SOCIO – ECONOMIC INDEX IN THE FACE OF COVID 19

TOPLINE REPORT

JUNE 2021

CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - SOCIAL INDICATOR

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INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the corona virus was first reported on the 31 December 2019 from Wuhan City in Hubei Province of China. On the 30 January 2020 the World Health Organisation declared the novel corona virus as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and declared it a pandemic on the 11 March 2020. The first case of the virus was detected in Sri Lanka on the 27 January 2020. Currently with a total of 140,471 confirmed cases and 941 deaths[1] , Sri Lanka grapples with the pandemic, enforcing lockdowns and island wide travel restrictions, isolating areas of various GN divisions, complete closure of schools, businesses which have in turn severely affected the daily lives of Sri Lankans in many ways. The main aim of this study was to assess the views of the public and understand to what extent the pandemic has affected their livelihoods, health, education and social relations. Furthermore, the current situation has only heightened the need for the state to promote and protect rights based on socioeconomic factors, and therefore it is important to understand the views of the public in this regard.

The topline report provides an overview on levels of satisfaction towards various institutions involved in mitigating COVID crisis, fair treatment of persons and intercommunity relations, awareness and sources of information about the COVID-19 pandemic, coping strategies used due to financial restrains, access to education and healthcare.

The survey team consisted of Dr.Pradeep Peiris, Sakina Moinudeen and M.Krishnamoorthy.

Social Indicator would like to thank Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu and Bhavani Fonseka for their support in the study and the Global Initiative for Justice Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) for funding this survey.

[1] https://covid19.gov.lk/covid-19-stats.html, Official website for Sri Lanka's response to COVID–19, accessed 16 May 2021

METHODOLOGY

A semi structured questionnaire was administered through face to face interviews with 1000 respondents from the four main ethnic communities representing both the urban and rural population across the 25 districts. The survey aimed to assess public perception on the impact of the pandemic in areas such as livelihood, health, education and social relations. The field enumerators were given an extensive training on the study, the research instrument, and field techniques prior to the commencement of field work.

Pre-Test:

In order to test the clarity of the language, sequence effect of the questions and relevance of the answer categories, a pre-test was conducted by a group of senior field supervisors. The field briefing for the pre- test was conducted on the 15th February 2021. The pretest was administered on field during the 16th and 17th of February 2021 among respondents from Sinhala and Tamil speaking communities prior to the field deployment of the survey. Based on the findings of the pre-test study, the questionnaire was further developed.

Large-N Survey:

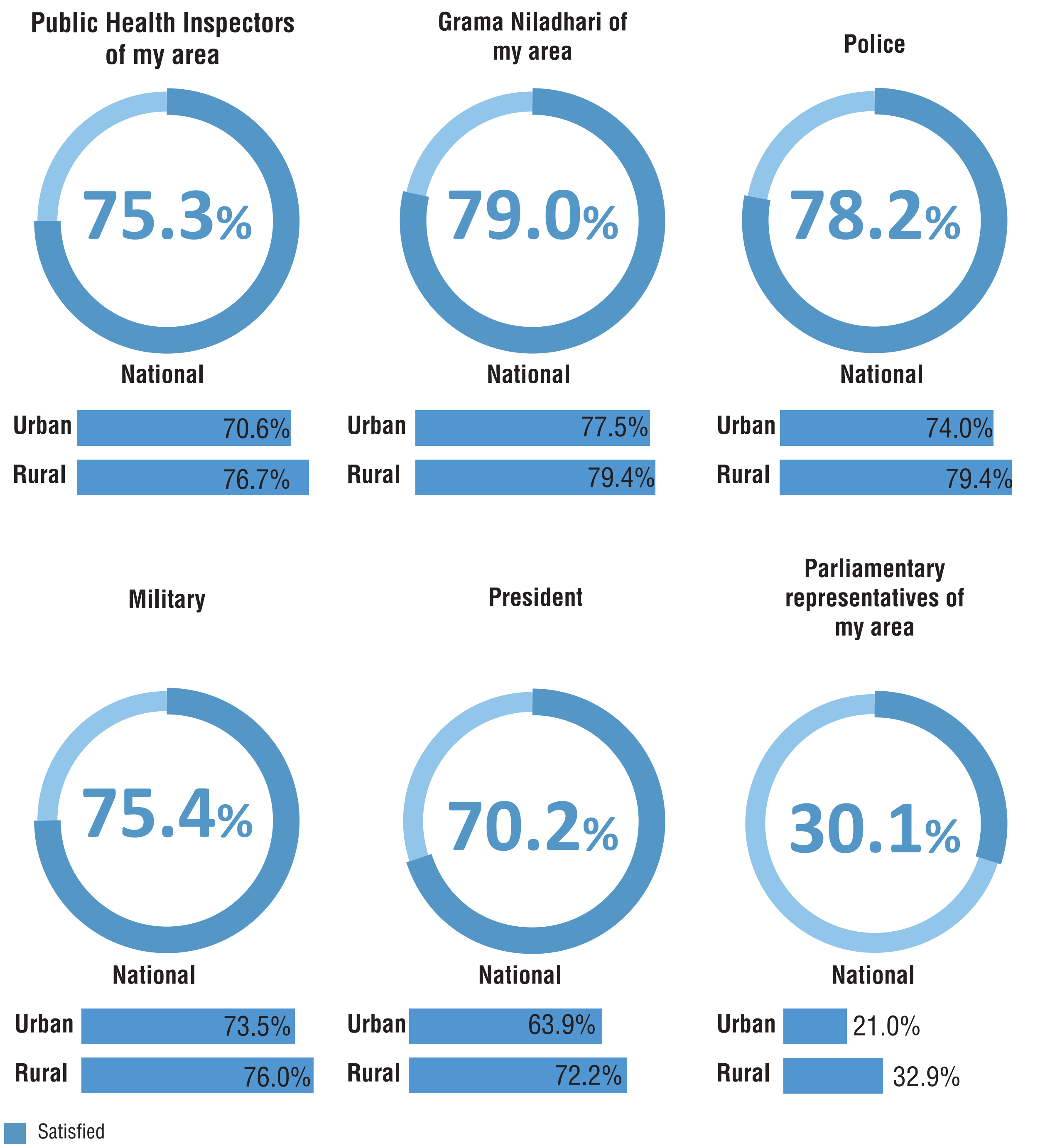
The field briefing for the large-N study commenced on the 27th and 28th February 2021. A total of 71 field enumerators both males and females participated in this study. The interviews were conducted in the first language of both the respondent and the field enumerator. To ensure the quality of the data collected, accompanied visits and back-checks were done during and after field work. The data set was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Fieldwork was done from the 27th February to the 24th March 2021.

SATISFACTION TOWARDS THE **MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 IN SRI LANKA**

Institutional involvement in mitigating COVID-19

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction towards various institutions in relation to their efforts taken in mitigating the COVID-19 crisis in the country. A significant proportion of respondents claim to be satisfied with the Public Health Inspectors and Grama Niladhari officials of their respective areas, the police, the military and the President. They are least satisfied with the Parliamentary representatives of their respective areas.

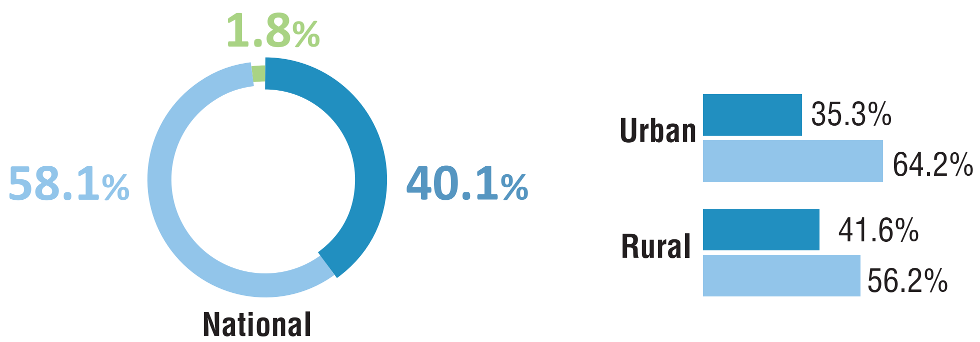


Cost of living and essential goods

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction towards the government's performance in managing the cost of living and the prices of essential goods during the COIVD-19 pandemic.

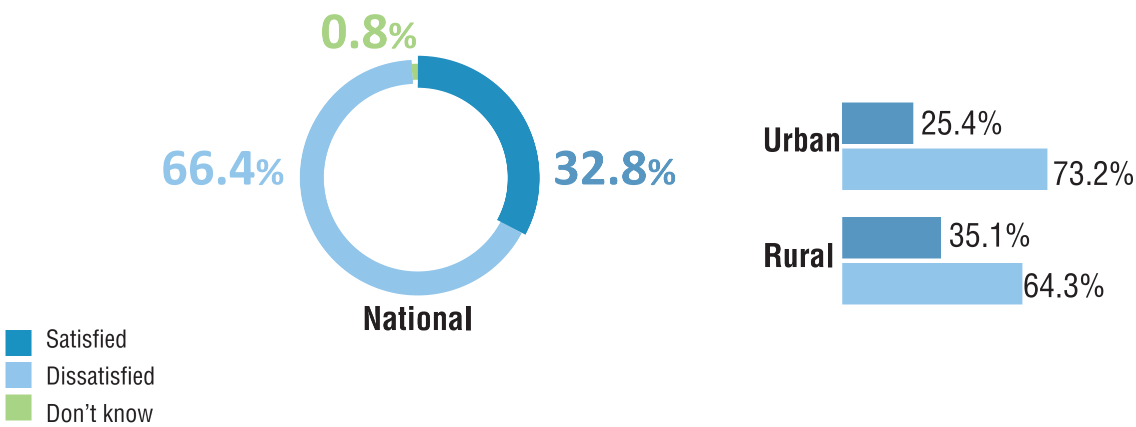
A majority of respondents (58.1%) indicate that they are dissatisfied, while 40.1% of the respondents indicate that they are satisfied with the government's performance in addressing the cost of living during the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of locality, from those who indicate that they are satisfied, it is mostly those in the rural communities, as opposed to those in the urban communities who seem to feel that way. Although a majority from both the urban and rural communities indicate dissatisfaction, a slightly higher proportion of respondents from the urban community hold this view.

How satisfied are you with the Government's performance in addressing the cost of living during COVID-19?



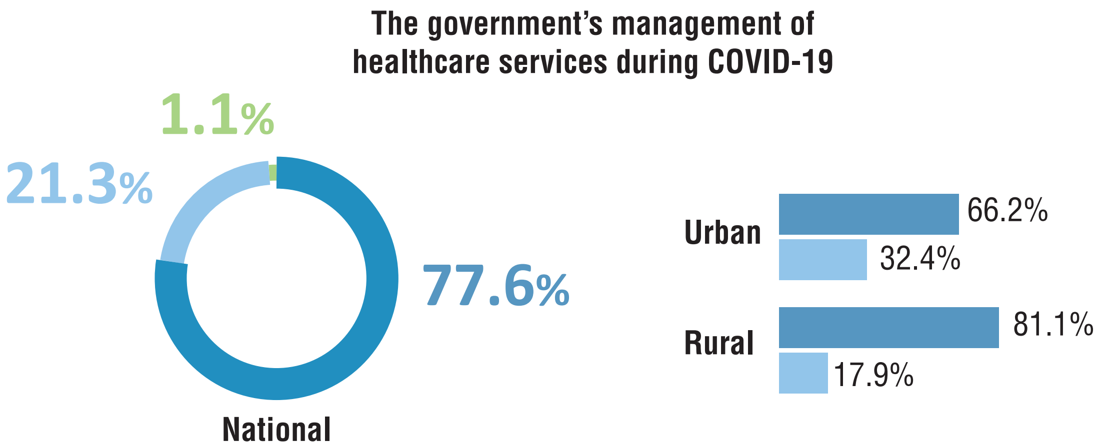
On the government's performance in controlling the prices of essential goods, a majority of respondents (66.4%) claim that they are dissatisfied. Nearly one third of the respondents claim to be satisfied. In terms of locality, from those who indicate that they are satisfied, it is mostly the rural (35.1%) as opposed to the urban (25.4%) communities who hold this view. From the majority who claim to be dissatisfied, a slightly higher percentage among the urban (73.2%) as opposed to the rural (64.3%) community feel this way.

