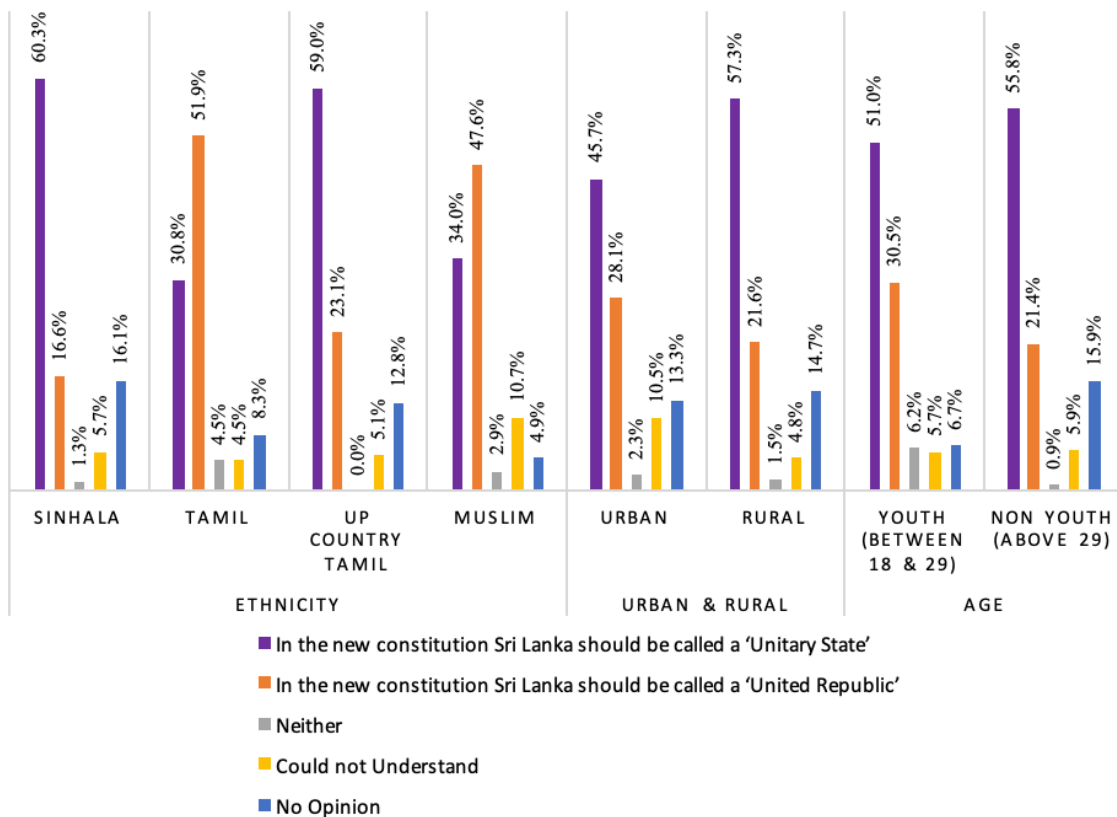


Figure 14: Public Perception on the status of Unitary State vs. United Republic in the New Constitution (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



On the sort of electoral system that should be incorporated in the new constitution, 46.8% of Sri Lankans believe that the new constitution should continue with the Proportional Electoral System, whilst 28.7% of Sri Lankans believe that the electoral system should be changed to a mixed system in the new constitution.

On an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Muslim community (56.3%) followed by the Sinhala community (47.8%) who indicate that the new constitution should continue with the Proportional Electoral System – whilst it is mostly the Up Country Tamil community (40%) who indicate that the electoral system should be changed to a Mixed System in the new constitution.

The Tamil community seem to be divided on this with 32.8% are of the opinion that the new constitution should continue with the Proportional Electoral System – while 38.8% indicate that the electoral system should be changed to a Mixed System in the new constitution.

There appears to be a divide in opinion even among the urban and the rural communities with regard to the sort of electoral reform that should be incorporated in the new constitution.

A slightly higher proportion among respondents between the ages 18 to 29 years (57.6%) believe that the new constitution should continue with the Proportional Electoral System in comparison to the respondents above the age of 29 years (44.7%)

Figure 15: Public Perception on the Electoral System (By National)

23

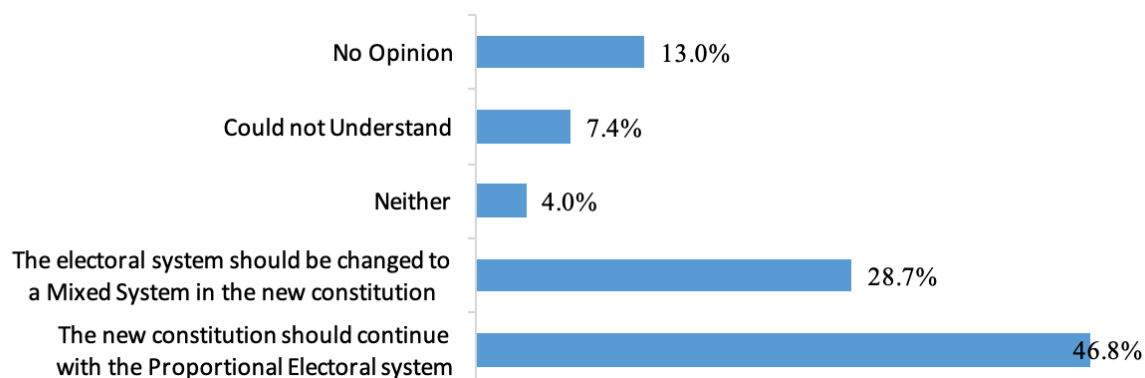
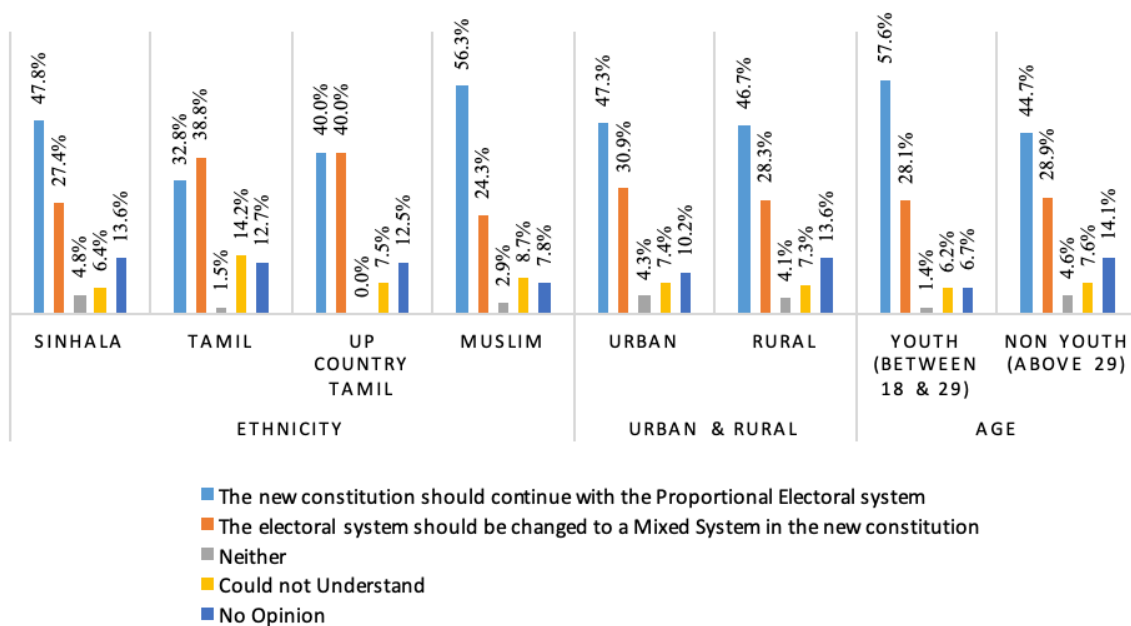


Figure 16: Public Perception on the Electoral System (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



While 43.6% of Sri Lankans indicate that the new constitution should not introduce an additional second chamber to the parliament, 18.8% of Sri Lankans state the contrary.

On an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Muslim community (31.1%) who indicate that the new constitution should introduce an additional second chamber to the house of representatives – whilst it is mostly the Tamil community (65.2%) who state the contrary.

In comparison to the rural community (17.2%), the urban community (25.3%) seem to be more inclined towards the introduction of a second chamber in addition to the house of representatives. An almost equal proportion from both the urban (43.2%) and the rural (43.8%) communities believe that the new constitution should not introduce a second chamber to parliament.

A higher proportion among the respondents between ages 18 to 29 years (32.5%) in comparison to those above the age of 29 years (16.2%) believe that the new constitution should introduce a second chamber in addition to parliament. As for the new constitution introducing a second chamber to the parliament, a higher proportion among the respondents between the ages 18 to 29 years (50.2%) are in favour of it, in comparison to the respondents above the age of 29 years (42.4%).

Figure 17: Public Perception on the Introduction of a Unicameral Vs. Bicameral Legislature (By National)

25

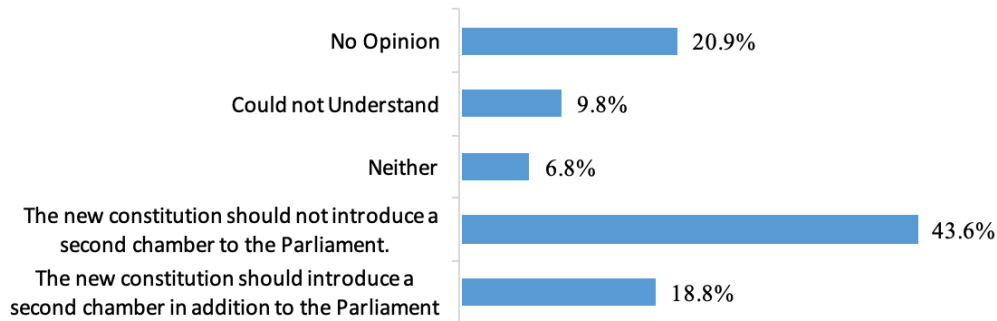
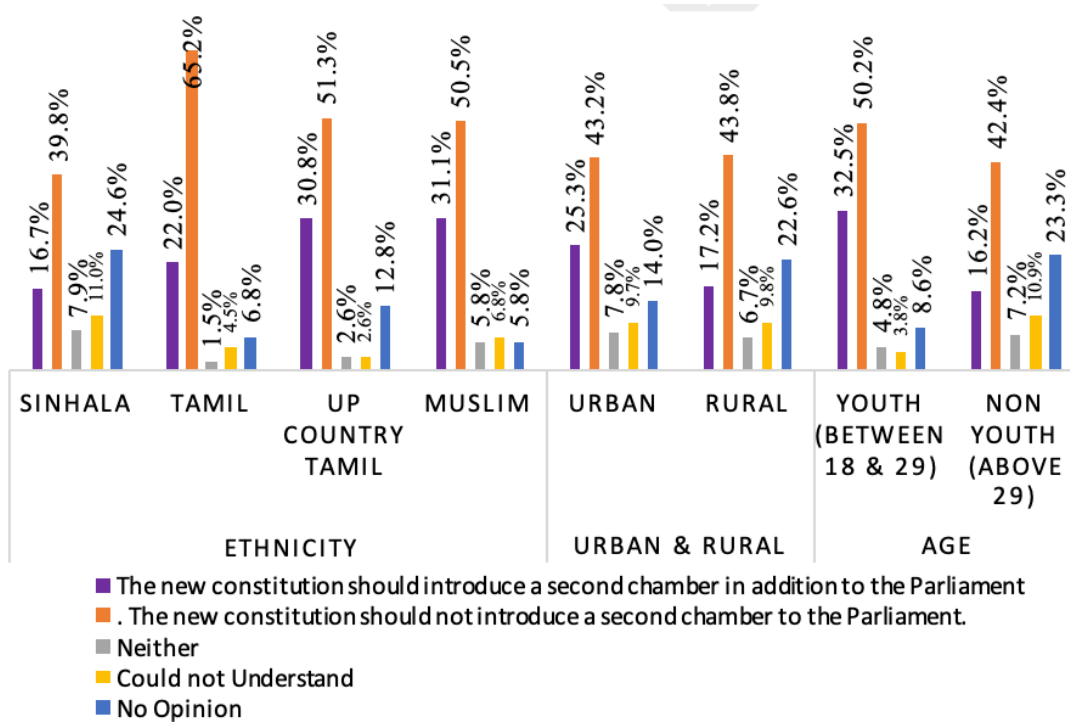


Figure 18: Public Perception on the Introduction of a Unicameral Vs. Bicameral Legislature (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



On the abolition of the executive presidential system, 42.3% of Sri Lankans believe that the executive presidential system should be retained without any changes - 32.1% of Sri Lankans believe that the executive presidential system should continue with less powers vested in the president. Only 14.8% of Sri Lankans are in favour of the executive presidential system being completely abolished.⁷

On an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Tamil community (46.2%) who indicate that the executive presidential system should be completely abolished. From those who believe that the executive presidential system should continue with less powers vested in the president, it is mostly the Muslim community (49.5%) who hold this view. Nearly a majority of the Sinhala community (49.7%) appear to be in favour of retaining the current executive presidential system.

