

CONFIDENCE IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE INDEX: AUGUST 2022

Centre for Policy Alternatives - Social Indicator



INTRODUCTION

This report is prepared by Social Indicator (SI), the survey research arm of the Center for Policy Alternatives on the findings of the Confidence in Democratic Governance Index (Wave 3). Given the economic and political crisis Sri Lanka is facing, this poll was designed with the aim of capturing the public experience, their opinion on *Aragalaya*, and on various aspects of the current economic and political crisis. Since the situation in Sri Lanka is volatile, this survey had to be conducted within a very short period of time employing SI's countrywide field network.

METHODOLOGY

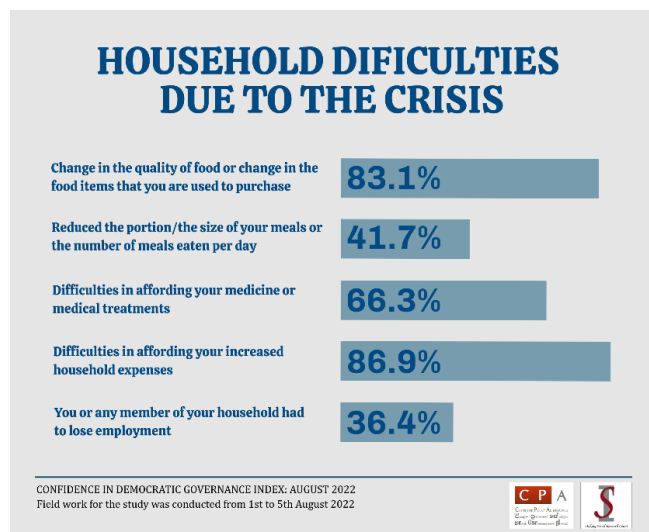
A semi-structured questionnaire with 1100 sample respondents from the four main ethnic communities (Sinhala, Tamil, Up-Country Tamil, and Muslim) was used in the third wave of the Confidence in Democratic Governance Index. Further, the sample was distributed among both urban and rural localities in all 25 districts consisting of men and women. These 1100 respondents were selected using a random sampling technique, and a multi staged random stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample locations. Field work for this national poll was conducted from 1st to 5th August, 2022. The dataset was weighted in order to reflect the actual district and ethnic proportion of the population. The data set was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

FINDINGS

Public experience in the current economic crisis

An overwhelming majority states that they are experiencing economic difficulties. About 80% states that their income does not cover their needs. Half of this 80% are experiencing great difficulties. People in the rural sector are experiencing greater difficulties than those who live in urban localities.

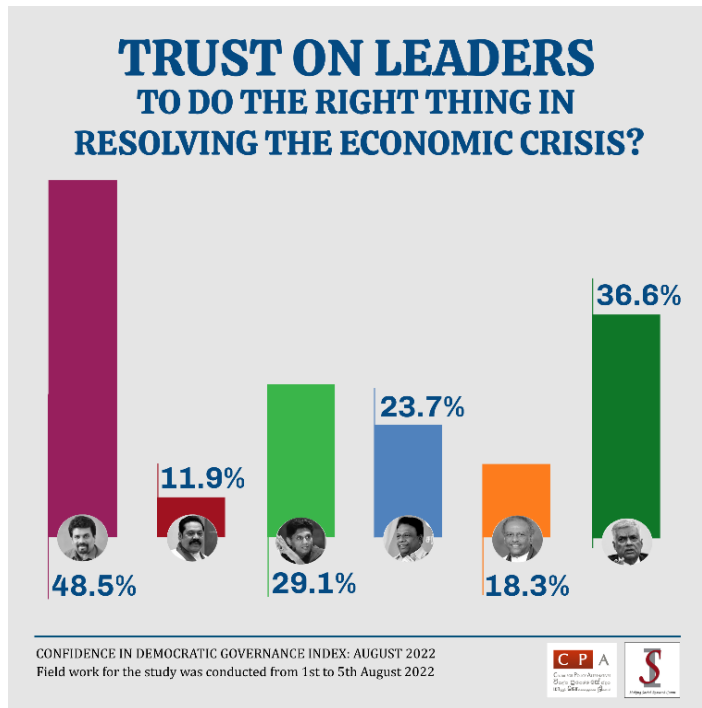
The survey inquired as to how the current economic crisis has impacted their lives. 87% says that they find it difficult to afford increasing household expenses while 83% states that they no longer purchase the same food items they used to purchase. Close to two-thirds states that they find difficulties in affording their medicine. 42% states that they