The Government's management in controlling the prices of essential goods



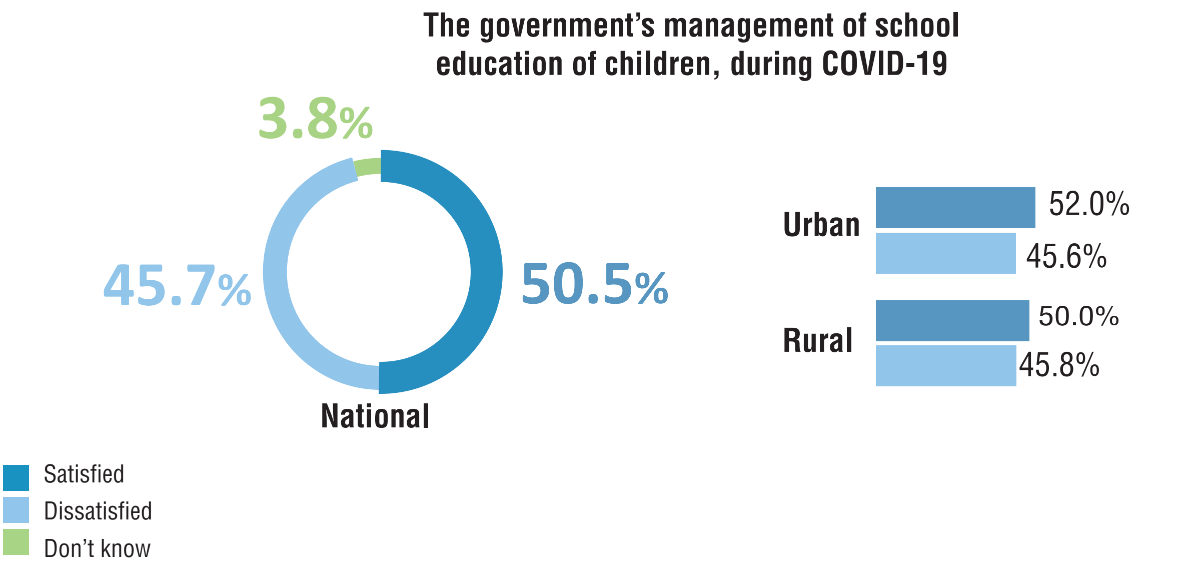
Healthcare

On healthcare a significant majority (nearly 80%) of the respondents indicate that they are satisfied whilst 21.3% indicate dissatisfaction. From those who claim to be satisfied, it is mostly respondents from the rural community (81.1%) who hold this view.



Education

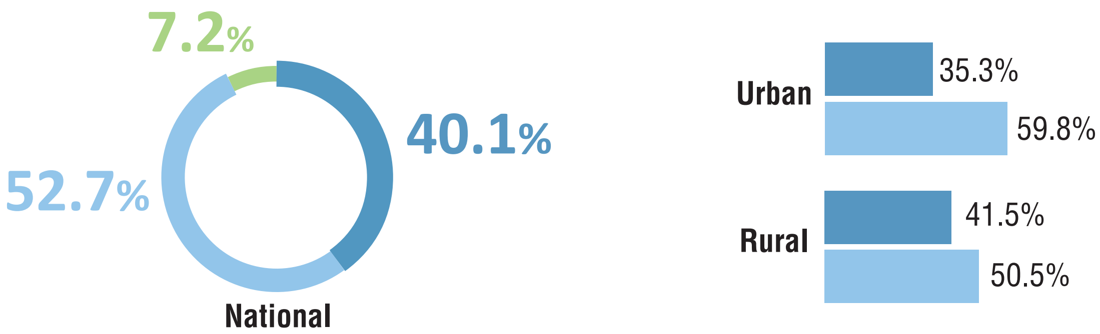
On education there appears to be a divide in opinion with a slight majority (50.5%) indicating that they are satisfied and nearly 46% of respondents claiming to be dissatisfied with the government's management of school education during the COVID 19 pandemic. This pattern is visible across the urban and rural communities with almost an equal proportion of respondents from both the urban and rural communities claiming to be either satisfied or dissatisfied with the Government's management of school education during the pandemic.



Employment security

On the government's management of ensuring employment safeguards during the COVID-19 pandemic, a majority (52.7%) of respondents claim to be dissatisfied whilst approximately 40% claim to be satisfied with the government's efforts. In terms of locality, from those who claim to be satisfied, it is mostly respondents from the rural community – and from those who claim to be dissatisfied, it is mostly respondents from the urban community who hold this view.

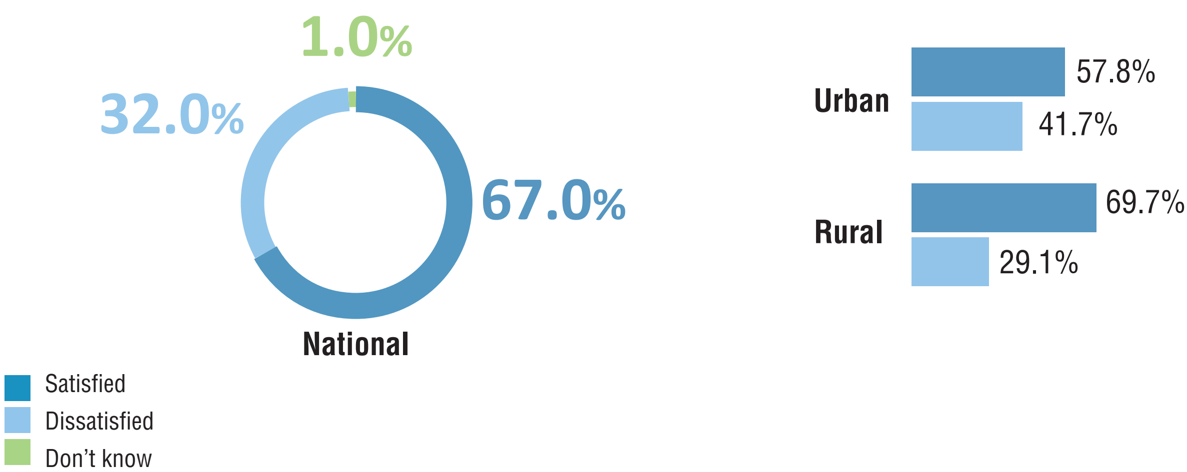
The government's management of protecting employment safeguards / opportunities during COVID-19



Controlling the spread of the pandemic

It is evident that a majority of respondents indicate that they are satisfied with the government's performance in controlling the spread of the COVID -19 pandemic. Nearly one third of the respondents claim to be dissatisfied. From those who claim to be satisfied, it is mostly respondents among the rural communities who hold this view. From those who claim to be dissatisfied it is mostly respondents among the urban community who indicate so.

The government's management of controlling the spread of COVID-19

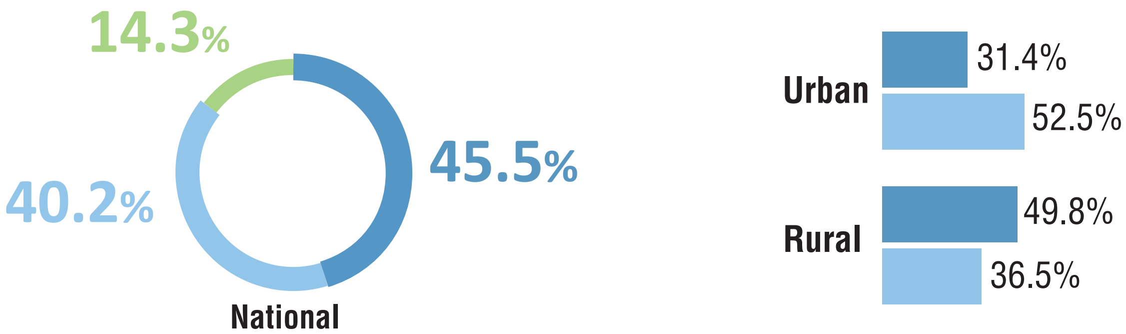


Fair treatment of persons

On fair treatment of persons during the pandemic, the respondents were asked to indicate their perception on whether they felt that the rules and guidelines in relation to the pandemic were fairly implemented by the government across income and ethnic divides prevalent within society.

On treatment of persons from varying income groups, nearly 46% of respondents indicate that the rules and guidelines implemented by the government were fair towards all income groups. Approximately 40% of the respondents oppose this. Although most among the rural community believe that the rules and guidelines were fairly implemented towards all income groups in society, a majority among the urban communities oppose this.

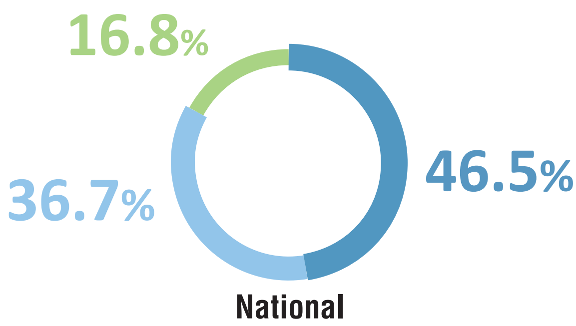
How fairly have COVID-19 rules (guidelines) of the government been implemented among all income groups?

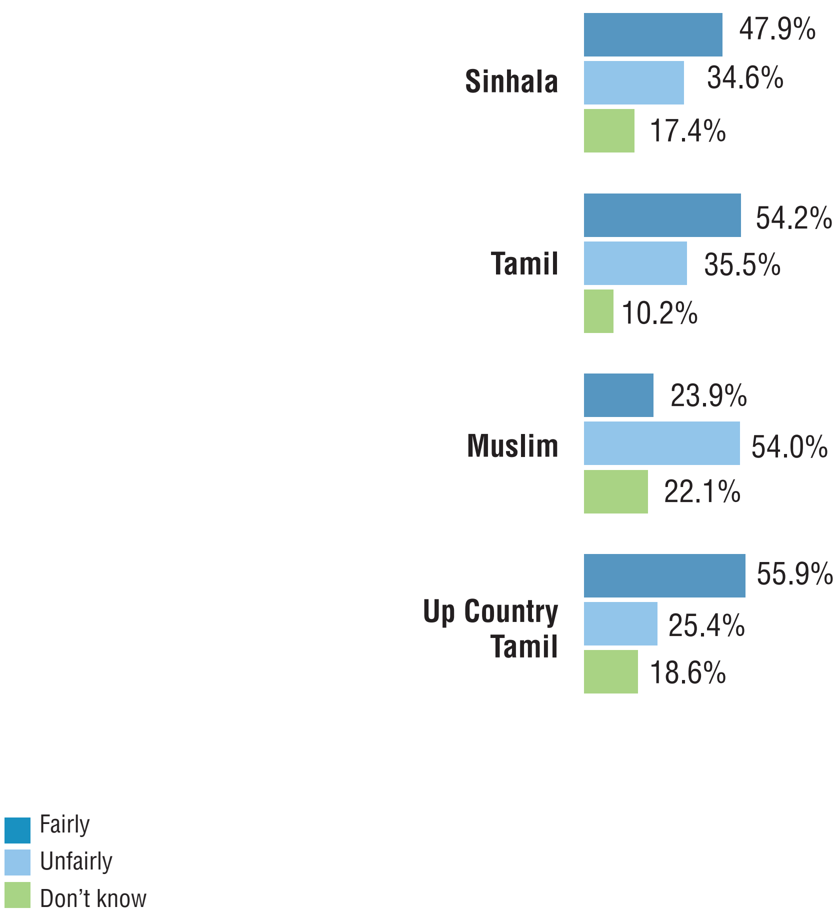


Fairly
Unfairly
Don't know

On treatment of persons from varying ethnic groups, nearly 47% of the respondents are of the opinion that the rules and guidelines were fairly implemented towards all ethnic groups in society, whilst nearly 37% of the respondents oppose this. From an ethnic perspective; it is mostly the Muslim community (54%) who feel that the rules and guidelines were unfairly implemented towards all ethnic groups in society. A majority across the Tamil and Up Country Tamil communities, closely followed by the Sinhala community, feel that the Covid -19 rules and guidelines were fairly implemented by the government.