A higher percentage of the urban community (42.8%) in comparison to the rural community (29.6%) believe that the executive presidential system should continue with less powers vested in the president. However, a higher percentage among the rural community (45.6%) in comparison to the urban community (28.8%) believe that the executive presidential system should be retained without any changes.

A higher proportion of respondents between the ages 18 to 29 years (41.4%) indicate that the executive presidential system should continue with less powers vested in the president in comparison to those above the age of 29 years (30.3%).

⁷ When comparing data from surveys conducted in the past it is evident that in October 2016 while 35.7% of Sri Lankans support the complete abolition of the executive presidential system 40.3% oppose the same. However, in March 2017 while 30.1% support 42.3% oppose the complete abolition of the executive presidential system

Figure 19: Public Perception on Abolishing the Executive Presidential System (By National)

27

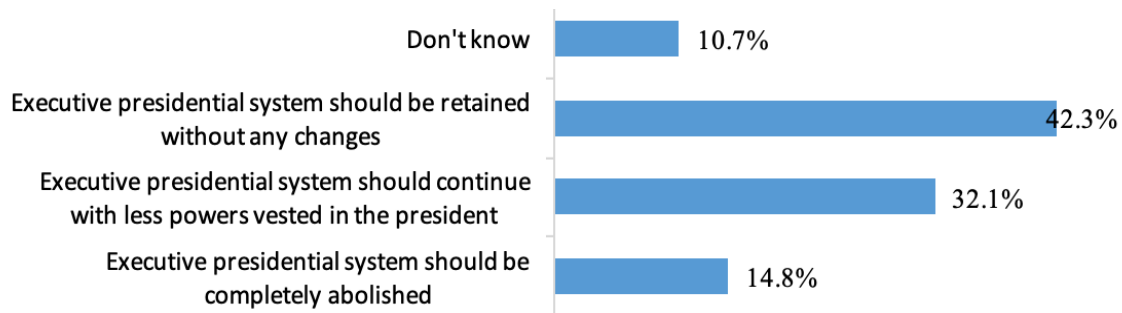
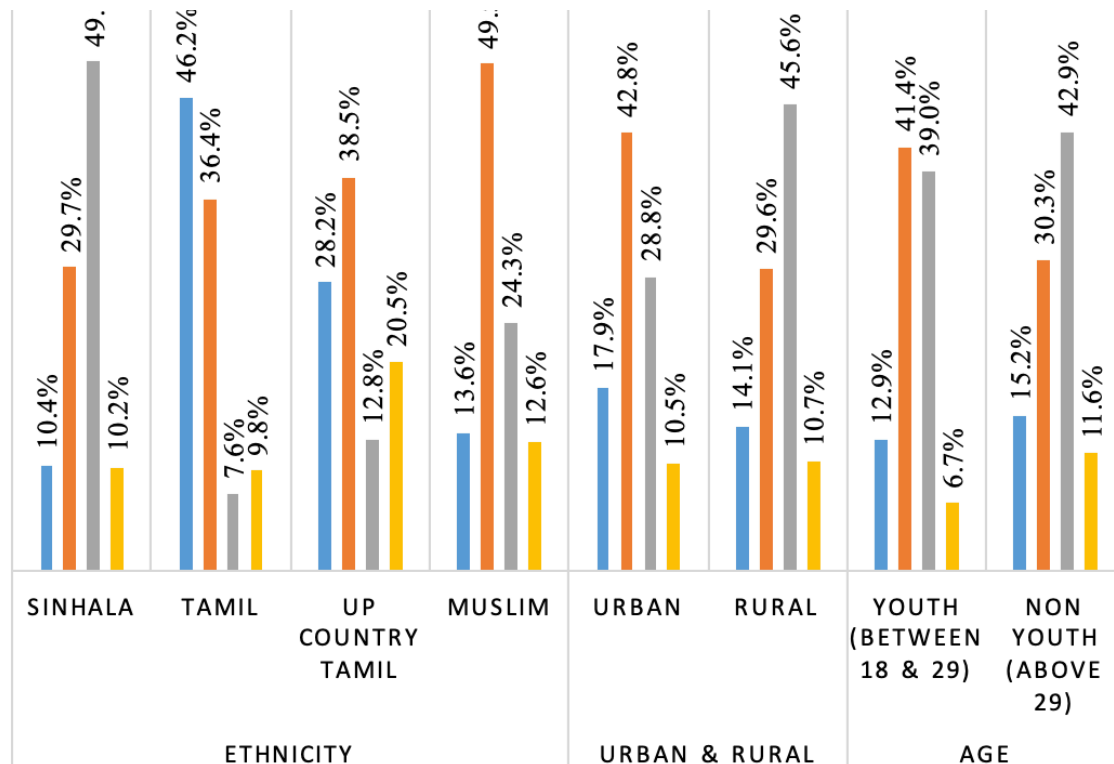


Figure 20: Public Perception on Abolishing the Executive Presidential System (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



- Executive presidential system should be completely abolished
- Executive presidential system should continue with less powers vested in the president
- Executive presidential system should be retained without any changes
- Don't know

A majority of Sri Lankans (87.2%) believe that it is not suitable for Members of Parliament (MP's) elected from one political party to switch their allegiance to another political party. Nearly 10% believe that it is okay for Members of Parliament (MP's) elected from one political party to switch their allegiance to another political party to serve their voters.

From those who believe that it is okay for MP's elected from one political party to switch their allegiance to another political party to serve their voters – it is mostly the Muslim community (33.7%) who hold this view. However, a significant proportion of all ethnic communities believe that it is not suitable for MP's elected from one political party to switch their allegiance to another political party.

Figure 21: Public Perception on dealing with Cross Overs (By National)

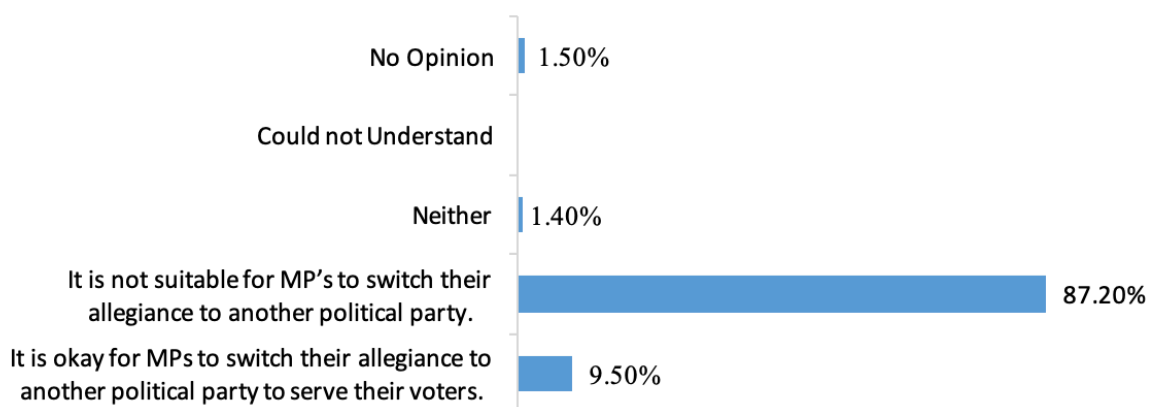
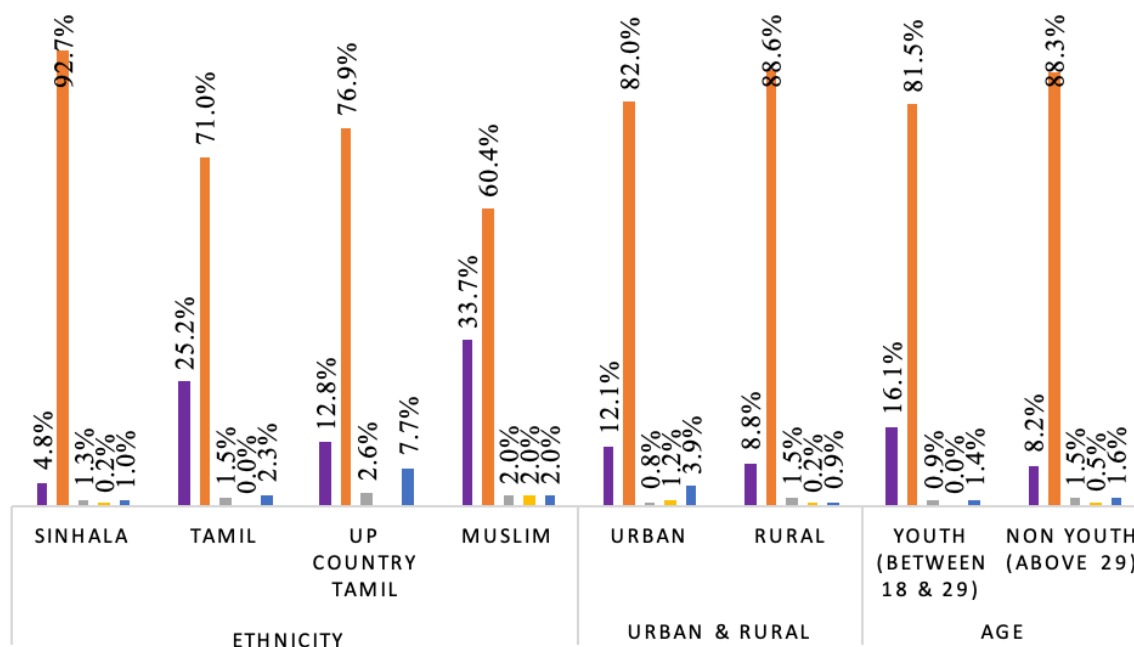


Figure 22: Public Perception on Dealing with Cross Overs (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)

29



- It is okay for MPs to switch their allegiance to another political party to serve their voters.
- It is not suitable for MP's to switch their allegiance to another political party.
- Neither
- Could not Understand
- No Opinion

SOURCES FOR PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

On obtaining more information about the constitution, it is evident that Sri Lankans would mostly rely on television news and political debates (50.5%) as a source of information.

On an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Muslim community who rely on talking to the elders in their respective families (31.1%) and to their educated friends and neighbours (16.5%) in order to obtain more information on the constitution – interestingly they constitute the least number who rely on watching television news and political debates (16.5%).

It is mostly the Sinhala (55.6%), Up Country Tamil (50%) and the Tamil (39.4%) communities who mostly rely on watching television news and political debates in order to obtain more information on the constitution.

From those who indicate that they listen to the opinion of the party leaders who appeal closer to their respective ideas, it is mostly the Up Country Tamil community (18.4%) who hold this view.

There appears to be a considerable proportion from both the urban (48.2%) and the rural (51.1%) communities who indicate that they watch television news and political debates, to obtain more information about the constitution.

It is mostly the respondents above the age of 29 years (53.6%) who rely on television news and debates in comparison to the respondents between the ages 18 to 29 years (34.6%).