have reduced the portion of their meal or the number of meals eaten per day. Slightly more than one-third states that at least one person in their household has lost employment due to the current economic crisis. These difficulties are felt across all localities. However, the findings suggest that the impact is slightly higher among the rural communities. When it comes to the consumption of food, people who live in rural localities as well as municipal council areas are facing equally grave difficulties.

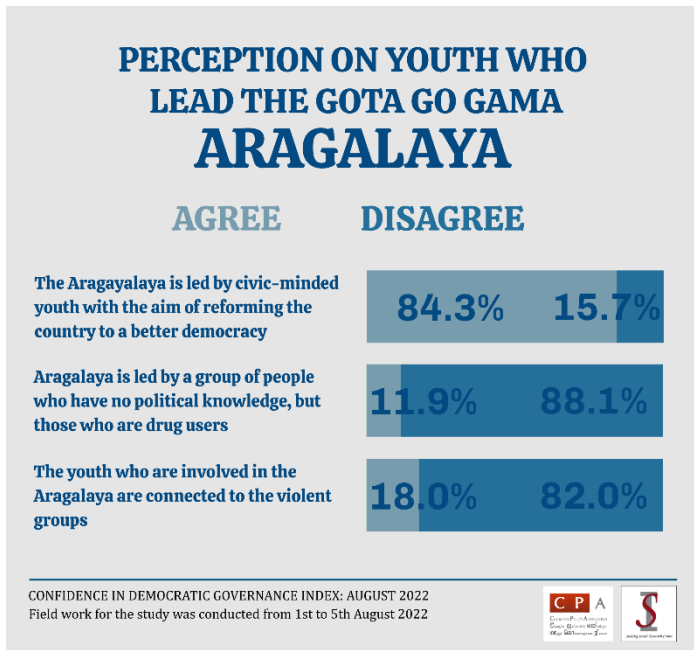
Trust in national level leaders to do the right thing in resolving the current economic crisis

When asked as to what extent they trust national leaders to do the right thing in resolving the current economic crisis, people expressed the highest level of trust in Anura Kumara Disanayake followed by Ranil Wickramasinghe and Sajith Premadasa. People from all ethnic communities almost equally trust Anura Kumara Disanayake. Tamil and Up-country Tamil communities place higher faith in Ranil Wickramasinghe than the Sinhalese and the Muslims. However, slightly more than one out of three of the Sinhalese state that they trust Ranil Wickramasinghe to do the right thing in resolving the current economic crisis. Minority communities place a significantly higher level of trust in Sajith Premadasa than the Sinhalese community. The leaders who formally represent the SLPP; Mahinda Rajapaksha, Dullas Alapperuma and Dinesh Gunawardene command only a low level of trust across all ethnic groups. Amongst them, survey findings indicate that Mahinda Rajapaksha is the least trusted leader to do the right thing in resolving the current economic crisis. While Anura Kumara Disanayake and Ranil Wickramasinghe enjoy the confidence of both rural and urban communities, urban Sri Lankans express more confidence in Sajith Premadasa to do the right thing in resolving the current economic crisis as compared to the rural community.