How fairly have COVID-19 rules (guidelines) of the government been implemented among all ethnic groups?

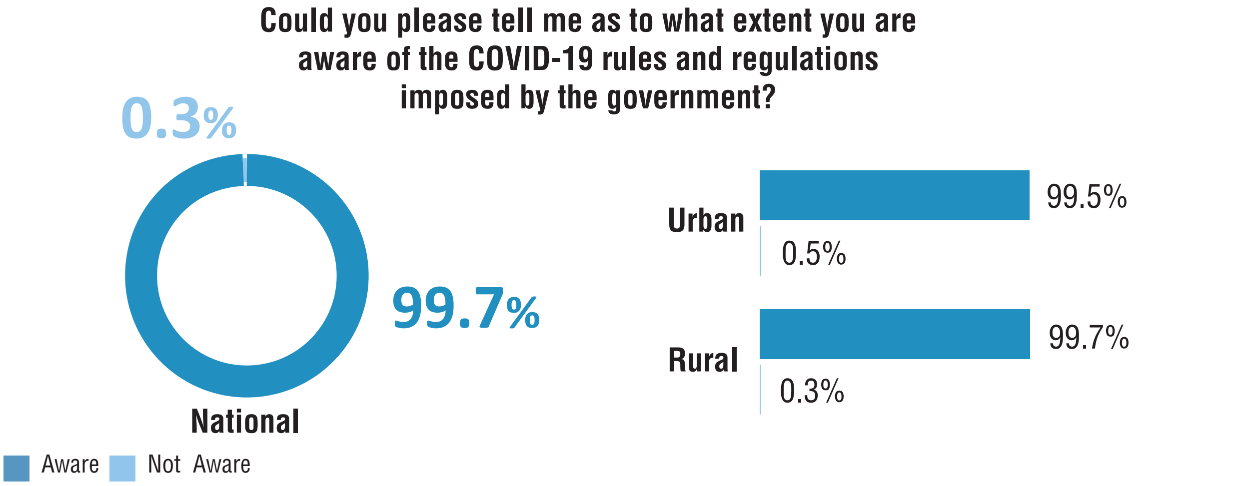




SOURCES OF **INFORMATION**

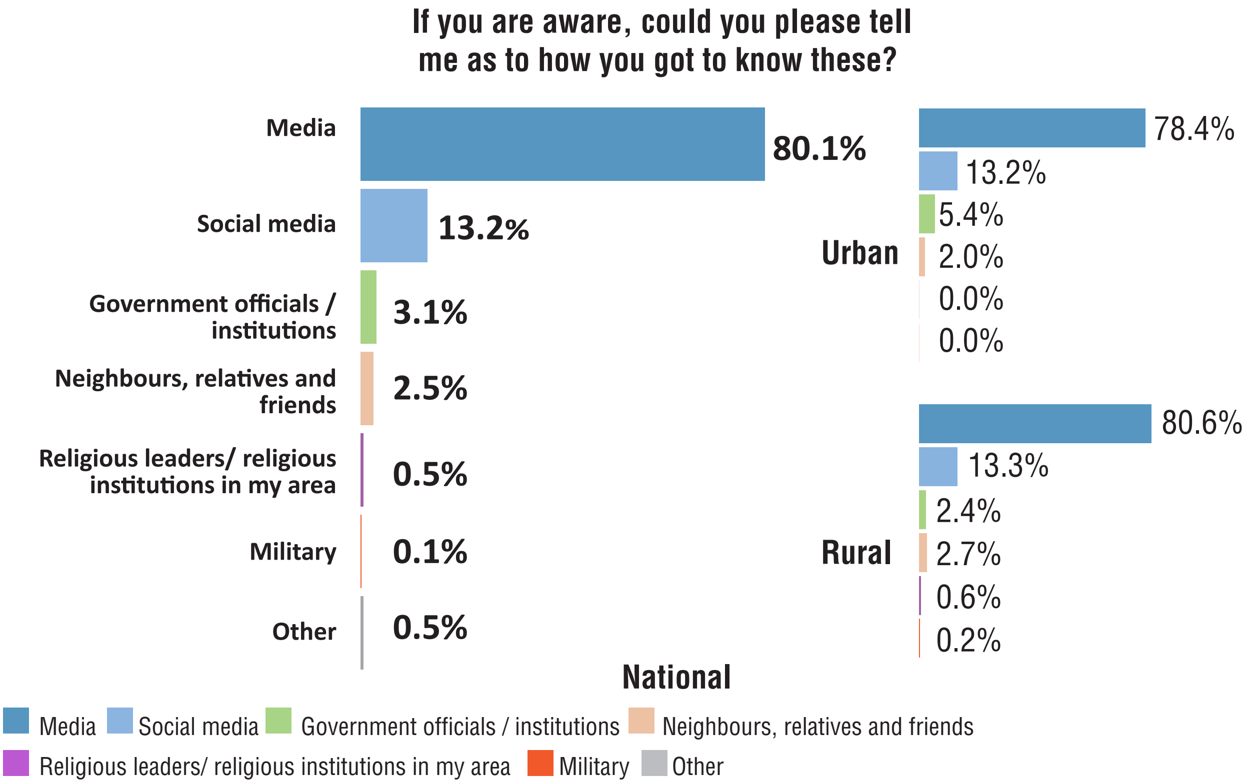
Levels of awareness on COVID-19 rules and regulations imposed by the government

Almost all respondents that were interviewed indicate that they are aware of the COVID-19 rules and regulations imposed by the government.



Sources of information

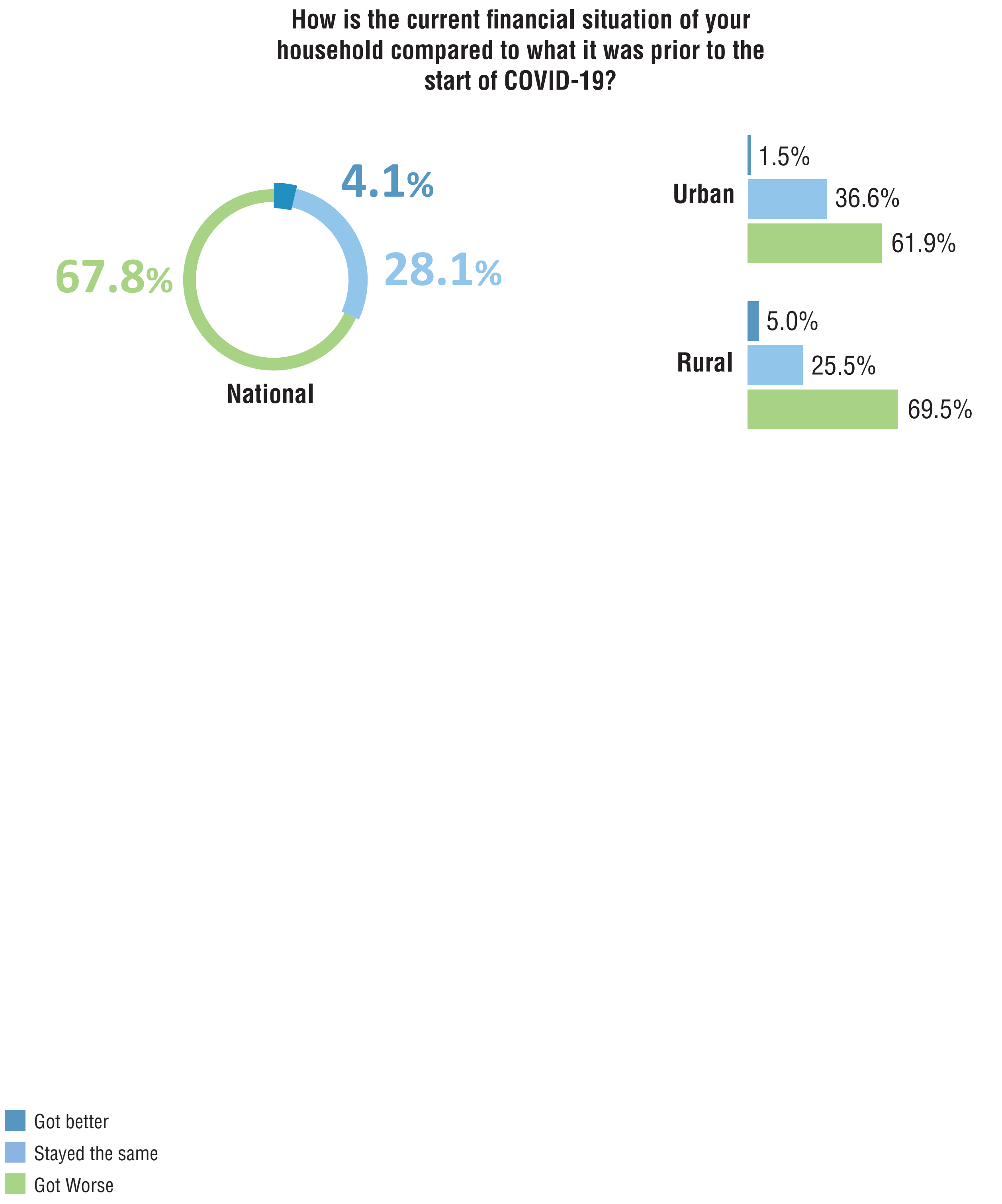
A significant proportion of respondents (80.1%) seem to get information about the COVID-19 rules and regulations via media (TV, Radio, Newspapers) This is followed by 13.2% of the respondents claiming that they receive information via social media.



IMPACT ON **LIVELIHOODS**

General financial situation of households

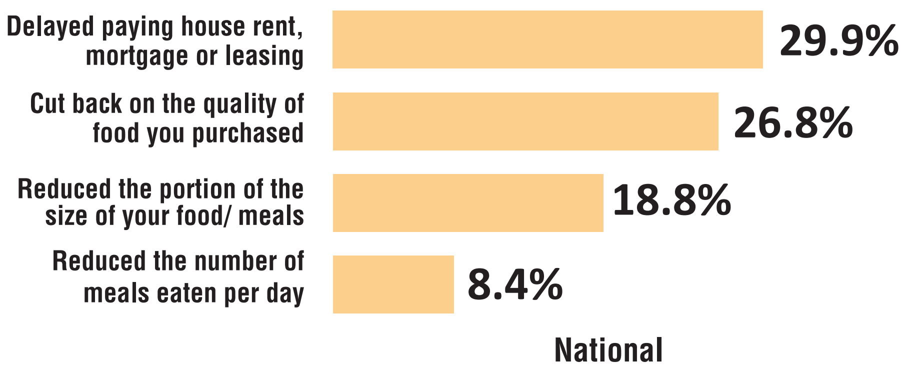
A majority (67.8%) of respondents indicate that their household financial situation has got worse when compared to what it was prior to the start of COVID-19. A slightly higher percentage of respondents from the rural community, in comparison to the urban community claim to feel this way.