**Figure 23: If you were to know more information about the constitution, what/whom would be the approach that you most likely use?
(By National)**

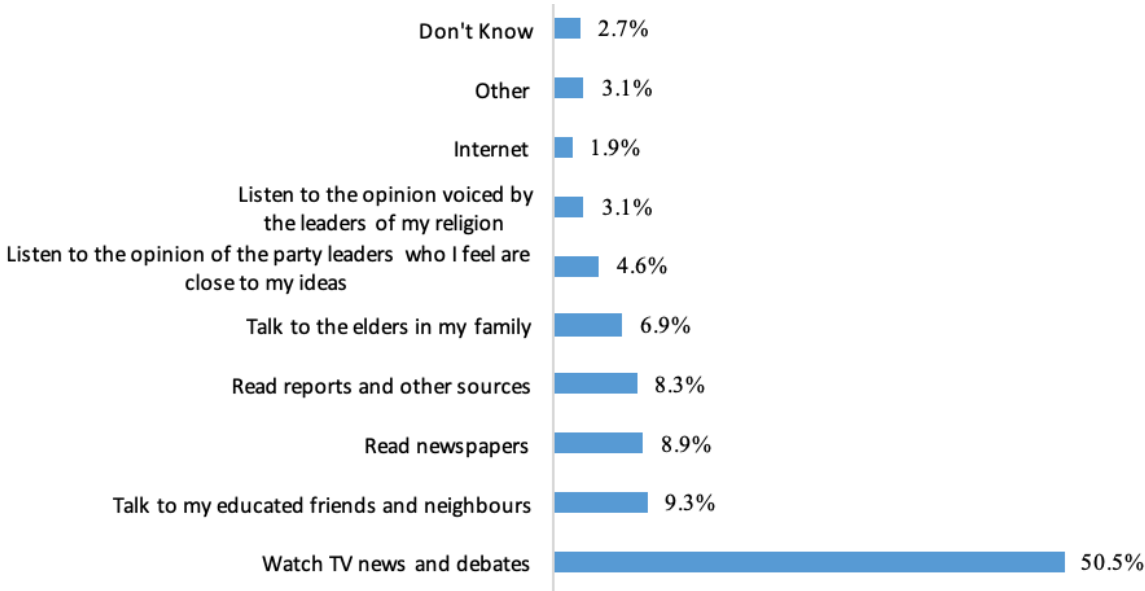
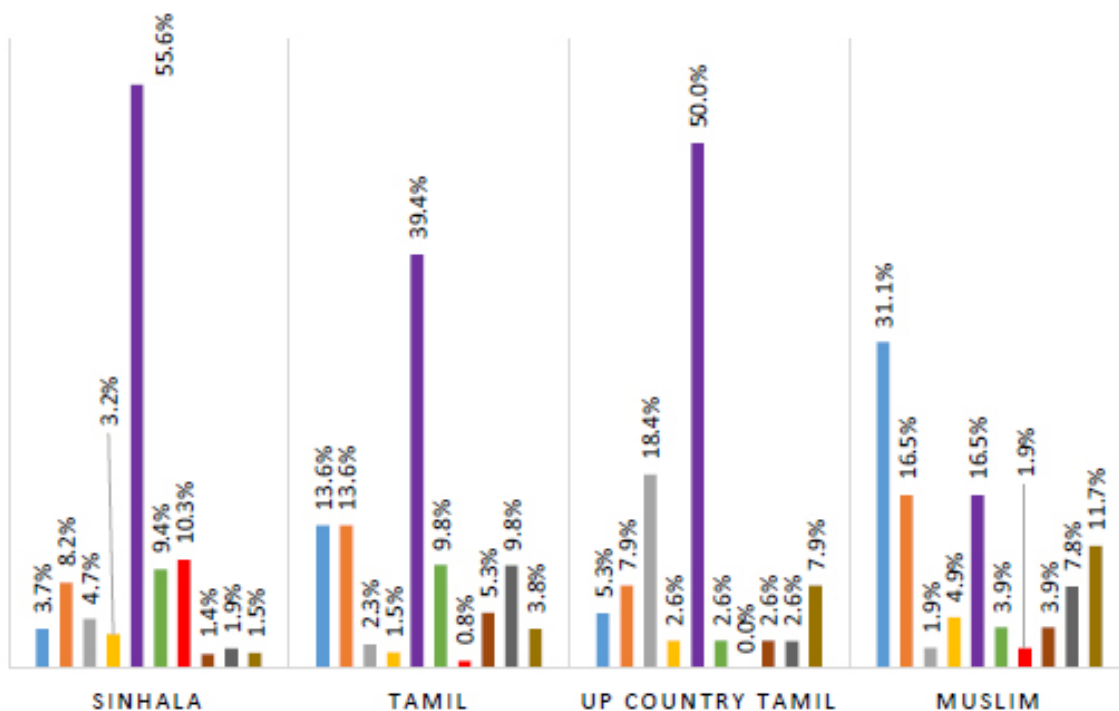


Figure 24: If you were to know more information about the constitution, what/whom would be the approach that you most likely use? (By Ethnic)

33



- Talk to the elders in my family
- Talk to my educated friends and neighbours
- Listen to the opinion of the party leaders who I feel are close to my ideas
- Listen to the opinion voiced by the leaders of my religion
- Watch TV news and debates
- Read newspapers
- Read reports and other sources
- Internet
- Others
- Don't Know

Figure 25: If you were to know more information about the constitution, what/whom would be the approach that you most likely use? (By Urban-Rural)

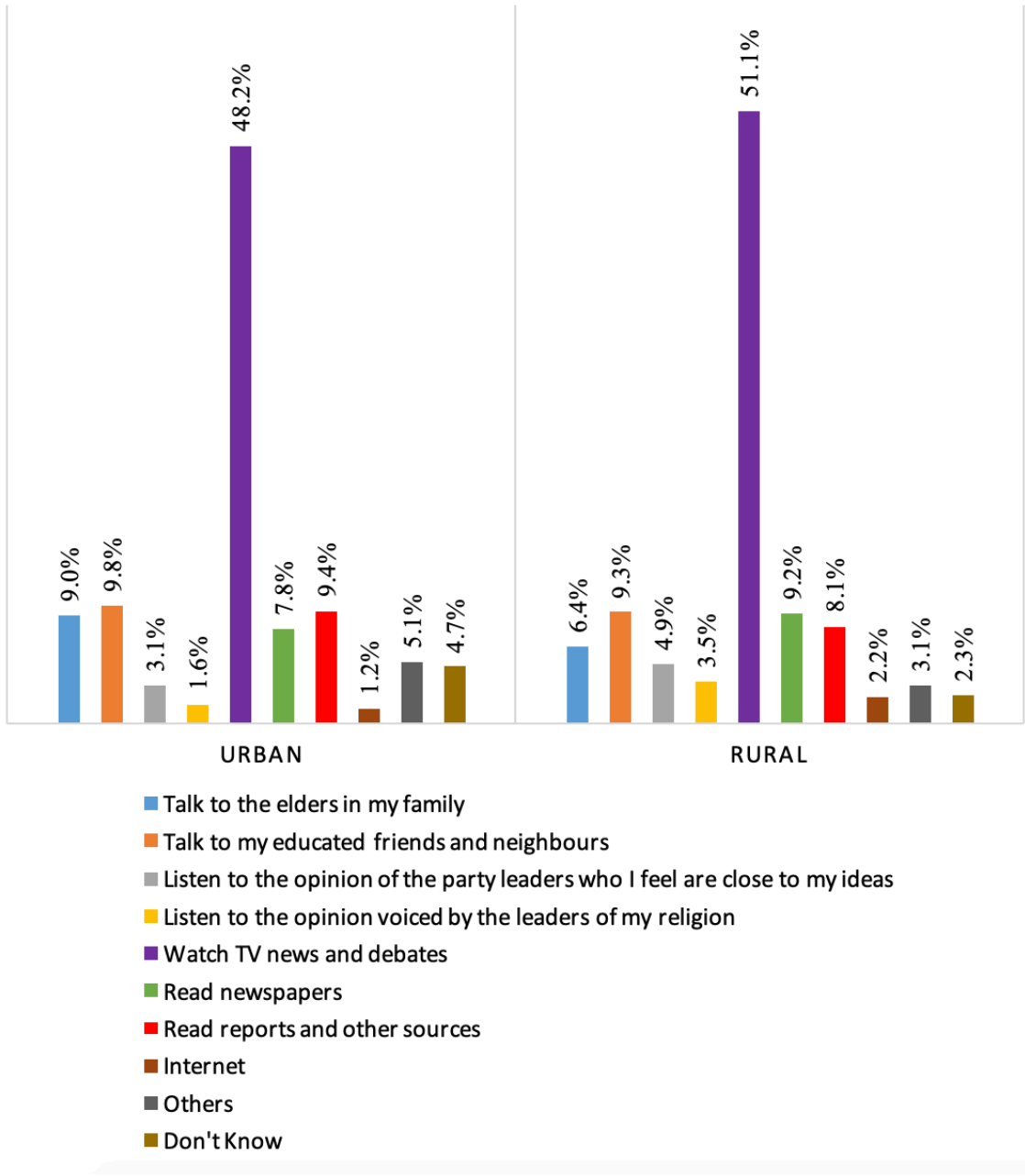
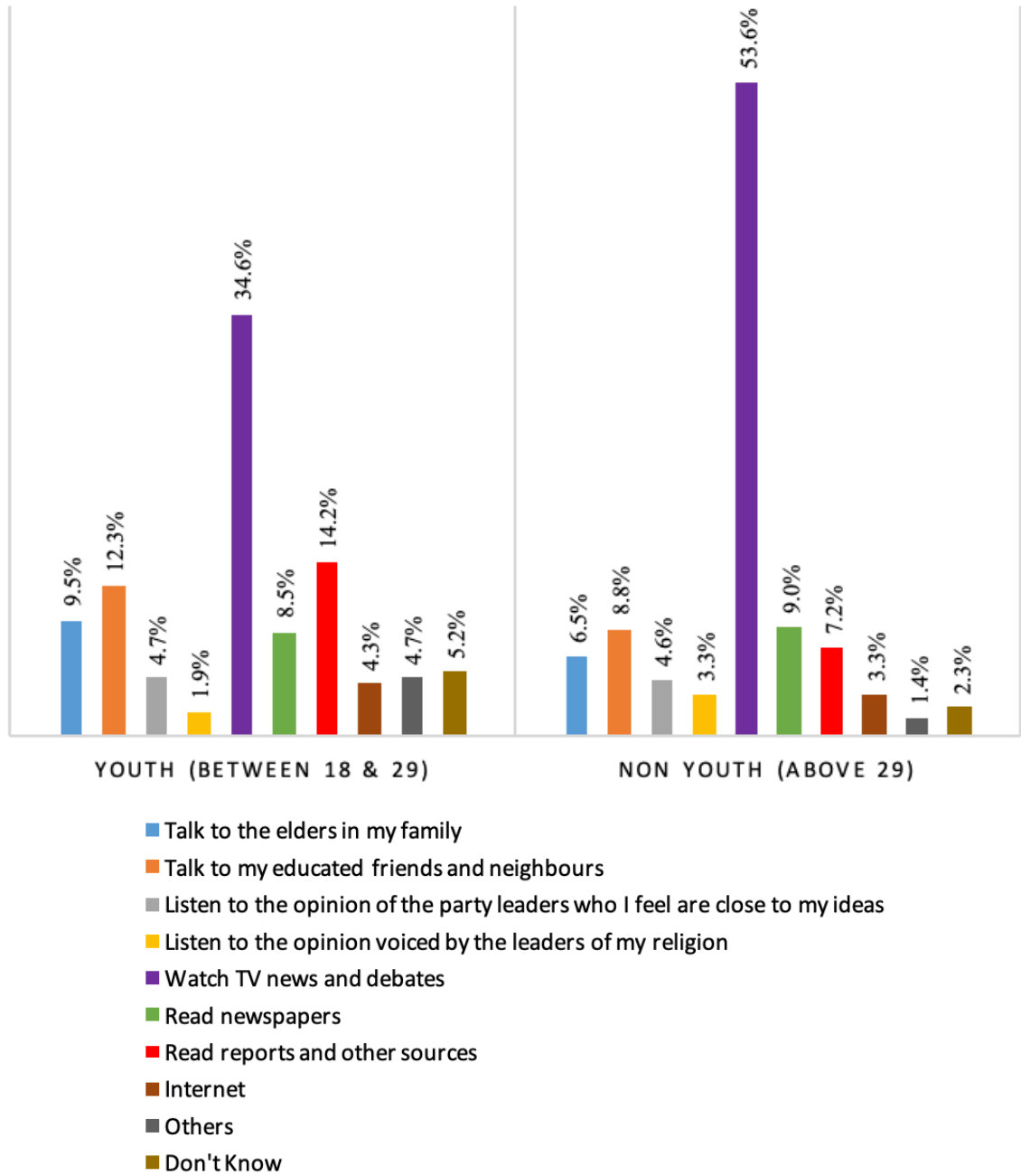


Figure 26: If you were to know more information about the constitution, what/whom would be the approach that you most likely use? (By Age)



The respondents were given a list of sources and were asked to rank the top three sources from whom they would obtain information on the drafting of a new constitution – the top three sources that were selected were via television news (47.8%), political debates aired on the television (17.2%) and the newspapers (10.2%).