Perception on the youth who led the Gota Go Gama Aragalaya

The survey focused on the opinion on the youth who led the Gota Go Gama Aragalaya. 84% agrees that the Aragalaya is led by civic minded youth with the aim of reforming the country to become a better democracy. While 82% expresses its disagreement that youth who are involved in the Aragalaya are connected to violent groups, 88% disagrees that Aragalaya is led by a group of people who have no political knowledge, but rather are drug users. Respondents across ethnic communities express overwhelmingly positive opinions about the youth who are involved in the Aragalaya. While negative opinions were limited to a small minority, it was largely concentrated in the Sinhala community as well as among those from rural localities.



Public opinion on removing the protestors from the Presidential Secretariat premises

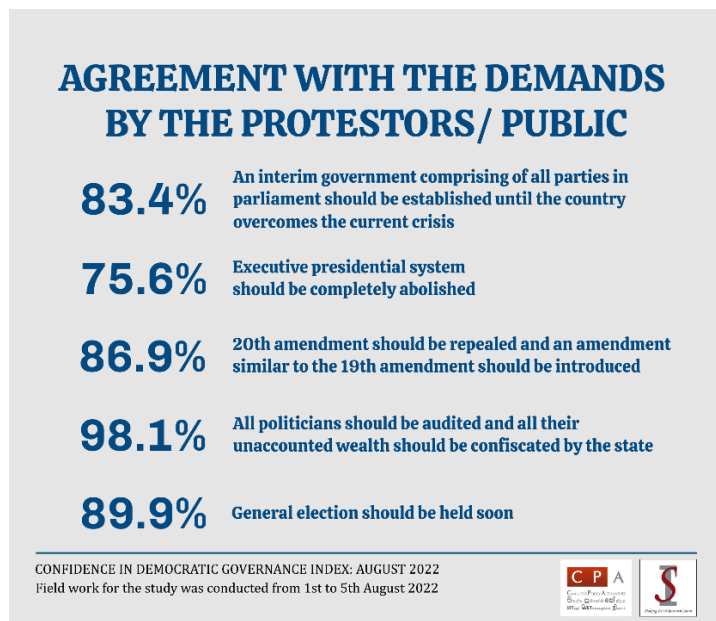
66% disapproves of the way the government removed participants of the Aragalaya from the Presidential Secretariat premises.

Public opinion on the passing of Emergency Law by Parliament

65% disapproves the passing of Emergency Law by Parliament on 27 July, 2022. However, 28% of Sinhalese and a quarter of the Tamil community approve of this.

Perception on the proposals put forward by the protestors to the current government

The survey inquired about the respondents' agreement or disagreement with the proposals put forward by the protestors to the current government. An overwhelming majority supports all the proposals. All respondents believe politicians should be audited and their unaccounted wealth should be confiscated by the state. Nine out of every ten people think a general election should be held soon. 87% feels that the 20th Amendment should be repealed and an Amendment similar to the 19th Amendment should be introduced. More than 80% believes that an interim government comprising all parties in Parliament should be established until the country overcomes the current crisis. More



than three quarters agree that the executive presidential system should be abolished. However, support for the abolishment of the Executive Presidency is slightly lower amongst the Sinhalese community as well as those who live in municipal areas.

Perception on the international community

The survey also aimed to understand public perception towards the international community and asked people to indicate which country they think will assist Sri Lanka to overcome the current economic crisis. One fourth ranks China as the number one country to come forward and assist Sri Lanka to overcome the current economic crisis, while close to one out of five ranks the USA and India as the countries that will assist Sri Lanka the most to overcome this economic crisis. Although there is slightly higher confidence in China, the Sinhalese have a mixed opinion as to which country would support Sri Lanka the most. Minority communities believe that India would be the number one country that would help Sri Lanka the most to come out of the crisis.

Widespread pessimism

The survey sought to capture how optimistic (or otherwise) the people are in terms of the country's economy returning to normalcy. The findings suggest that the people are extremely pessimistic about the country's economic future. 58% thinks it will take a long time to recover from the current slump, while 20% states they are not sure. This extreme pessimism can be seen across all ethnic groups and also across communities who live in both urban and rural localities.

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