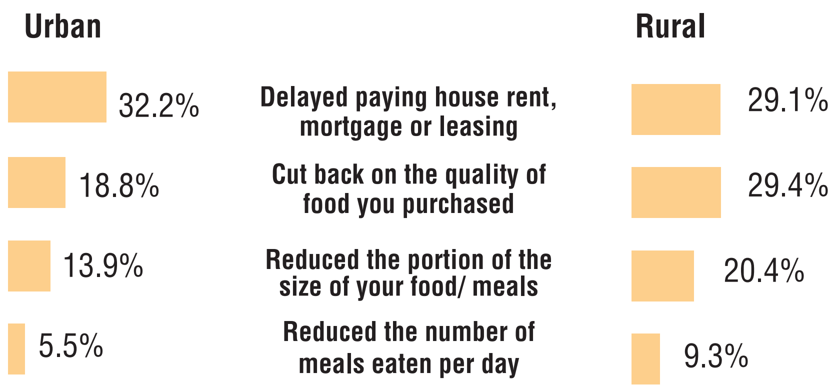


Consequences faced due to the shortages in finances

On there being a delay in payment of house rent, mortgage or leasing, cut back on the quality of food purchased, reduction in the portion of the size of food/ meals and reduction in the number of meals eaten per day– a considerable proportion of respondents indicate that they have had to face these consequences as a result of the pandemic.

Since the start of COVID-19 have you or anyone in your household had to do any of the following due to the shortage of finances?



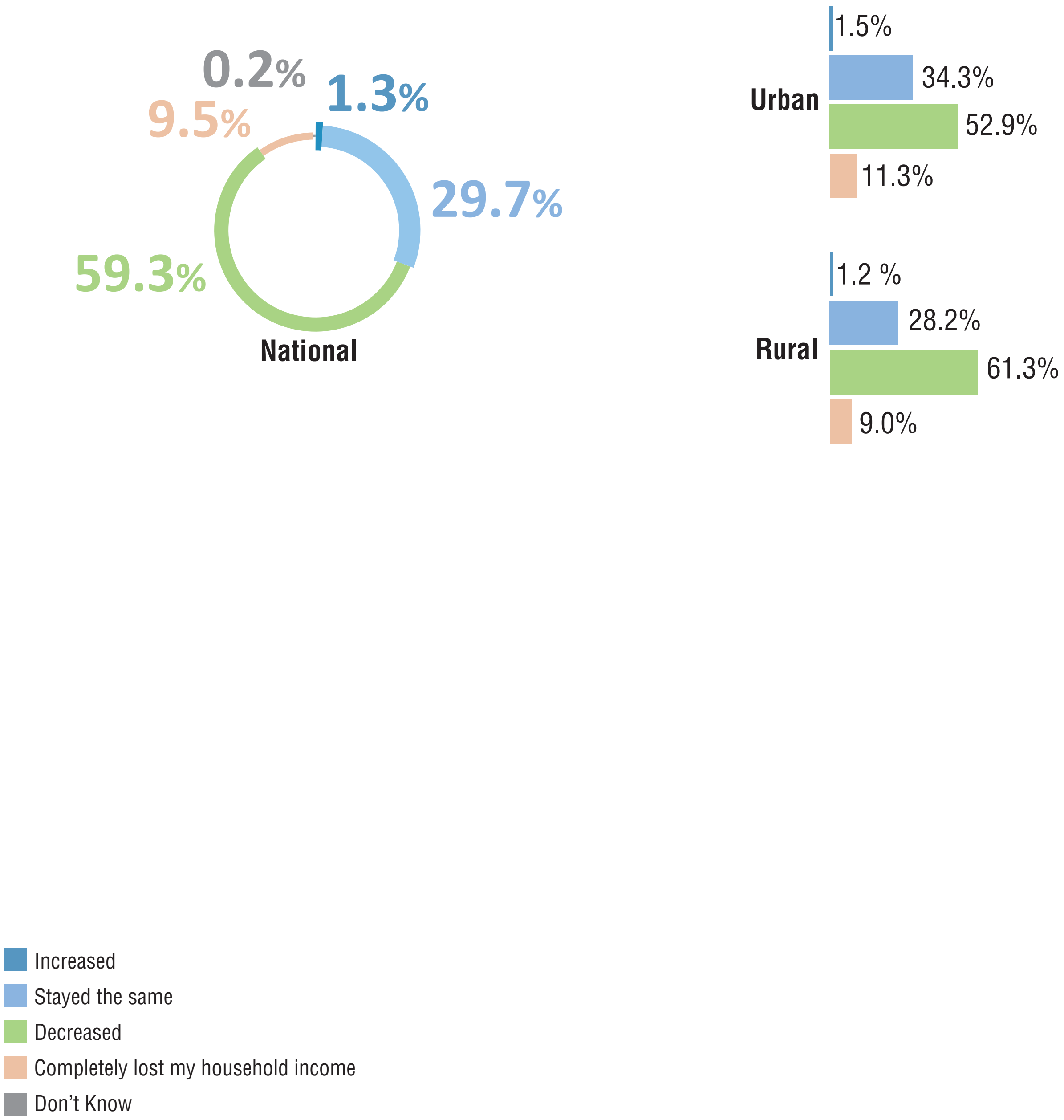


Yes

Impact on income due to the pandemic

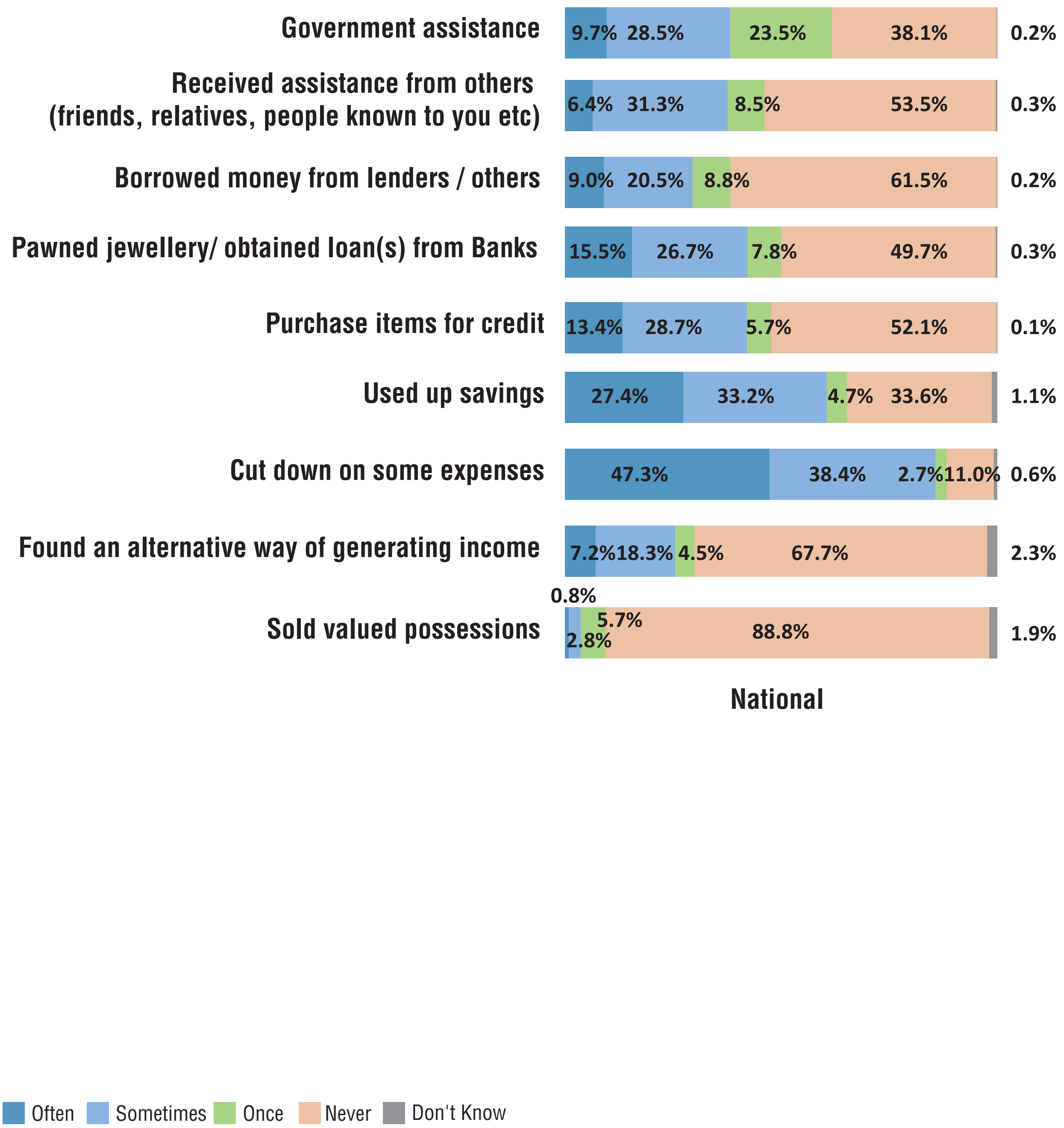
On the impact on income, it is evident that a majority of respondents (nearly 60%) indicate that their household income has decreased due to the pandemic. Approximately 10% of the respondents claim to have completely lost their household income. 11.3% from the Urban and 9% from the rural communities hold this view.

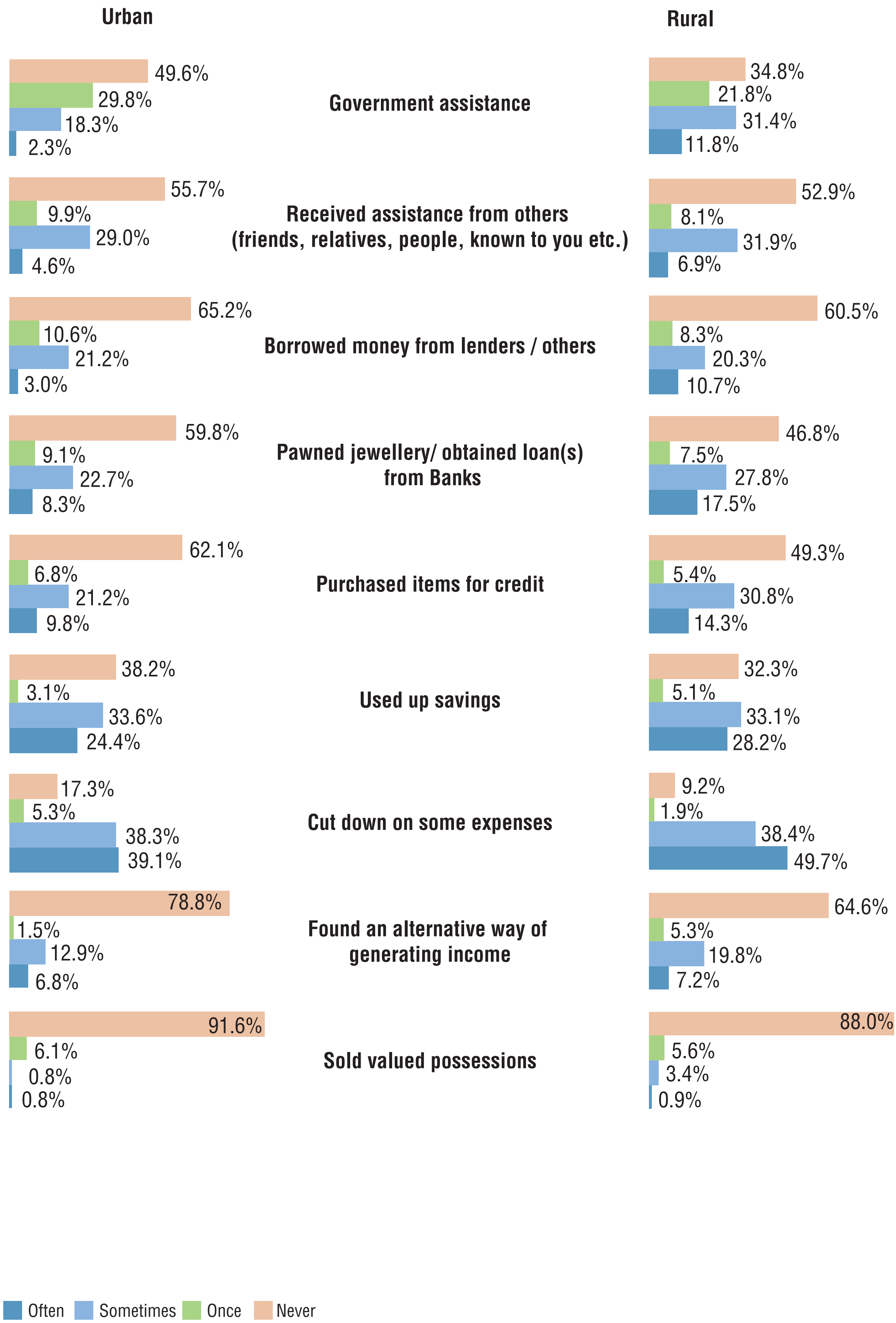
Thinking about your current household income in comparison to the time prior to the start of covid-19 could you please tell me as to what extent your household income has either increased or decreased?