On an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Sinhala (52.1%) Muslim (46.5%) and the Up Country Tamil (27.8%) communities who indicate that they rely on television news to gather information on the drafting of a new constitution. It is mostly the Tamil community (25.3%) who indicates that they rely on political debates aired on the television in order to gather information on the drafting of a new constitution.

As for the urban community, the top three sources in which they rely on, in order to obtain information on the drafting of the new constitution are television news (45.7%), political debates aired on the television (17.7%) and Facebook and other web based news sites (12.2%). As for the rural community the top three sources in which they rely on in order to obtain information on the drafting of the new constitution are television news (48.2%), political debates aired on the television (17%) and newspapers (10.7%).

As for the respondents between ages 18 to 29 years, the top three sources they rely on in order obtain information on the drafting of the new constitution are television news (40.1%), Facebook and other web based news sites (19.7%) and political debates aired on the television (13.4%).

As for the respondents above 29 years the top three sources they rely on, in order to obtain information on the drafting of the new constitution are television news (49.6%), political debates aired on the television (18.1%) and newspapers (10.5%).

Figure 27: From the below mentioned sources of information, please rank the top three sources from which you obtained information on the process of drafting a new constitution? (By National)

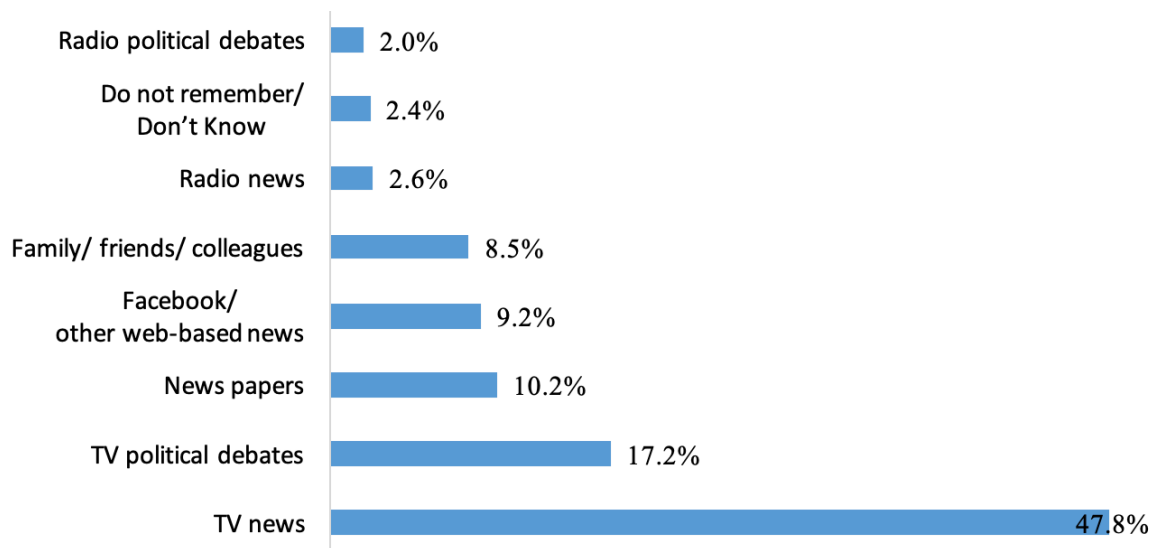
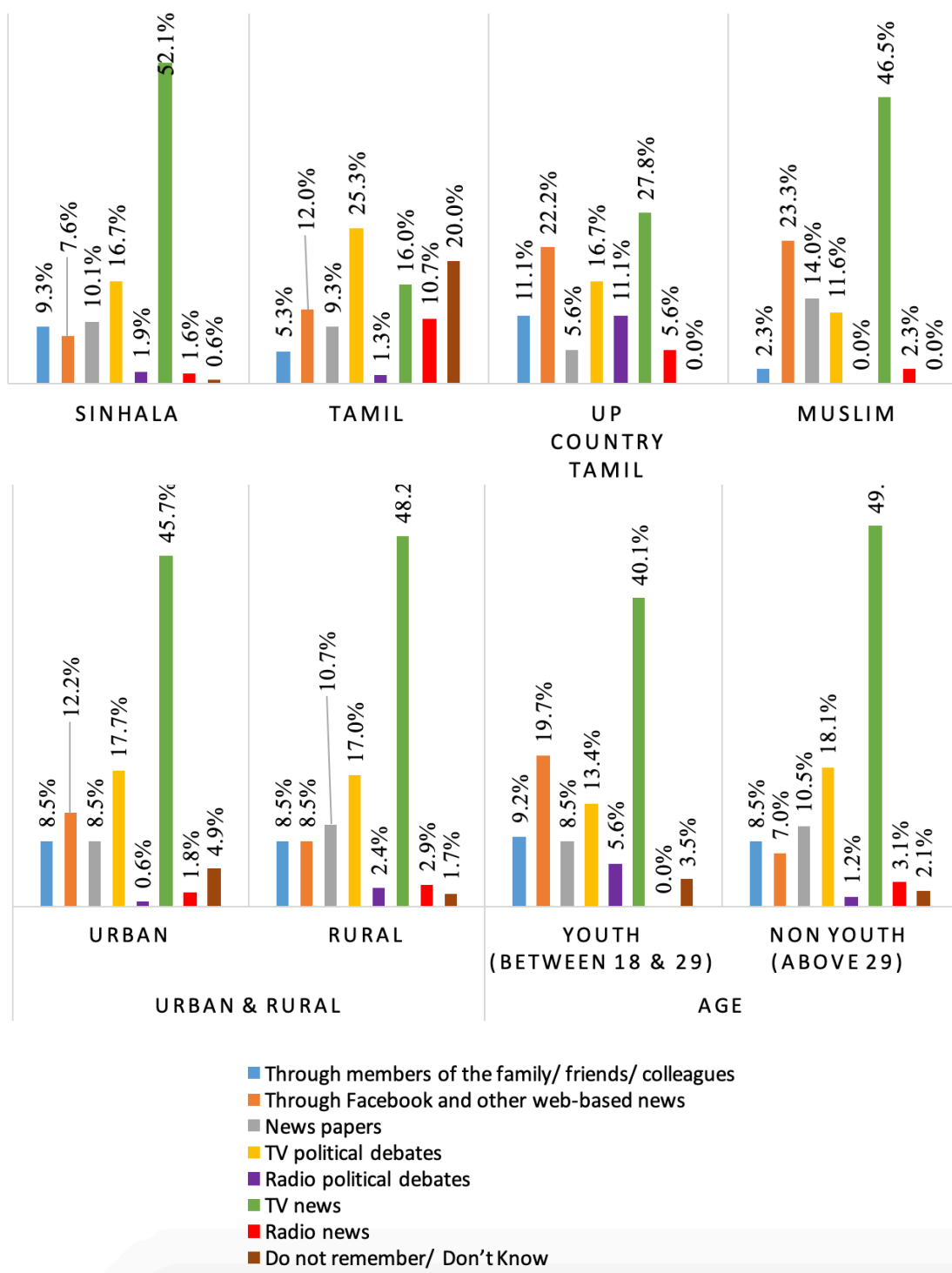


Figure 28: From the below mentioned sources of information, please rank the top three sources from which you obtained information on the process of drafting a new constitution? (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



At the event of a constitutional reformation, 25.9% of Sri Lankans rely on the courts and judges in determining whether a constitutional change is good for the country or not. 18.9% of Sri Lankans rely on religious leaders who represent their respective religions on a national level whilst 17.4% of Sri Lankans rely on their respective party leaderships.

On an ethnic perspective, most among the Sinhala community rely on the courts and judges (26.8%) whilst 22.4% rely on religious leaders who represent their religion on a national level in determining whether a given constitutional change is either good or not for the country.

In terms of the Tamil (37.9%) and Muslim (23.8%) communities most among them rely on their elders in their communities in determining whether a given constitutional change is either good or not for the country. In terms of the Up Country Tamil community, most among them (39.5%) rely on the courts and judges.

As for those from the urban community, whilst most among them (29.9%) rely on courts and the judges, 17.3% rely on elders in their respective communities and 13% rely on religious leaders who represent their respective religions on a national level.

However as for the rural community, most among them (25%) rely on the courts and judges whilst 20.5% rely on religious leaders who represent their respective religions on a national level and 19% place their confidence on experts.

Courts and judges followed by religious leaders who represent them on a national level are the top two sources in which respondents between the ages of 18 to 29 years as well as respondents above the age of 29 rely on, in order to determine whether a constitutional change is either good or not for the country. This is followed by respondents between the ages of 18 to 29 relying on the elders in their community whilst the respondents above the age of 29 years relying on their respective party leadership.

Figure 29: In the event of a constitutional reform, who do you think is of best capacity to state that a constitutional change is good for the country or not? (By National)

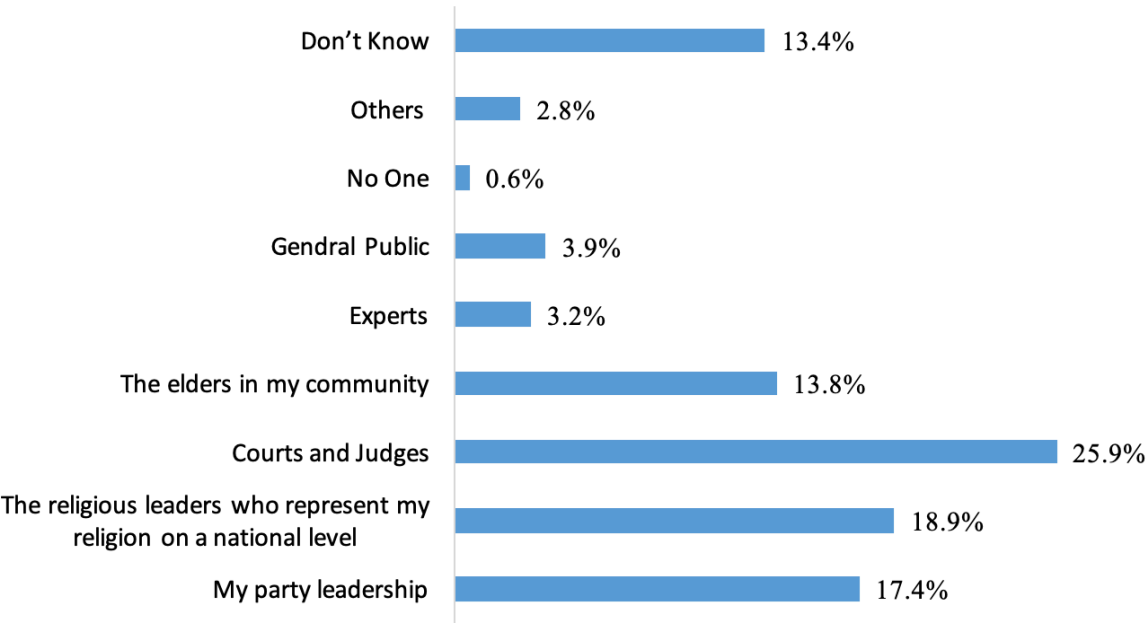


Figure 30: In the event of a constitutional reform, who do you think is of best capacity to state that a constitutional change is good for the country or not? (By Ethnicity and Urban-Rural)

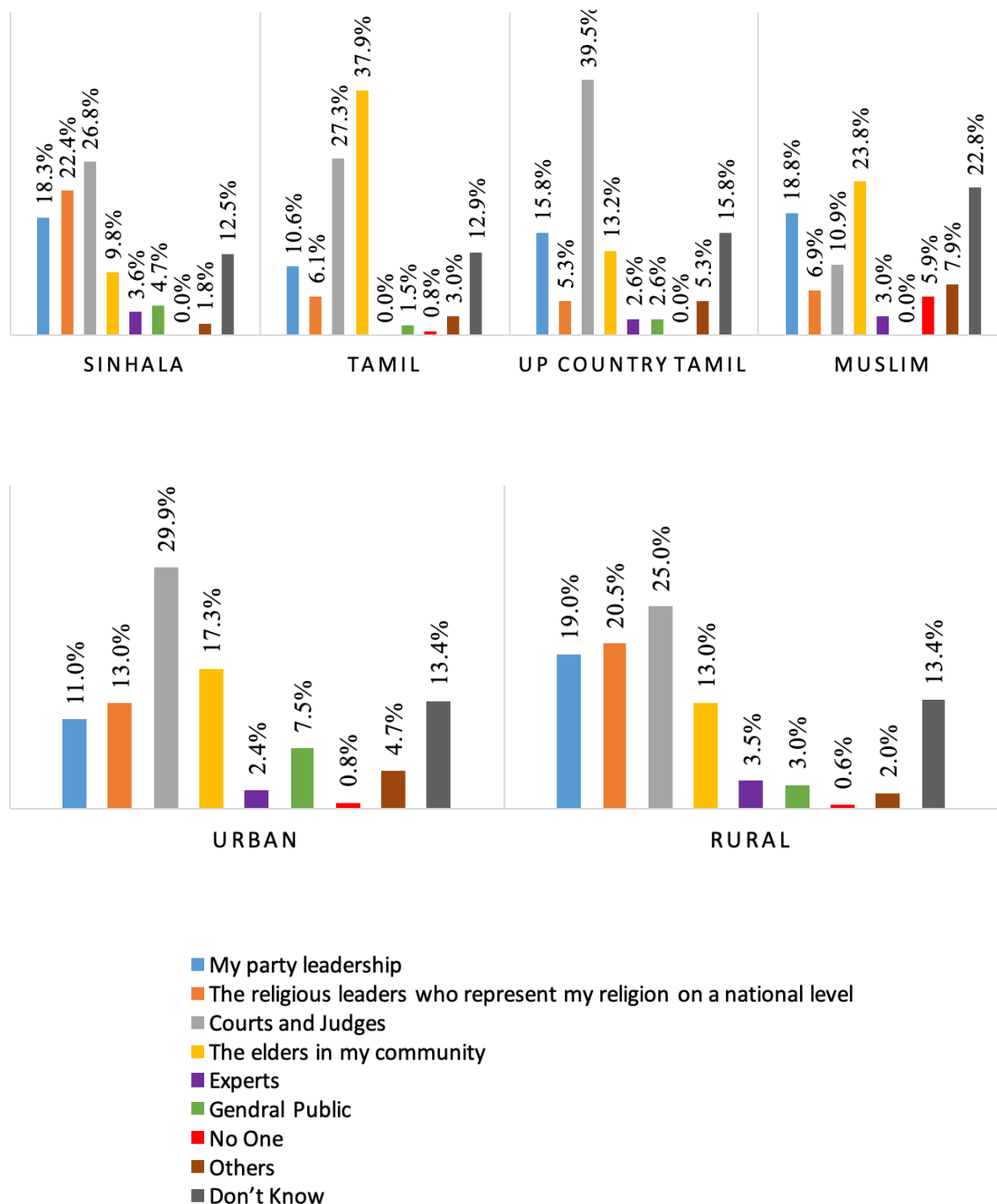
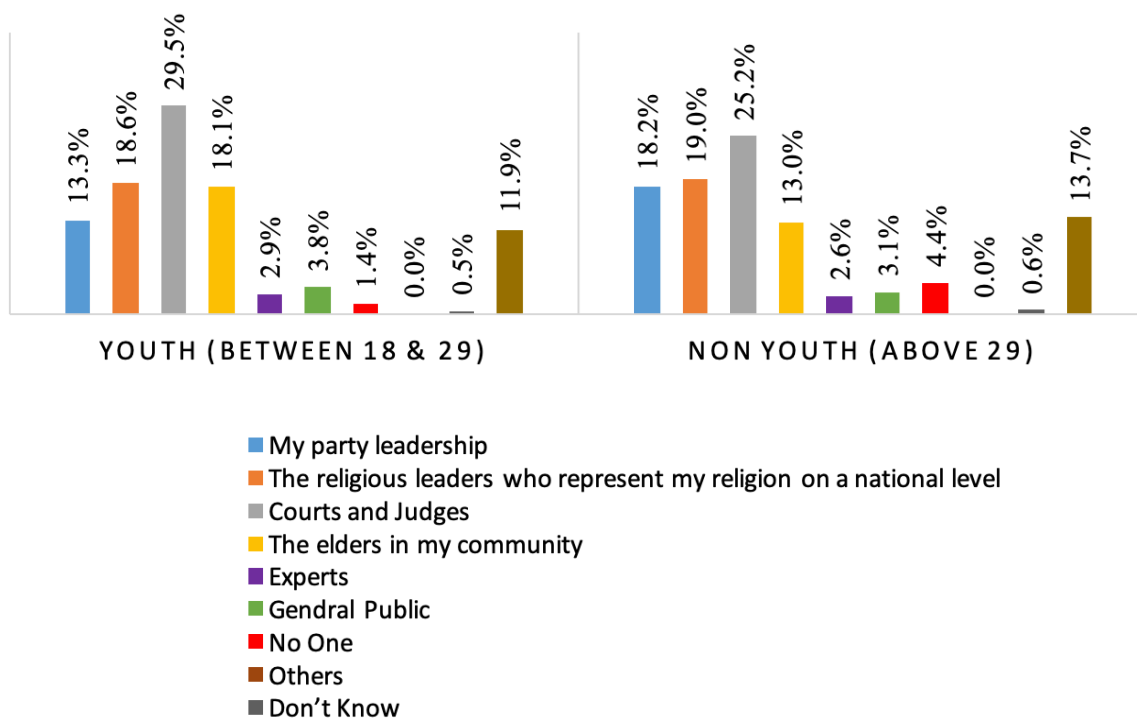


Figure 31: In the event of a constitutional reform, who do you think is of best capacity to state that a constitutional change is good for the country or not? (By Age)



PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

While 30.1% of Sri Lankans believe that President Maithripala Sirisena had the constitutional power to remove the incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe from office on the 26th of October 2018 - 48.3% of Sri Lankans state the contrary.

It is mostly the minority communities who believe that President Maithripala Sirisena did not have the constitutional power to remove the incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe from office on the 26th of October 2018 - (Tamil community – 71.8%, Up Country Tamil community – 75.7% and Muslim community – 59.8%)

However among the Sinhala community while 34.6% from the Sinhala community indicate that the president had the constitutional power to remove the incumbent Prime Minister, 43.2% indicate that the president did not have the constitutional power to do so.

Both urban (53.6%) and rural (47%) communities indicate that the President did not have the constitutional power to remove the incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe from office, on the 26th of October 2018.

A higher proportion among respondents between the ages 18 to 29 years and above 29 years indicate that the President did not have the power to remove the incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe from office. However, from those who indicate that the President did have the power, it is mostly the respondents between the ages 18 to 29 years who hold this view.

Figure 32: Do you think the president had the constitutional power to remove the incumbent prime minister on the 26th of October 2018 and appointment of another Member of Parliament as the Prime Minister (By National)

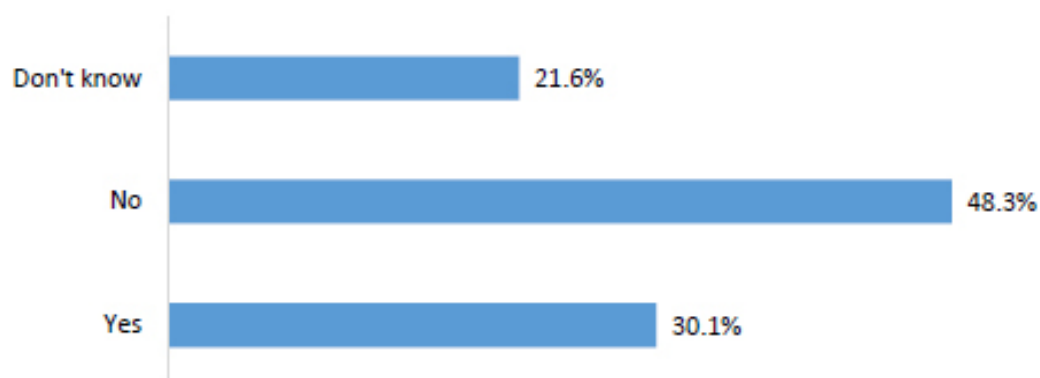
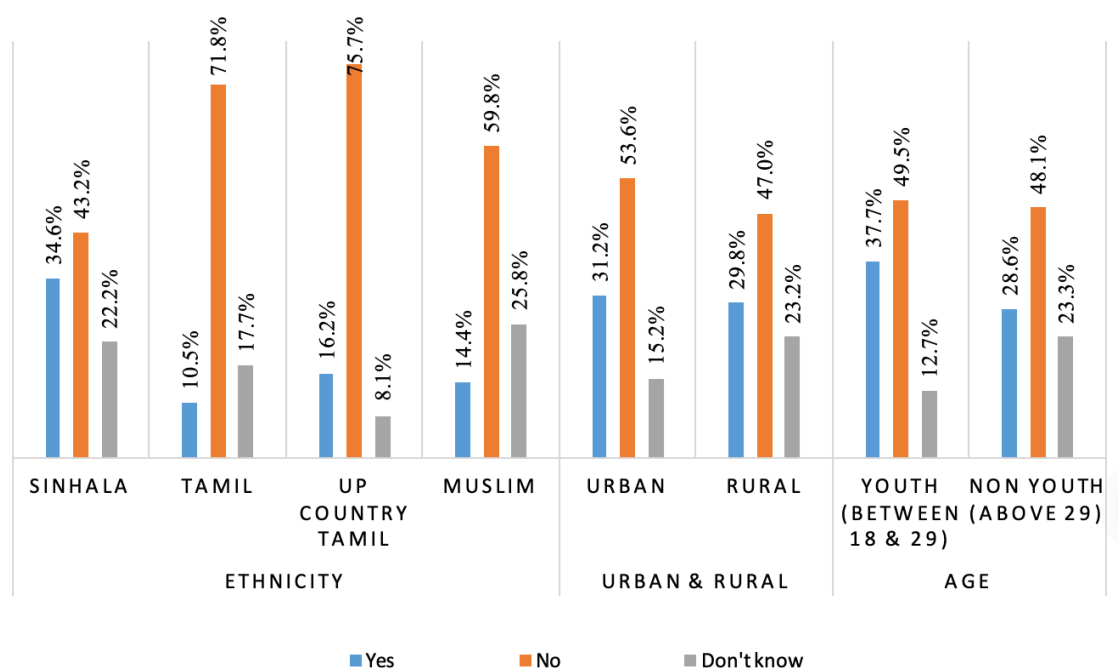


Figure 33: Do you think the president had the constitutional power to remove the incumbent prime minister on the 26th of October 2018 and appointment of another Member of Parliament as the Prime Minister (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



Nearly a majority of Sri Lankans (49.8%) state that they disapprove President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to remove the incumbent Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe and appoint Member of Parliament, Mahinda Rajapaksa as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on the 26th of October 2018. However it is also interesting to note that nearly 43% of Sri Lankans approve the President's appointment of Mahinda Rajapaksa as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on the 26th of October 2018.

From an ethnic perspective, it is evident that a significant proportion of the minority communities (Tamil community – 83.9%, Up Country Tamil community – 86.5% and Muslim community – 83.5%) indicate that they disapprove of President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to remove the incumbent Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe and appoint Member of Parliament, Mahinda Rajapaksa as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on the 26th of October 2018. From those who approve, it is mostly the Sinhala community with 51.2% indicating the same.

It is mostly the rural community (44.7%) in comparison to the urban community (33.6%) who approve the President's appointment of Mahinda Rajapaksa as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on the 26th of October 2018. However, it is mostly the urban community (61.2%) in comparison to the rural community (46.9%) who disapprove of it.

It is evident that most respondents between the ages 18 to 29 years (54.9%) disapprove President Sirisena's decision to remove the incumbent Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe and appoint Member of Parliament, Mahinda Rajapaksa as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on the 26th of October 2018.