Coping strategies adopted due to decreased income

The respondents were asked to choose from a range of coping strategies that they may have adapted to, due to the loss of or decreased levels of household income. The list ranged from government assistance, assistance from others (friends, relatives, people known to you etc.), borrowing money from lenders / others, pawned jewellery/ obtained loan(s) from banks, purchasing items for credit, using savings, cutting down some expenses, finding alternative ways of generating income and selling valuable possessions.



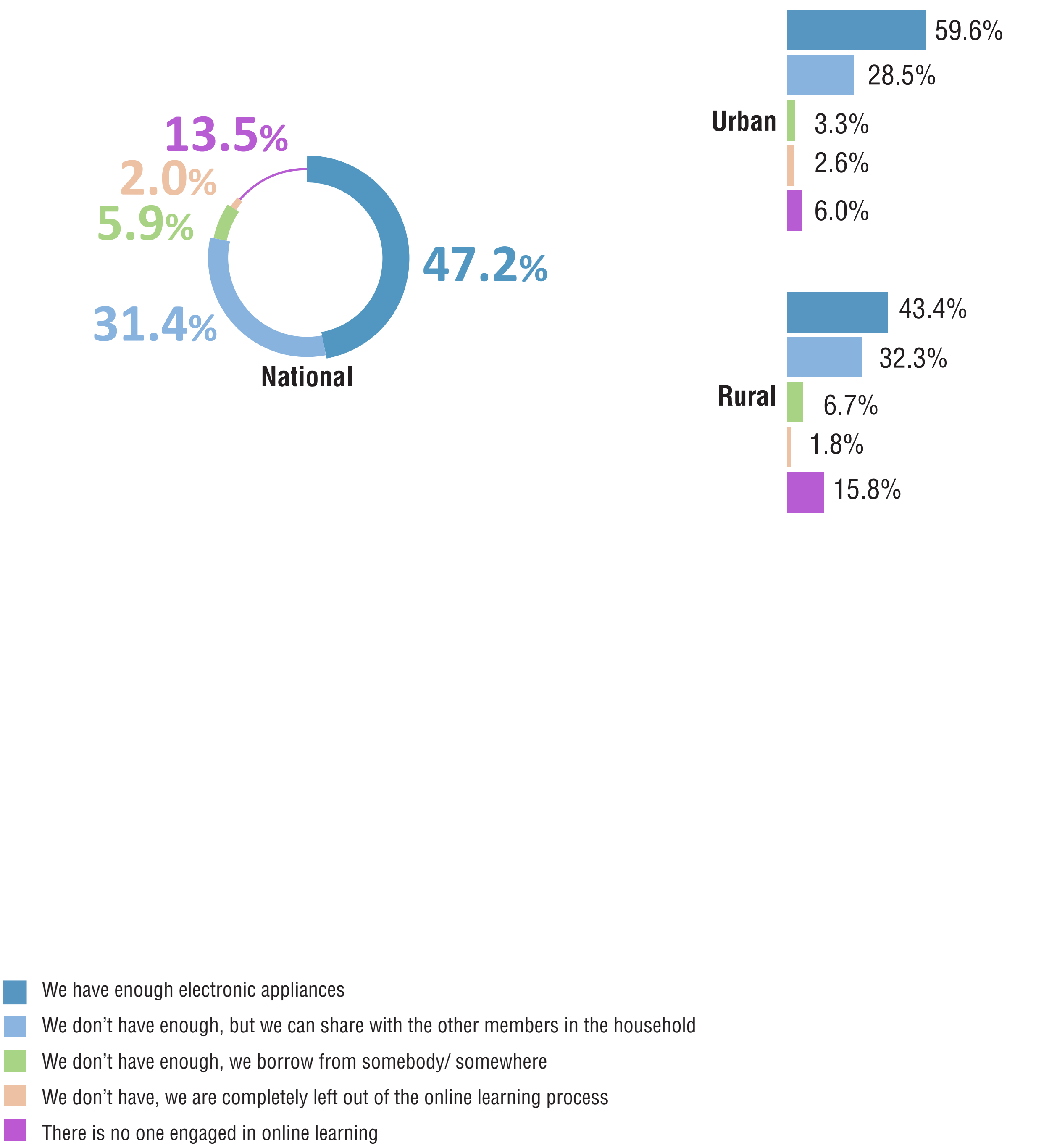

Urban
Rural
49.6%
29.8%
18.3%
2.3%
Government assistance
34.8%
21.8%
31.4%
11.8%
55.7%
9.9%
29.0%
4.6%
Received assistance from others (friends, relatives, people, known to you etc.)
52.9%
8.1%
31.9%
6.9%
65.2%
10.6%
21.2%
3.0%
Borrowed money from lenders / others
60.5%
8.3%
20.3%
10.7%
59.8%
9.1%
22.7%
8.3%
Pawned jewellery/ obtained loan(s) from Banks
46.8%
7.5%
27.8%
17.5%
62.1%
6.8%
21.2%
9.8%
Purchased items for credit
49.3%
5.4%
30.8%
14.3%
38.2%
3.1%
33.6%
24.4%
Used up savings
32.3%
5.1%
33.1%
28.2%
17.3%
5.3%
38.3%
39.1%
Cut down on some expenses
9.2%
1.9%
38.4%
49.7%
78.8%
1.5%
12.9%
6.8%
Found an alternative way of generating income
64.6%
5.3%
19.8%
7.2%
91.6%
6.1%
0.8%
0.8%
Sold valued possessions
88.0%
5.6%
3.4%
0.9%
Often
Sometimes
Once
Never

IMPACT ON **EDUCATION**

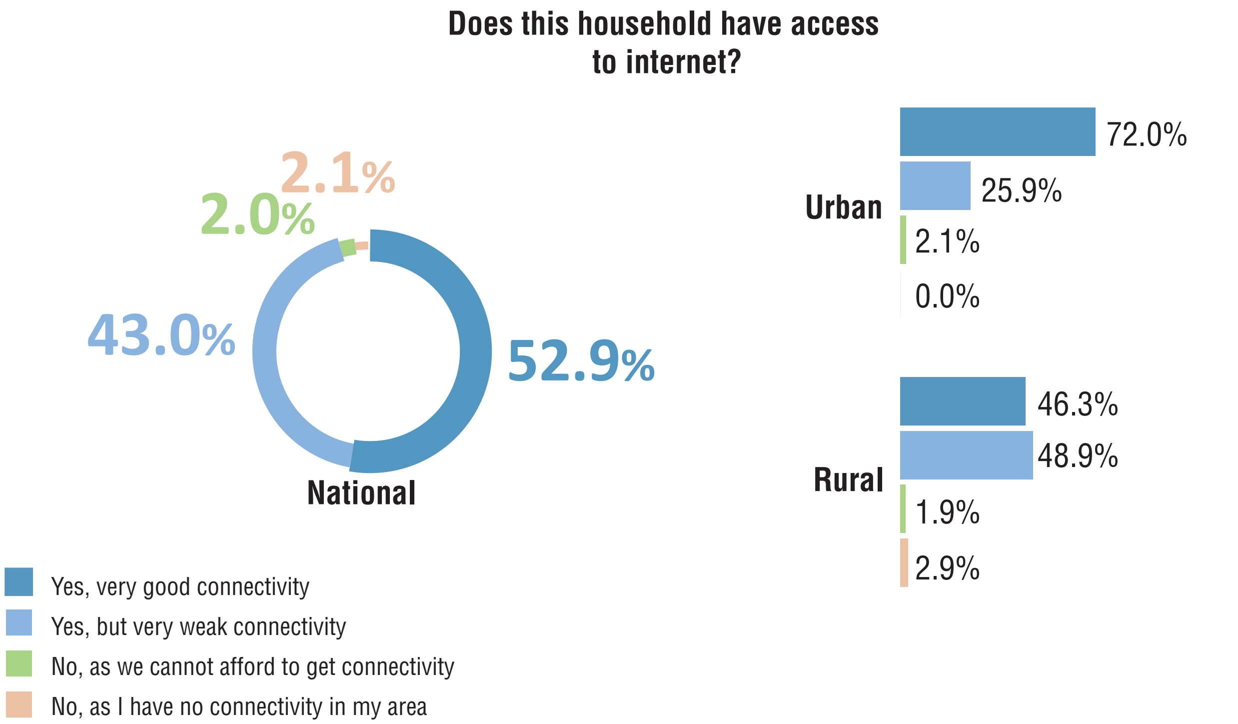
Access to online learning

On access to online learning, a significant proportion of respondents claim to not have enough electronic appliances - which results in them having to either share with other members of the household, borrow from someone or somewhere or completely halt online learning, which leaves them completely left out of the process in obtaining online learning during the pandemic.

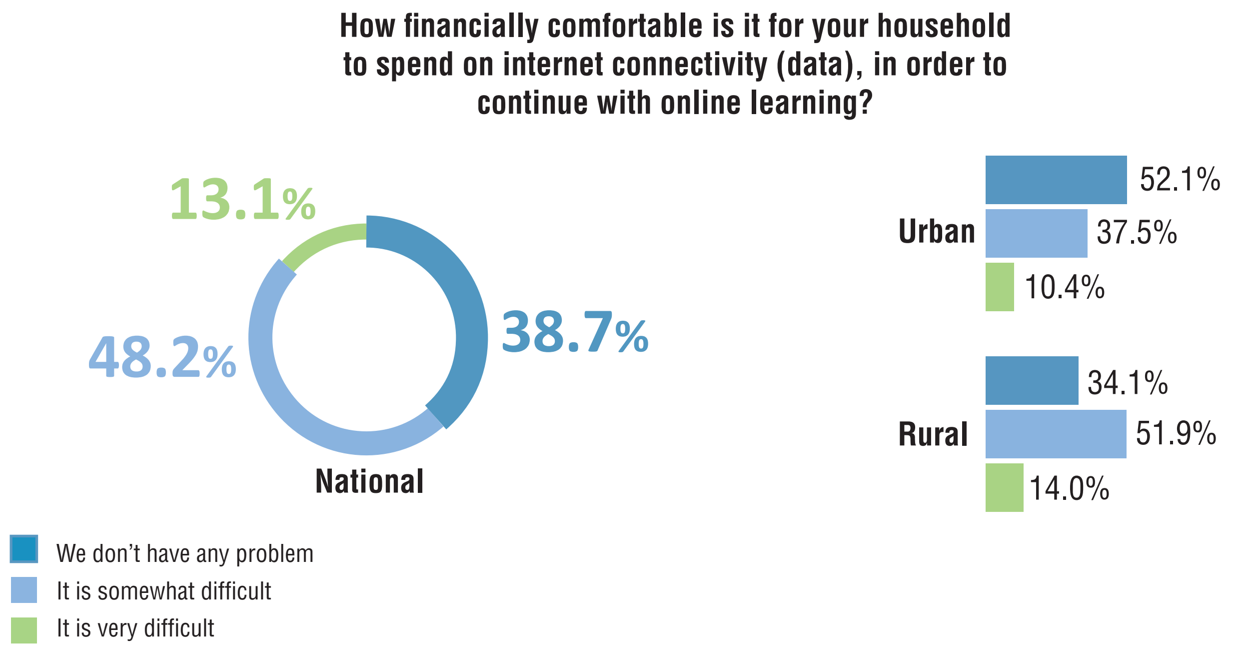
Does this household possess enough electronic appliances (computers, smart phones, tabs etc.) for those who follow online learning?