Figure 34: To what extent do you approve/disapprove President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to remove the incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and appoint another Member of Parliament Mahinda Rajapakse as the Prime Minister? (By National)

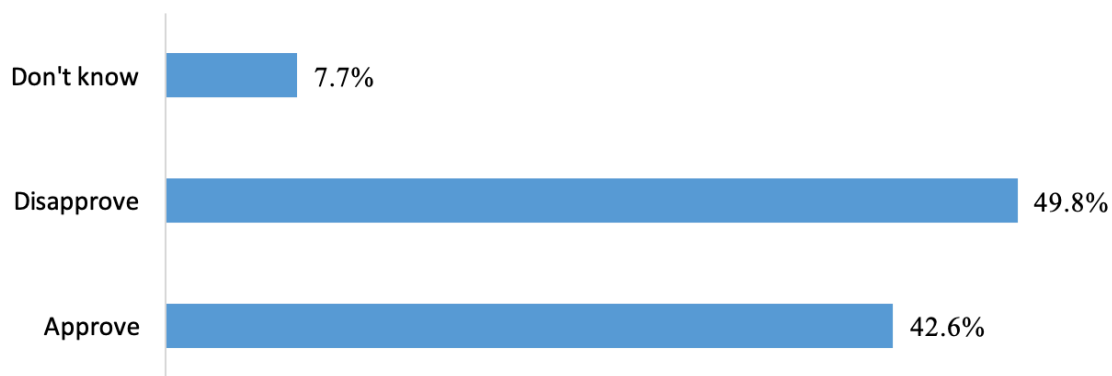
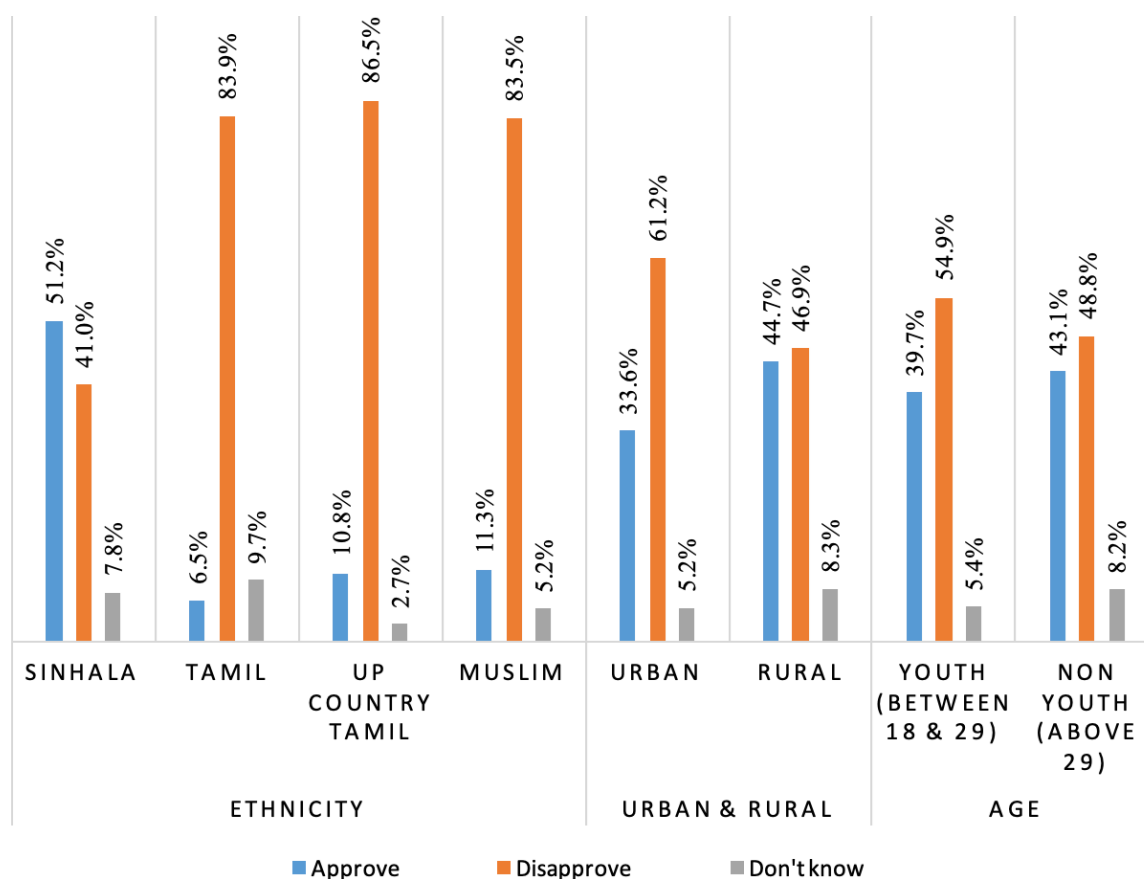


Figure 35: To what extent do you approve/disapprove President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to remove the incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and appoint another Member of Parliament Mahinda Rajapakse as the Prime Minister? (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



From those who indicate that they were aware of the gazette notification on the 9th of November issued by President Maithripala Sirisena on dissolving the parliament – 44.1% of Sri Lankans believe that the President did not have the constitutional power to do this. 34.9% of Sri Lankans believe that he had.

From those who indicate that the president did not have the constitutional power to dissolve parliament via a gazette notification on the 09th of November 2018 – it is mostly the minority communities who hold this view (Tamil community – 71.4%, Up Country Tamil community – 63.6% and Muslim community – 58.5%). From those who indicate that the president had the constitutional power to dissolve parliament, it is mostly the Sinhala community (38.4%) who hold this view.

A higher percentage among the urban community (50.9%), in comparison to the rural community (42.4%) believe that President Sirisena did not have the constitutional power to dissolve parliament on the 09th of November 2018

Interestingly, it is mostly the youth population (41.9%) in comparison to the non-youth population (33.4%) who believe that President Sirisena had the constitutional power to dissolve parliament via a gazette notification on the 09th of November 2018.

Figure 36: Do you think the president had the constitutional power dissolve the parliament on the 09th of November 2018? (By National)

50

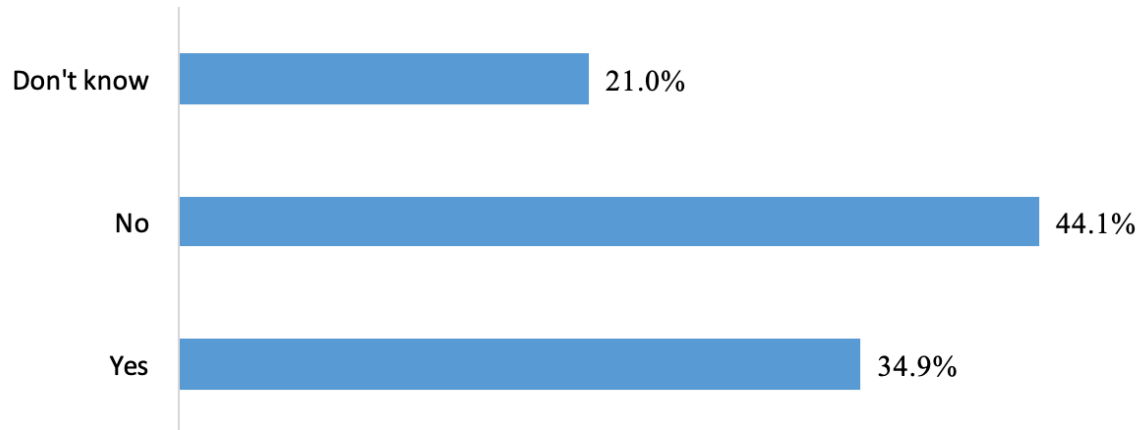
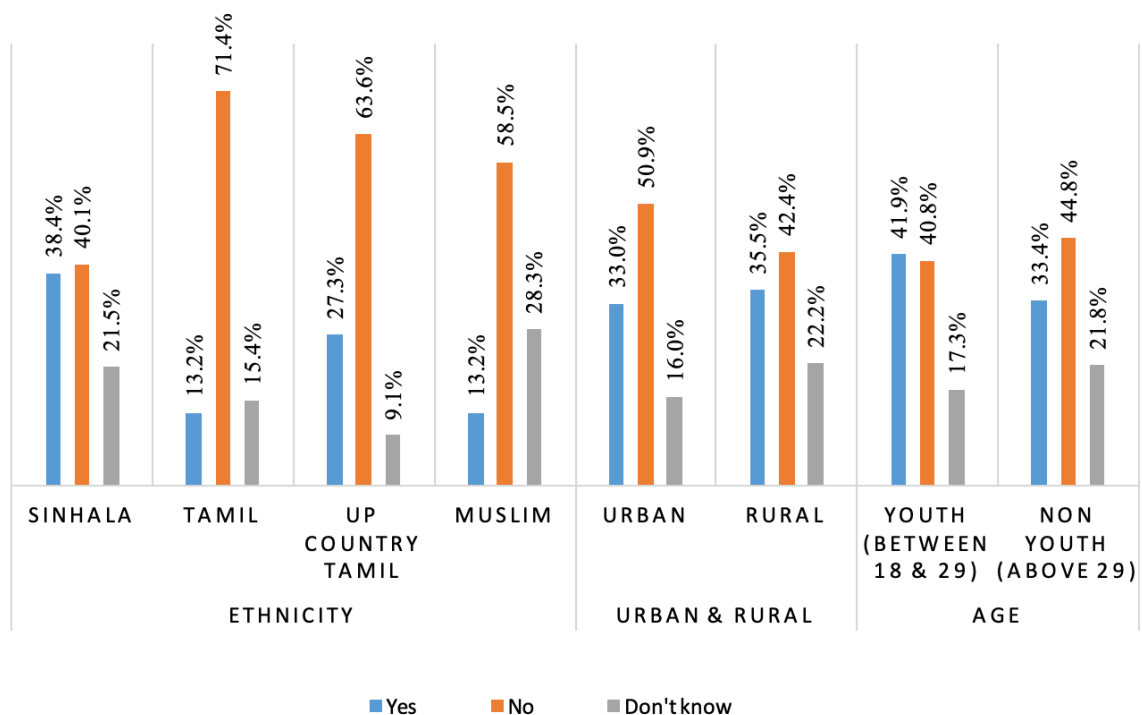


Figure 37: Do you think the president had the constitutional power dissolve the parliament on the 09th of November 2018? (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



Sri Lankans appear to be divided on the President's decision in dissolving parliament via a gazette notification on the 09th of November 2018. Whilst 47.9% of Sri Lankans approve the President's decision, 45% of Sri Lankans disapprove of it.

A significant proportion of the minority communities (Tamil community – 90.1%, Up Country Tamil community – 76.2% and the Muslim community – 88.7%) disapprove the president's decision in dissolving parliament via a gazette notification on the 09th of November 2018.