A considerable percentage of respondents (43%) indicate that they do have access to the internet but to very weak connectivity. A clear divide between localities is evident where a significant majority among the urban community indicate that they have very good access to internet connectivity – while a very high percentage among the rural community indicate that they have access, but to very weak internet connectivity.

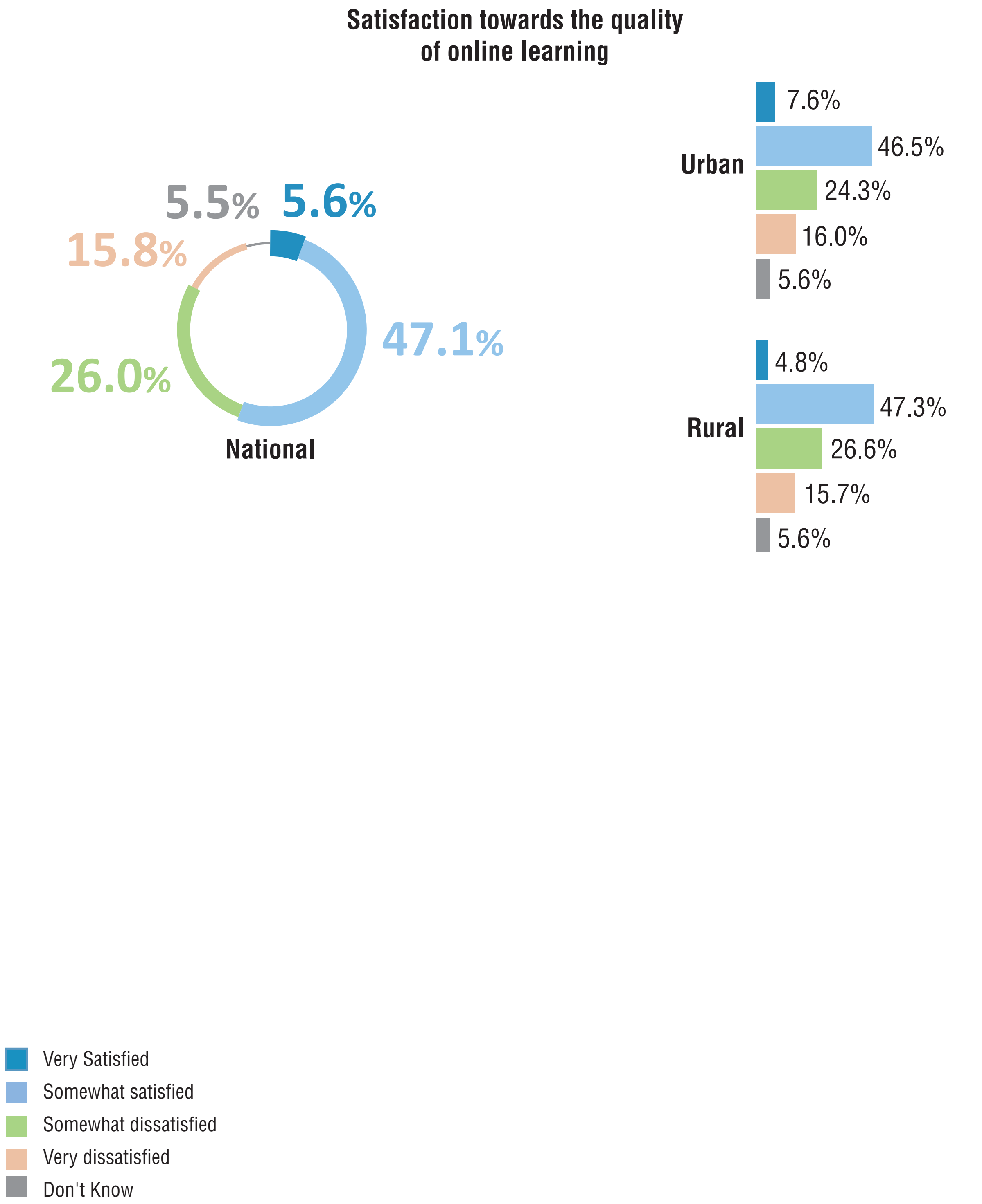


On expenditure for internet connectivity, a majority of respondents (61.3%) indicate that it is difficult for them to spend on internet connectivity (data) in order to continue with online learning. This issue is significantly evident among those from the rural community.



Satisfaction towards the quality of online learning

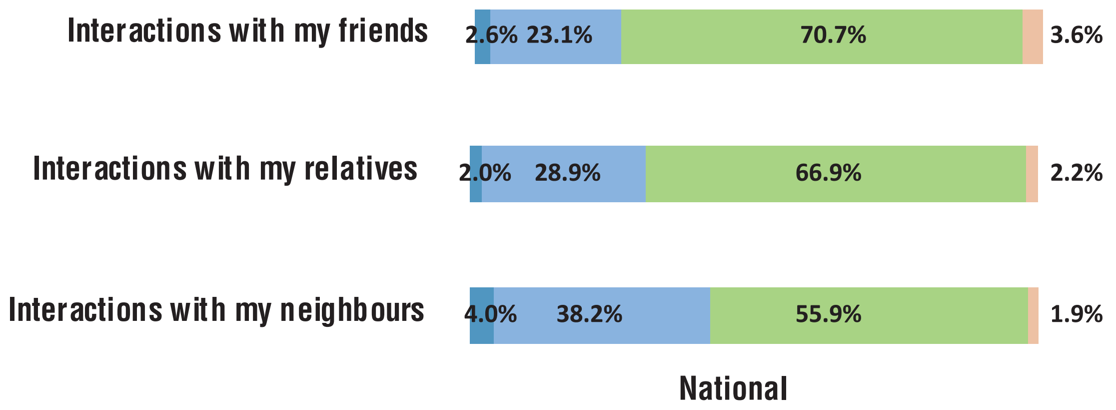
Respondents seem to have mixed opinions on the quality of education received via online learning. Whilst 52.7% of the respondents claim to be satisfied, 41.8% are dissatisfied.