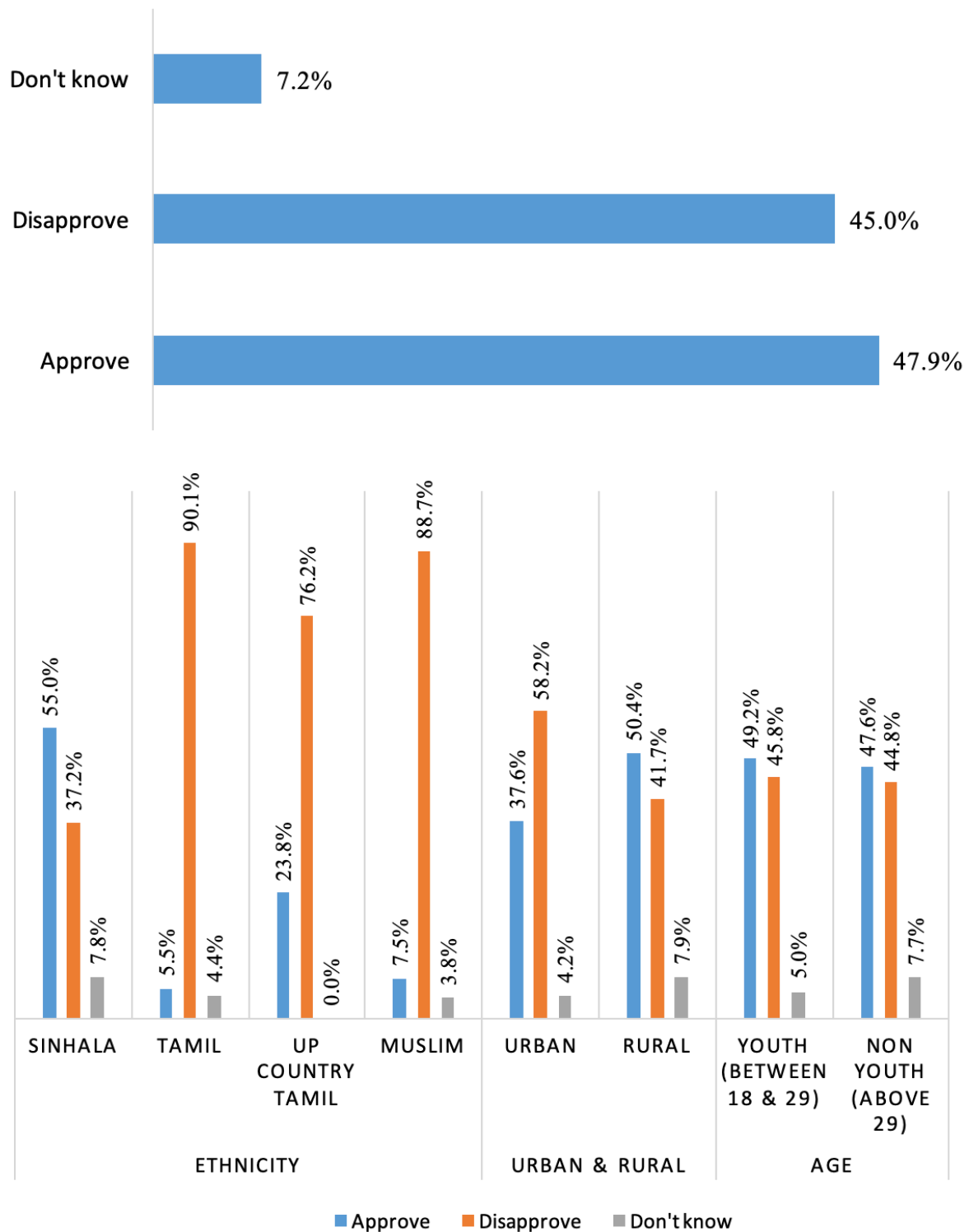
From those who approve of it, it is mostly the Sinhala community (55%) who hold this view.

While it is mostly the urban community (58.2%) who disapprove the President's decision to dissolve parliament via a gazette notification on the 09th of November 2018 – It is mostly the rural population (50.4%) who approve of it.

There appears to be a clear divide in opinion with regard to the dissolution of parliament among the respondents between ages 18 to 29 years and above 29 years.

Figure 38: To what extent do you approve/ disapprove of the president's decision to dissolve parliament on the 09th of November 2018?
(By National, Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)

52



On the impartiality of television news coverage during the constitutional crisis period (President's actions in removing the prime minister, gazette notification on the dissolution of parliament etc.) 54.4% of Sri Lankans believe that the news coverage on television was biased whilst 34.8% believe that the news coverage was impartial.

On an ethnic perspective, it is mostly the Up Country Tamil community (55%) who feel that the news coverage on television was impartial during the constitutional crisis period – whilst it is mostly the Muslim community (59.2%) who feel that the news coverage was biased during the constitutional crisis period.

It is mostly those from the urban community (57.2%) in comparison to the rural community (53.7%) who believe that television news coverage during the constitutional crisis period was biased.

Comparatively, it is mostly respondents above the age of 29 years who believe that television news coverage during the constitutional crisis period was biased – than those between the ages 18 to 29 years.

Figure 39: What is your assessment about the impartiality of TV media in general, in covering the news during the recent crisis period (President's actions in removing the prime minister, gazette notification on the dissolution of parliament?) (By National)

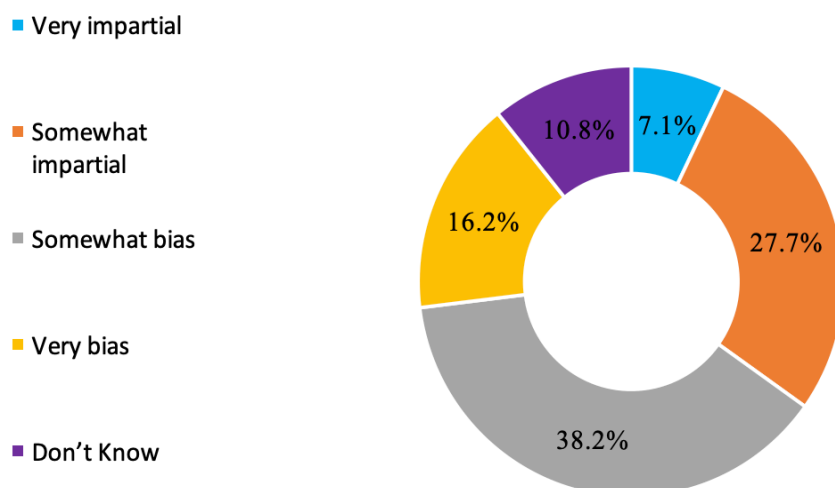
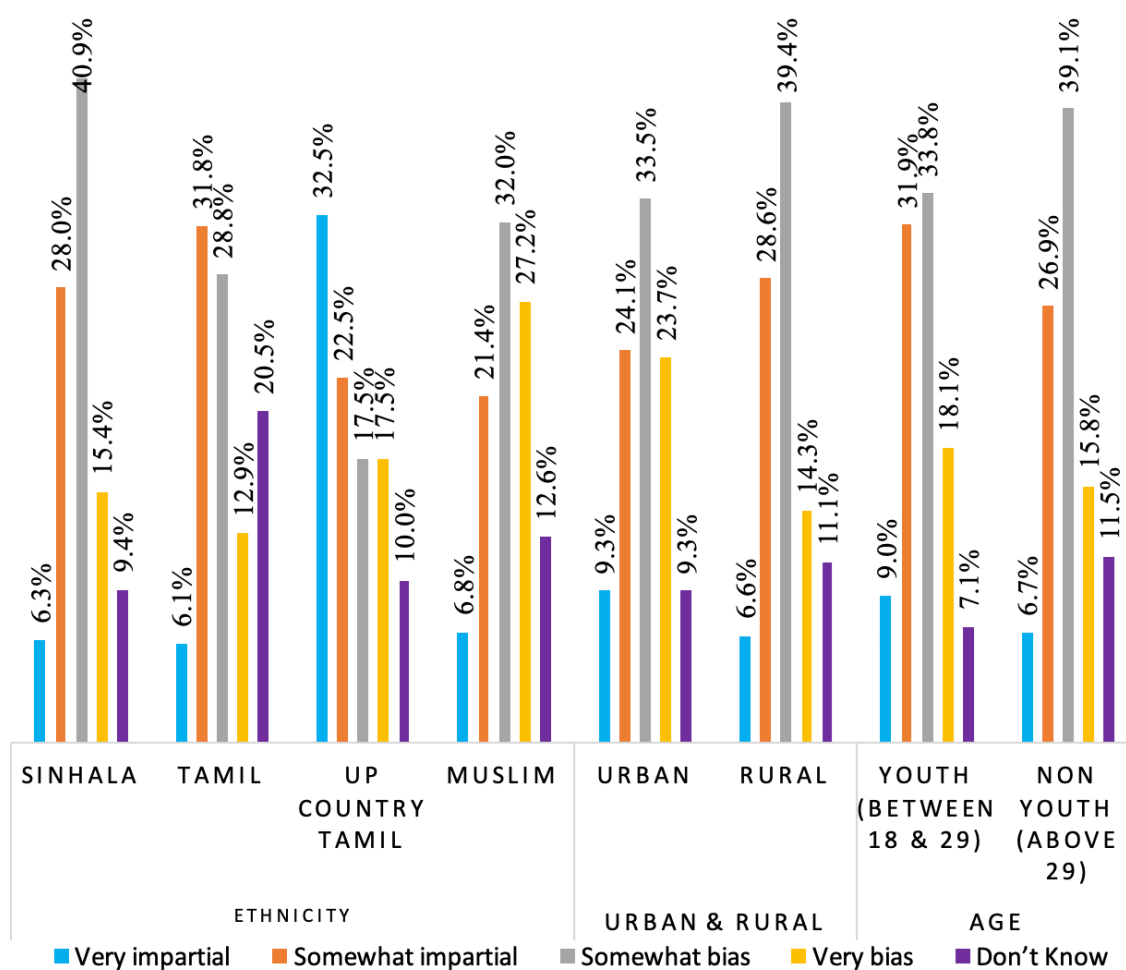


Figure 40: What is your assessment about the impartiality of TV media in general, in covering the news during the recent crisis period (President's actions in removing the prime minister, gazette notification on the dissolution of parliament?) (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



A majority of Sri Lankans (56.3%) agree with the judgement given by the Supreme Court on the 13th of December 2018, in which the court ruled that President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to dissolve Parliament on the 09th of November 2018 was unconstitutional. 30% of Sri Lankans disagree with the same.

It is mostly the minority communities (Tamil community – 81.1%, Up Country Tamil community – 87.5% and the Muslim community – 72.8%) who agree with the judgement given on the 13th of December 2018 in comparison to the Sinhala community. From those who do not agree with the verdict it is mostly the Sinhala community (35.6%) who hold this view.

A majority from both the urban and the rural communities agree with the judgement given by the Supreme Court on the 13th of December 2018 in which the court ruled that President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to dissolve Parliament on the 09th of November 2018 was unconstitutional.

Figure 41: On the 13th of December 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to dissolve the Parliament on the 09th of November 2018 was unconstitutional. To what extent do you agree with this judgement given by the Supreme Court? (By National)

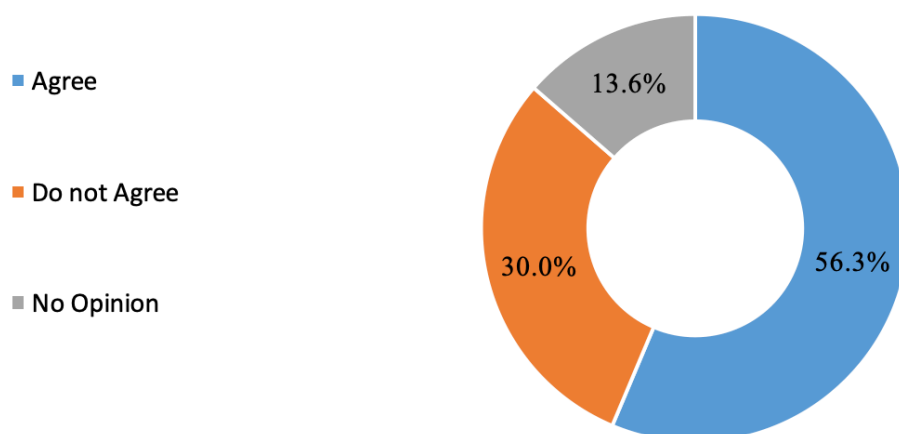
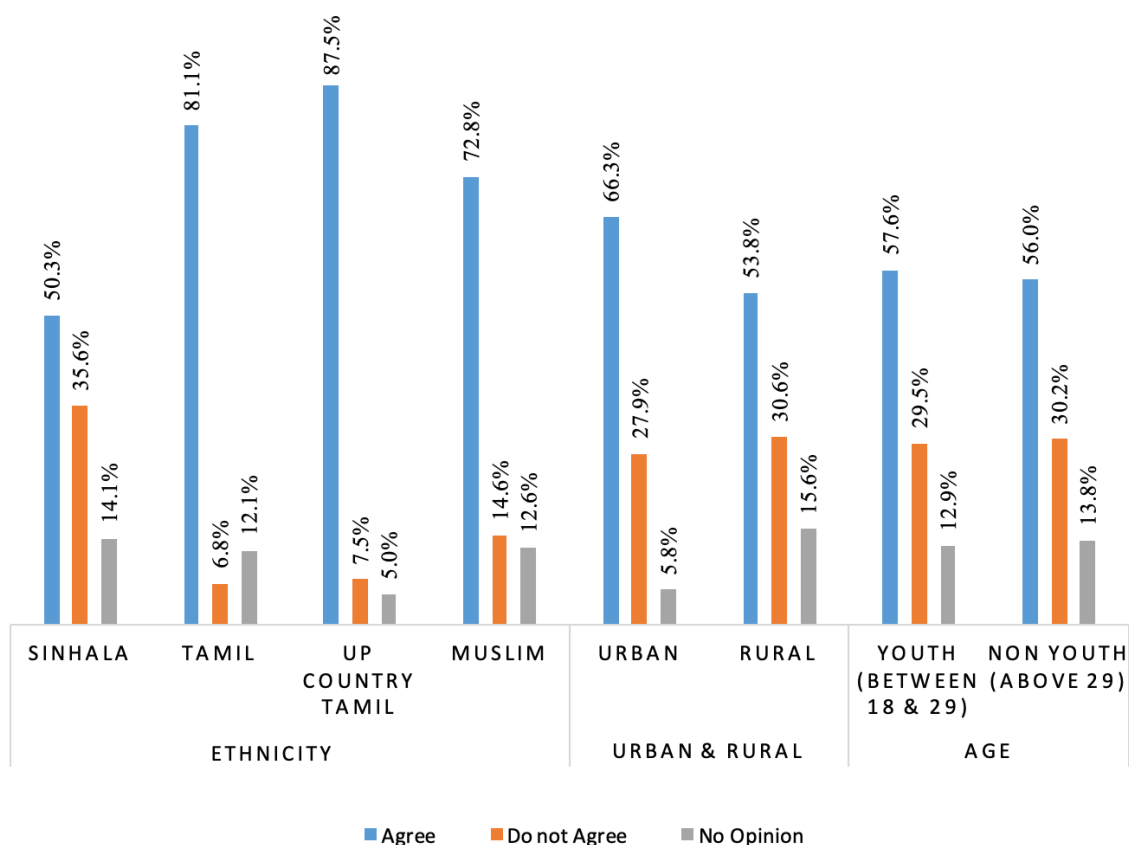