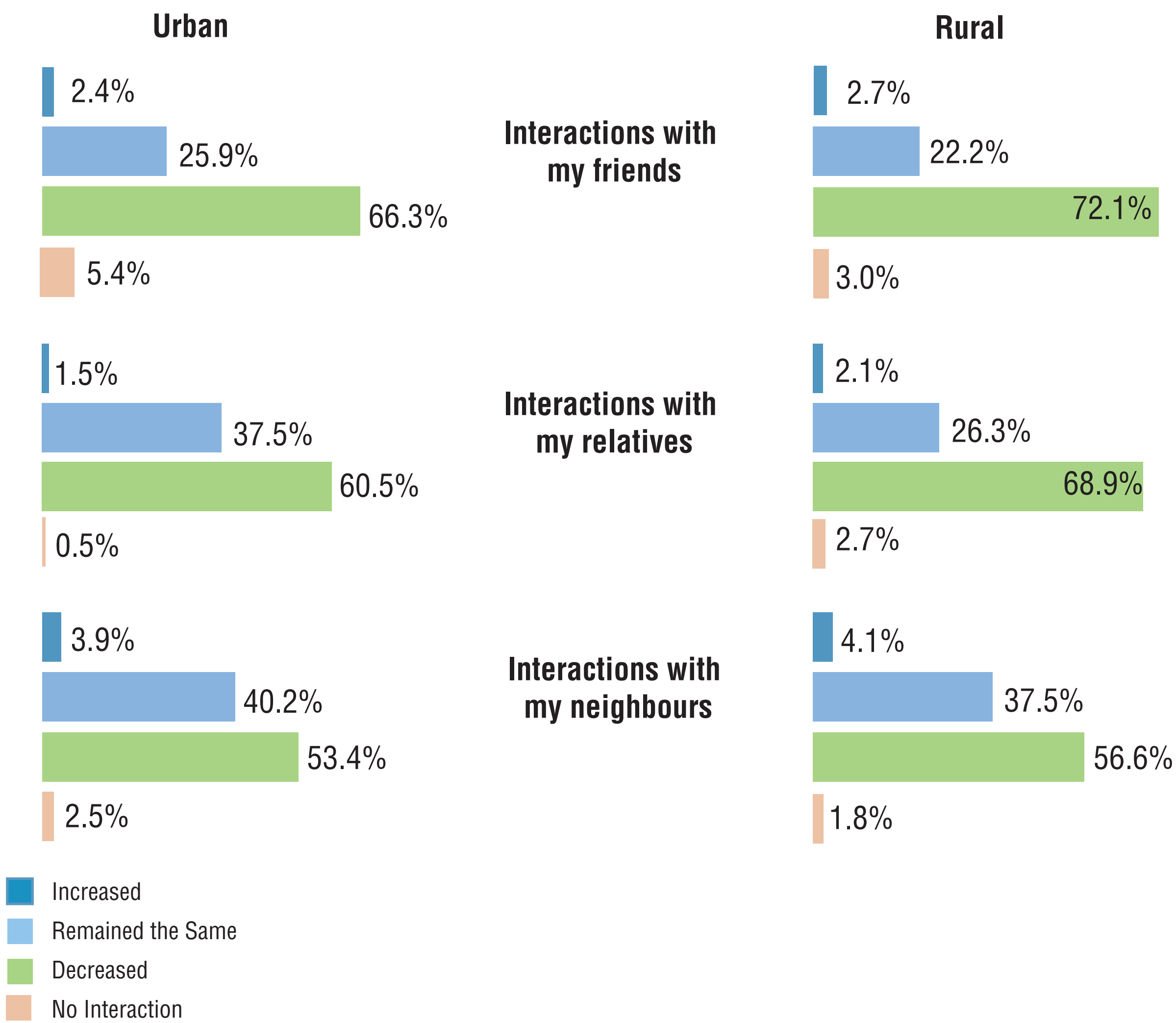


IMPACT ON **SOCIAL RELATIONS**

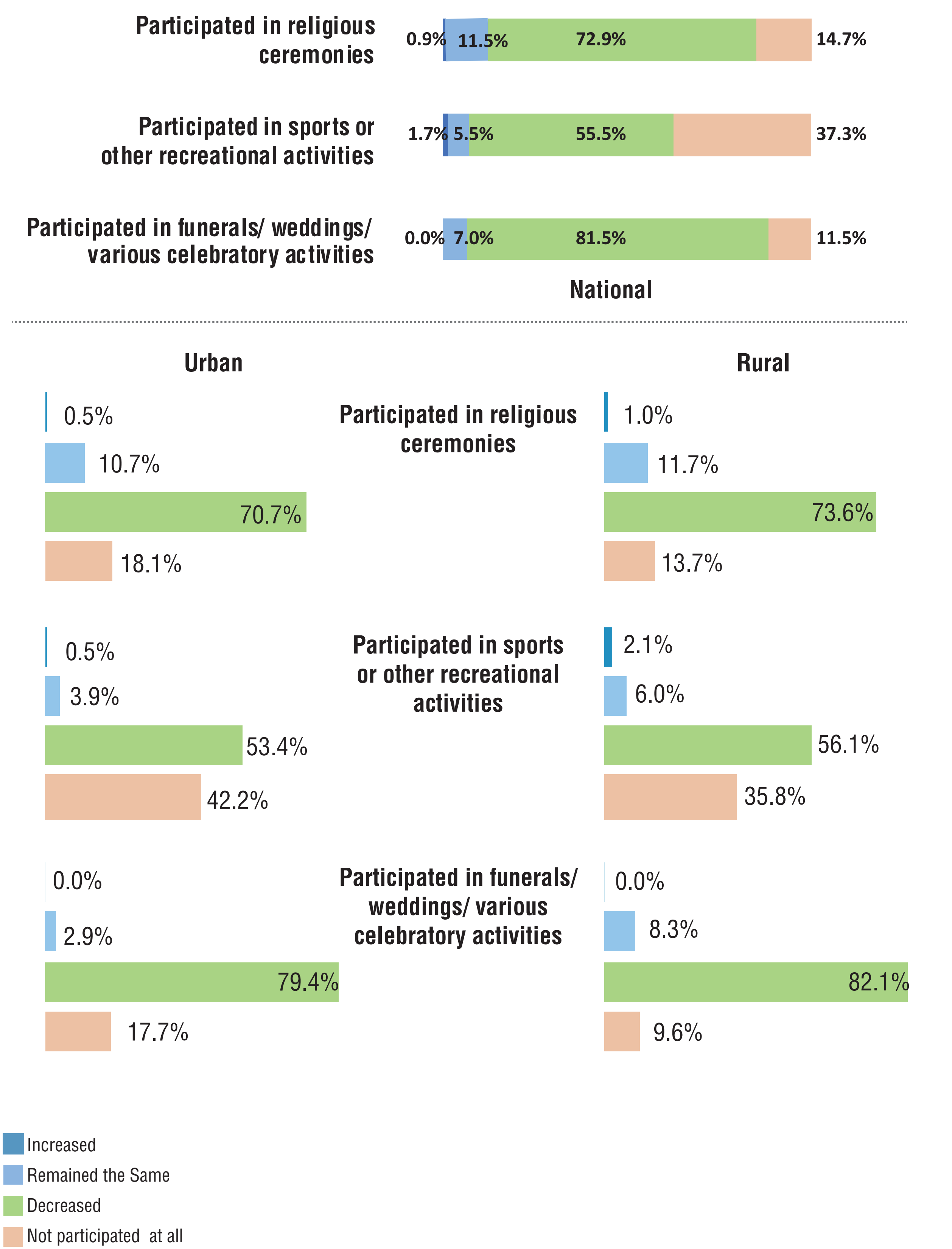
Interactions with friends, relatives and neighbours

There appears to be a clear decline in the respondents' interactions with their friends, relatives and neighbours and also various social engagements as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.





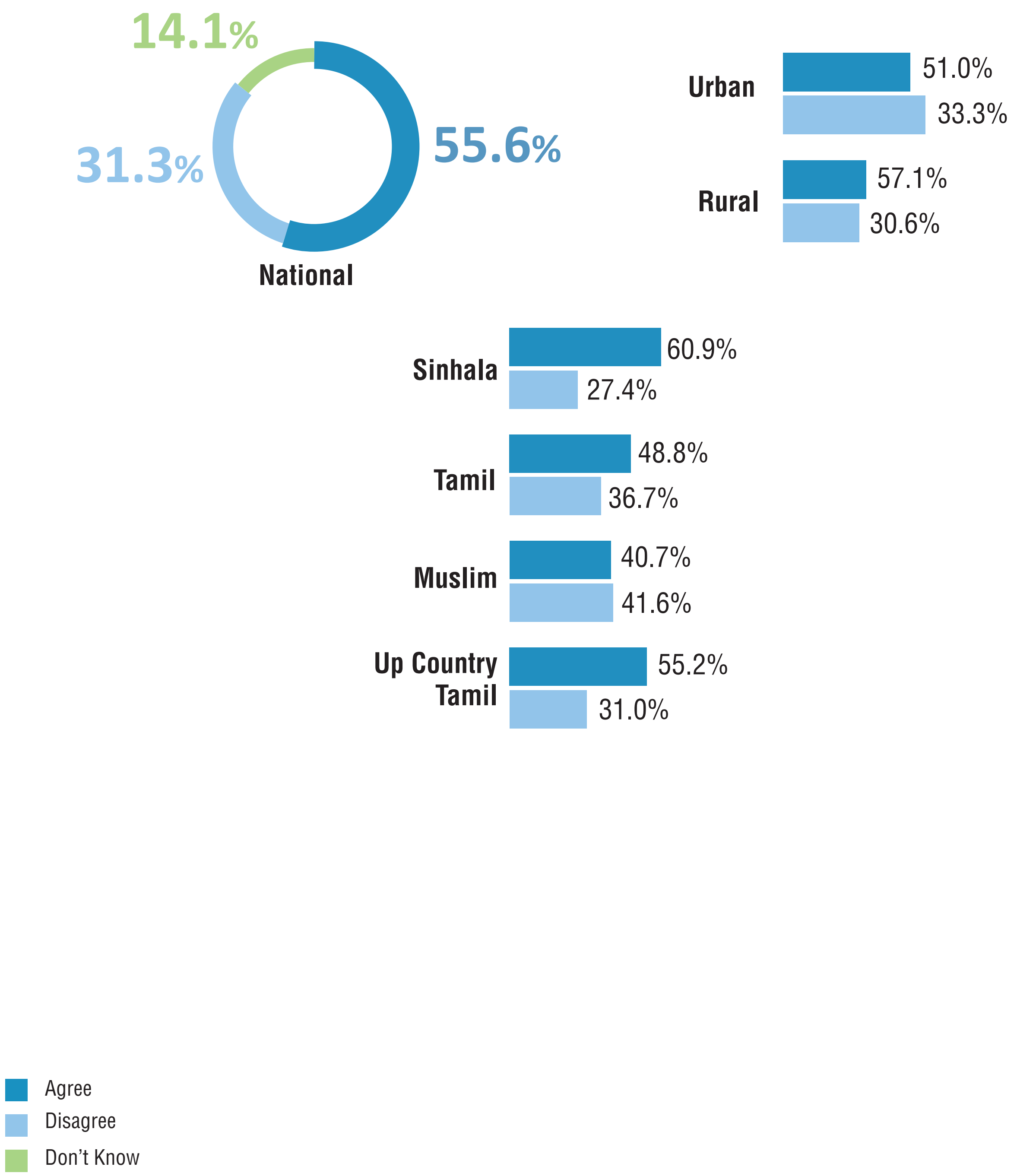
Social engagement



Impact on inter-community relations

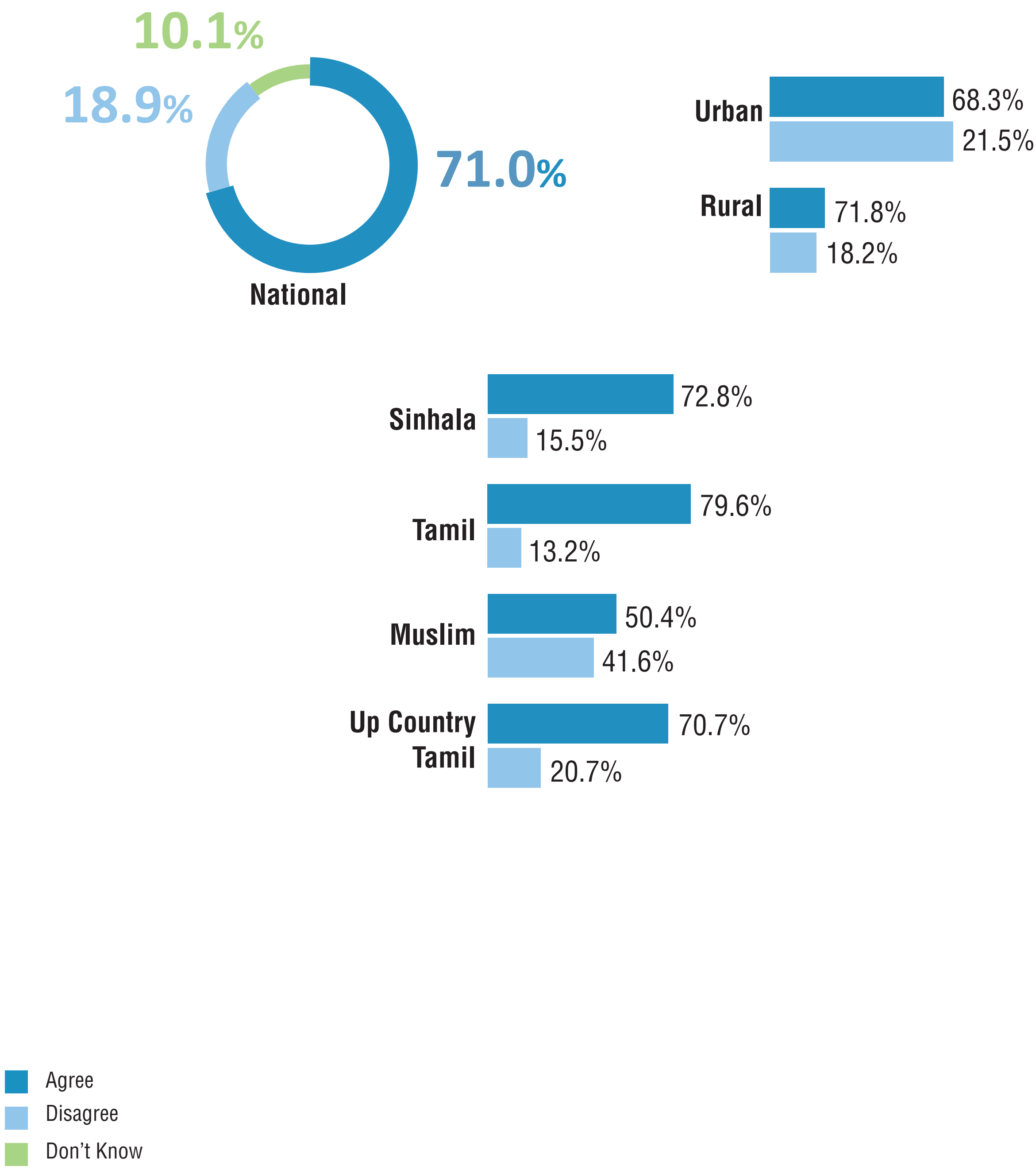
On perception towards low-income dwellers, a majority (55.6%) are of the view that COVID-19 could be highly prevalent among the low-income dwellers.