Figure 42: On the 13th of December 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to dissolve the Parliament on the 09th of November 2018 was unconstitutional. To what extent do you agree with this judgement given by the Supreme Court? (By Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)



TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

The efficiency and impartiality of various institutions is imperative for a country to function as a democracy. As such, the respondents were asked to indicate as to how much trust they had towards the functioning institutions ranging from the President, Prime Minister, Courts, Police, Army, Parliament, Political Parties, Election Commission and the Civil Society.

The top most institutions that Sri Lankans trust the most are the Army (86.1%), the Courts (85.4%), the Civil Society (65.4%) and the Election Commission (64.5%).

Sri Lankans least trust the Political Parties (24.1%), Parliament (24.1%) and the Prime Minister (34.5%).

From an ethnic perspective, the top three institutions that the Sinhala community trust most, is the Army (95.8%), the Courts (85%) and the Police (74.5%).

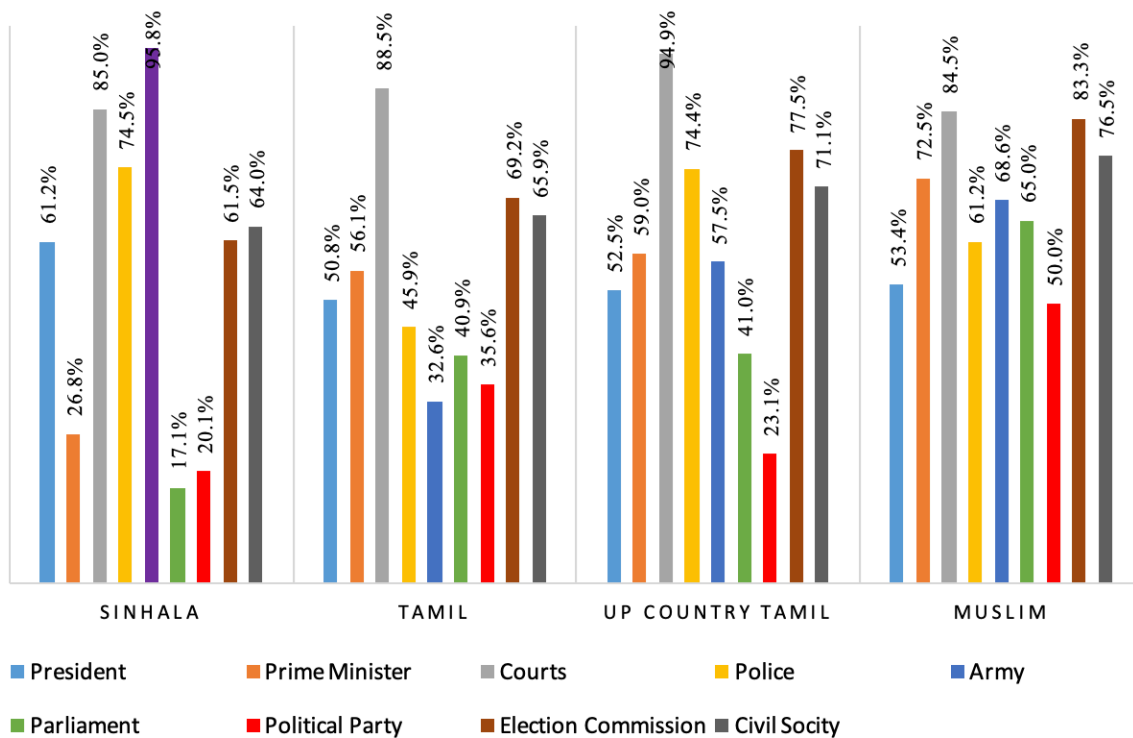
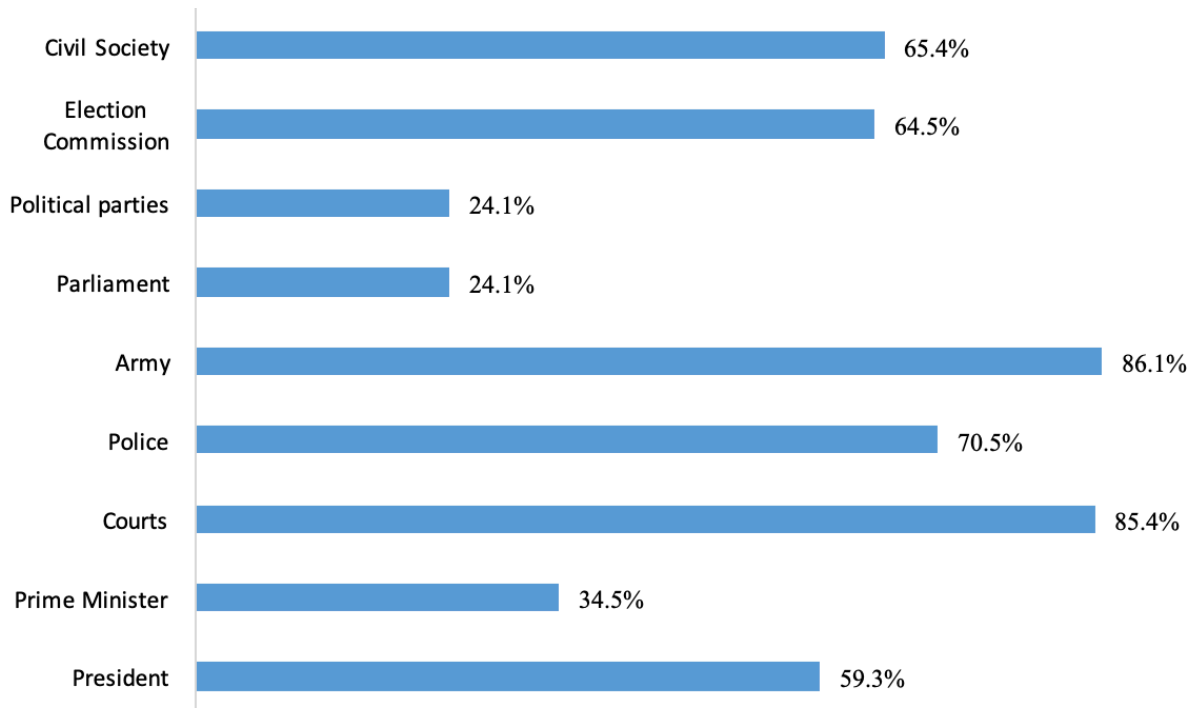
As for the Tamil community, the top three institutions that they mostly trust are the Courts (88.5%), the Election Commission (69.2%) and the Civil Society (65.9%)

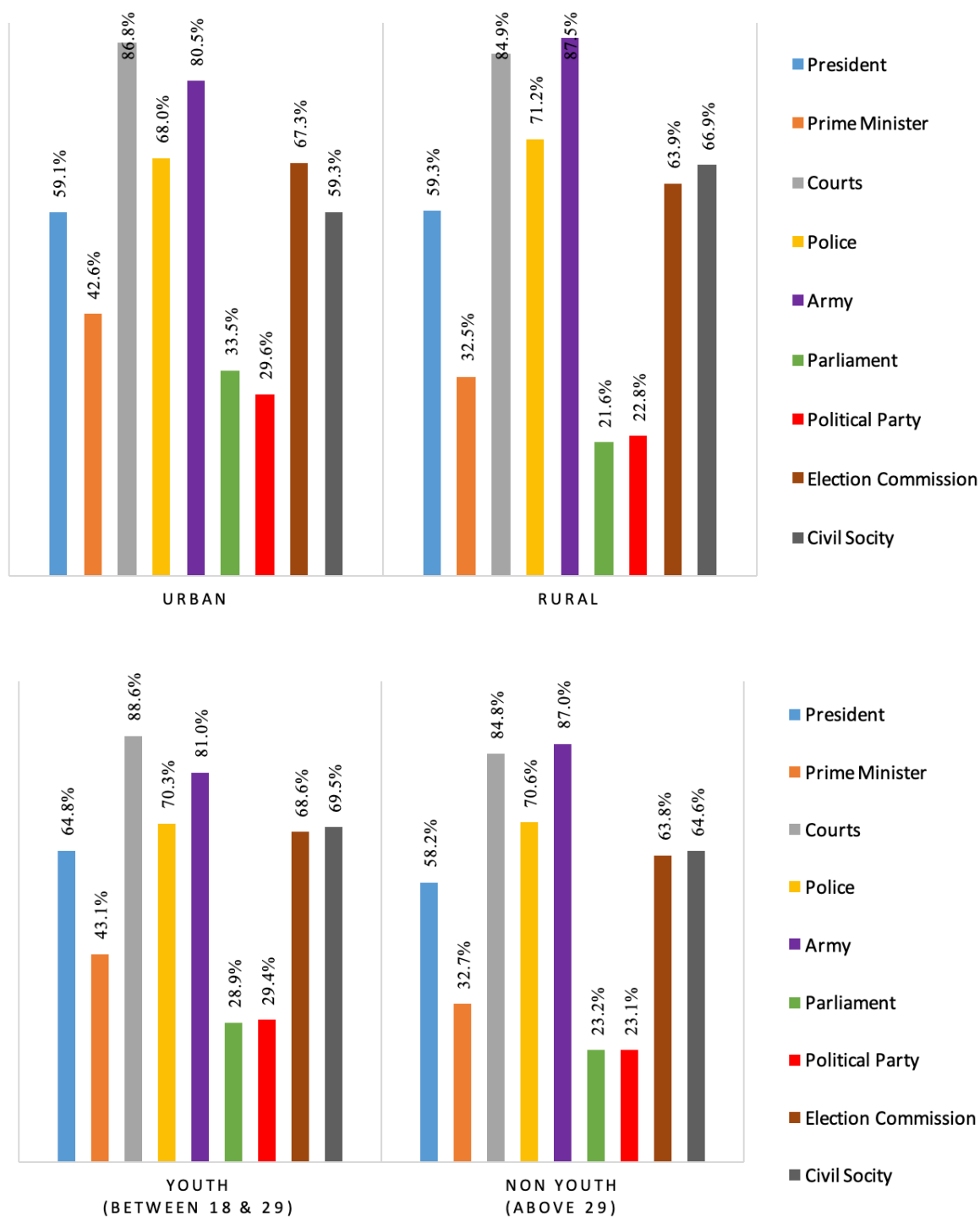
As for the up country Tamil community the top three institutions that they trust the most are the Courts (94.9%), the Election Commission (77.5%) and the Police (74.4%).

As for the Muslim community the top three institutions that they trust the most are the Courts (84.5%), the Prime Minister (72.5%) and the Army (68.6%) are the top three institutions that they trust the most.

Figure 43: Please indicate how much trust you have in the following institutions to perform their role (By National, Ethnicity, Urban-Rural and Age)

60







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.

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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.

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