COVID-19 could be highly prevalent among the low-income dwellers

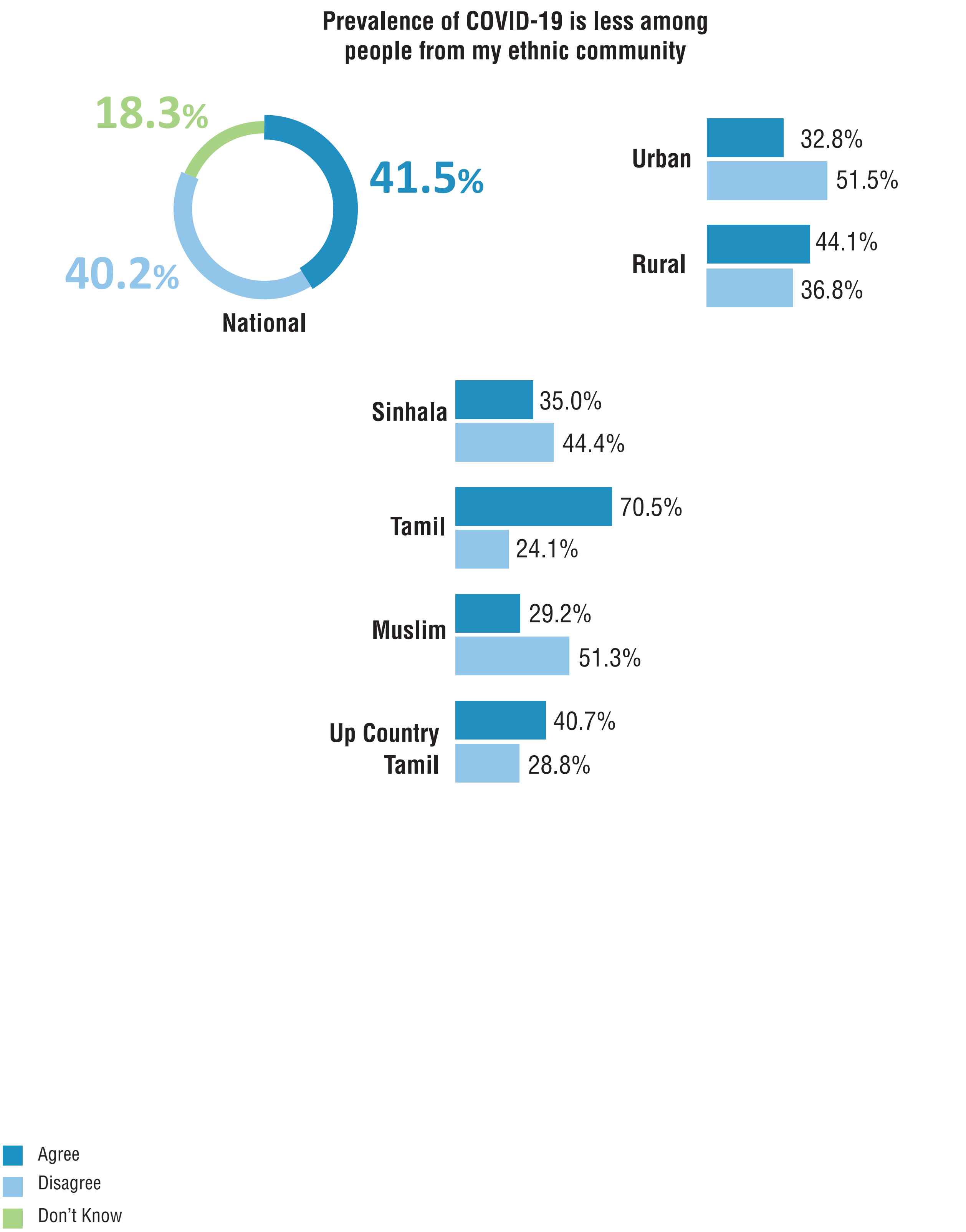


A significant majority of respondents (71.0%) believe that cultural/ religious practices of some religious groups could be a cause for a higher possibility of the spread of COVID-19. From those who disagree, it is mostly respondents from the Muslim community who hold this view.

Cultural/ religious practices of some religious groups can cause higher possibility of spreading COVID-19



When asked if they feel that the prevalence of COVID-19 is less among their own ethnic groups, there appears to be a divide in opinion.

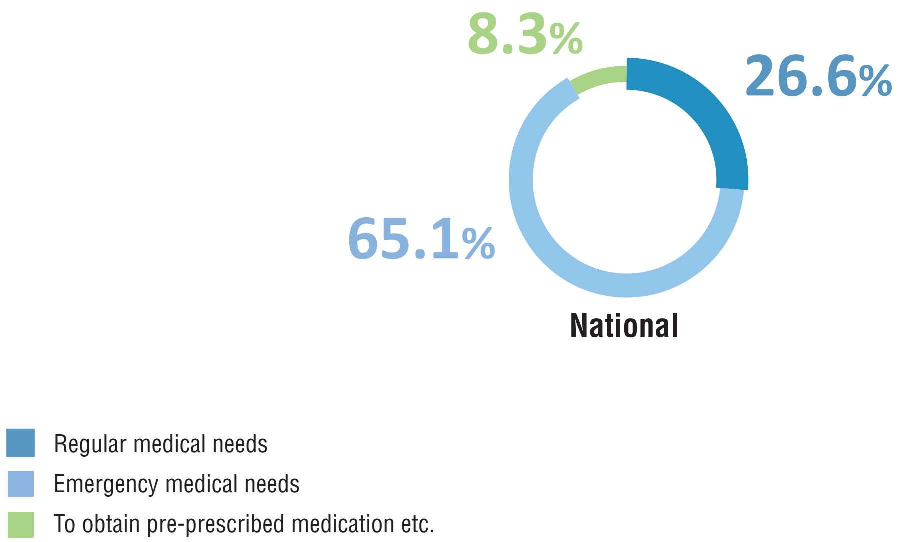


IMPACT ON **HEALTHCARE**

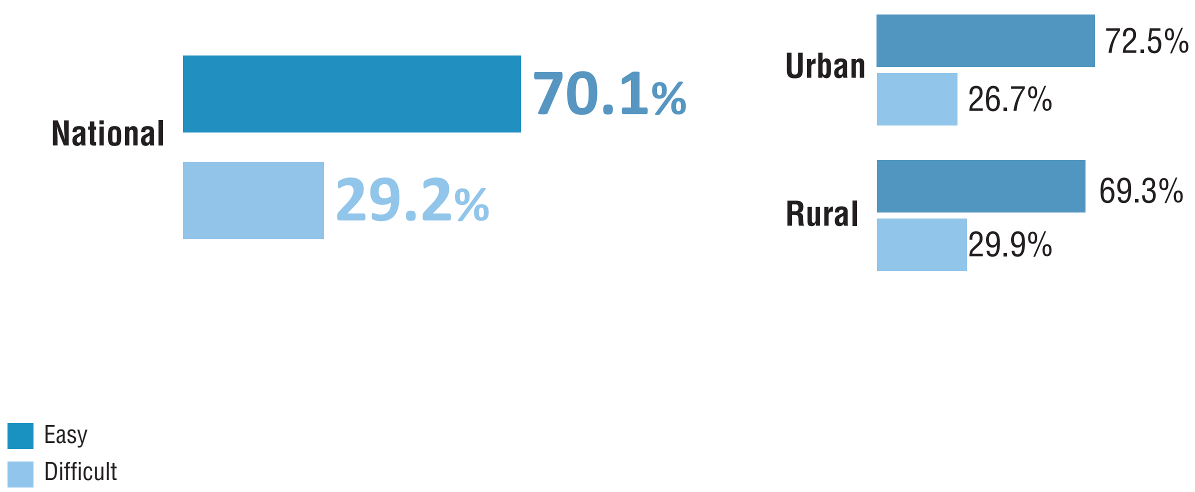
Access to healthcare services

From those who had to visit a hospital/ doctor during the COVID-19 crisis, 65.1% of the respondents indicate that it was for emergency medical needs - whilst nearly 27% indicate that it was for regular medical needs. Overall, despite the prevailing COVID crisis, the respondents claim to have had an easy experience in obtaining the medical services they required.

If you did visit the hospital/ doctor, could you please tell me whether it was a regular or emergency medical need?



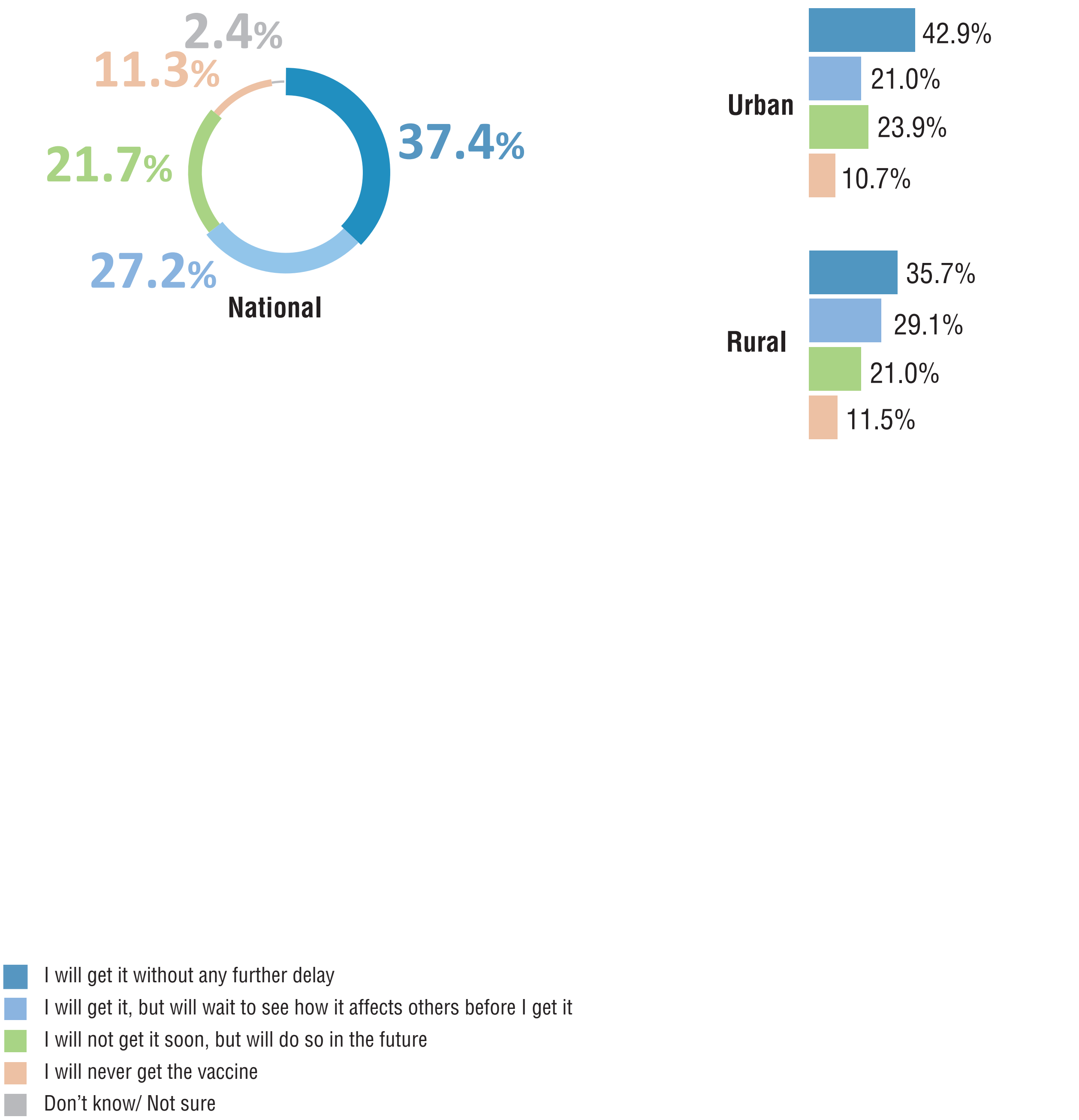
If you visited the hospital/ Doctor, how easy was it for you to get the relevant services from the hospital/ Doctor?



Perceptions on the vaccine

On getting vaccinated, 11.3% indicate that they will never get the vaccine whilst 21.7% indicate that they will not get it soon, but will do so in the future. Only about one third of the respondents are confident, and will get the vaccine without any further delay. 27.2% indicate that they will do so, depending on how it may affect the rest.

If you were given the opportunity to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine, which of the following best reflects your opinion?



The Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) brings together advocates, activists, and practitioners from nine global organizations with expertise in a range of fields from psycho-social support and documentation to forensics and law. Together they assist communities in or emerging from conflict in creating just and peaceful futures.

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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