

**CONFIDENCE IN
DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE INDEX
WAVE 4**

TOPLINE REPORT

Centre for Policy Alternatives | Social Indicator

January 2023

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INTRODUCTION

On 4th February, 2023 Sri Lanka celebrates its 75 years of independence. Despite the government's celebratory move, citizens continue to struggle with exorbitant cost of living and shortage of essential items such as medicine. In order to ease the economic burden of the government, it proposes higher tariffs and taxation hurting the household economy further. Against this backdrop, the fourth wave of the Confidence in Democratic Governance Index was held with the aim of capturing the public opinion on areas of local government elections which is a subject of debate at present, experience on their household economy, and public satisfaction towards the economic management of Wickremesinghe government.

The research study was conducted by Social Indicator (SI) the survey research arm of the Centre for Policy Alternatives. Since its inception in 1999, SI has employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of research that focus on a wide range of socio-political issues in Sri Lanka. The survey research team consisted of Dr. Pradeep Peiris, M.Krishnamoorthy, Muditha Pathirana and Ishara Jayarathne. We sincerely thank Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu for his support in making this study a success.

METHODOLOGY

A semi-structured questionnaire administered among 1222 respondents from the four main ethnic communities (Sinhala, Tamil, Up-Country Tamil, and Muslim) was used in the fourth wave of the Confidence in Democratic Governance Index. The sample consisted of men and women in all 25 districts in both urban and rural areas. The respondents were selected using a random sampling technique, while a multistage random stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample locations. Field work for the poll was conducted from 12th January to 18th January, 2023 employing SI's countrywide field network. A total of 78 field enumerators (male and female) from the four main ethnic communities participated in the study. The dataset was weighted to reflect the actual district and ethnic proportion of the population. The data set was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Perception on Household Economy

- The survey inquired the household economic status of the Sri Lankans compared to July, 2022. A significant majority (79%) state that it has worsened. This worsened economic experience is shared across both urban and rural localities.

Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction on President Wickremesinghe's Economic Management

- While three quarters of citizens state that they are not satisfied (76%), only 16% of people state that they are satisfied with the way President Ranil Wickremesinghe manages the country's economy. This dissatisfaction is spread across urban and rural localities as well as across both age groups (below 30 years and above 30 years).

Perception on the Government Approaching the IMF

- When inquired as to what the respondents' opinions are on the government seeking assistance from IMF - 29% state Sri Lanka will be able to recover with the help of IMF while 56% are pessimistic about this approach. Sri Lankans living in rural areas are rather optimistic of this approach (31%) compared to the urban localities (22%). In terms of age, it is mostly the youth less than 30 years of age who state that Sri Lanka will not be able to recover with the IMF assistance (63%).

Perception on New Economic Policies under the Wickremesinghe Government

- The survey inquired the public perception on economic policies under the Wickremesinghe government. Almost all the Sri Lankans (97%) are against the increasing of electricity tariff. While a majority of Sri Lankans (91%) are not happy with the government imposing new taxes, 6% state that they approve of this policy. Notably, 39% of people state that they approve of reducing the number of government employees while 54% are against this policy.
- With regard to localities and age, a significant proportion disapprove of increasing the electricity tariff and imposing new taxes. Significantly, roughly 40% from urban, rural localities and both age categories approve of reducing the number of government employees.

Opinion on the Members of Parliament

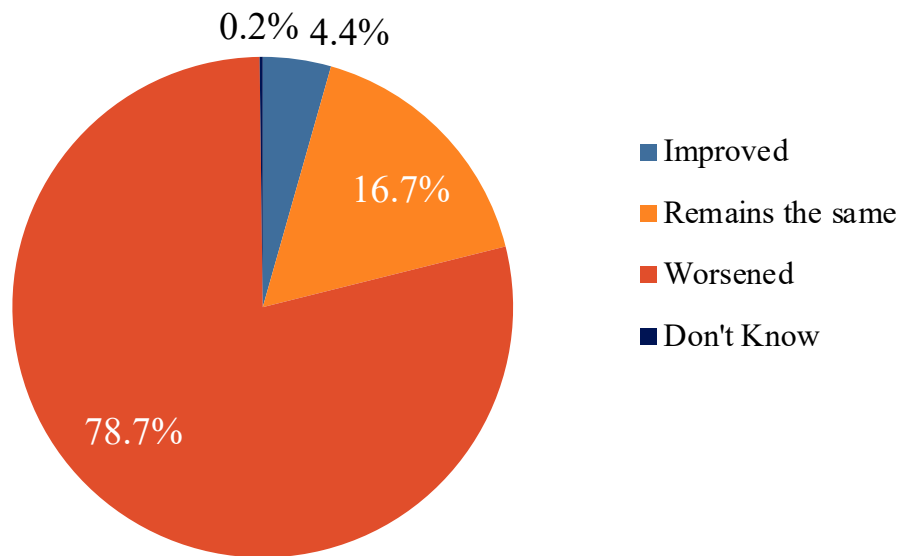
- Given the political and economic crisis situation in Sri Lanka, respondents were inquired about their opinion on the way the Members of Parliament lead their lifestyle. Survey findings reveal that most of the Sri Lankans share the opinion that most of the government and opposition MPs live their lavish lifestyle as they used to live before the crisis. This sentiment is spread across both urban and rural localities and both age groups (below 30 years and above 30 years).

Opinion on the Local Government Elections

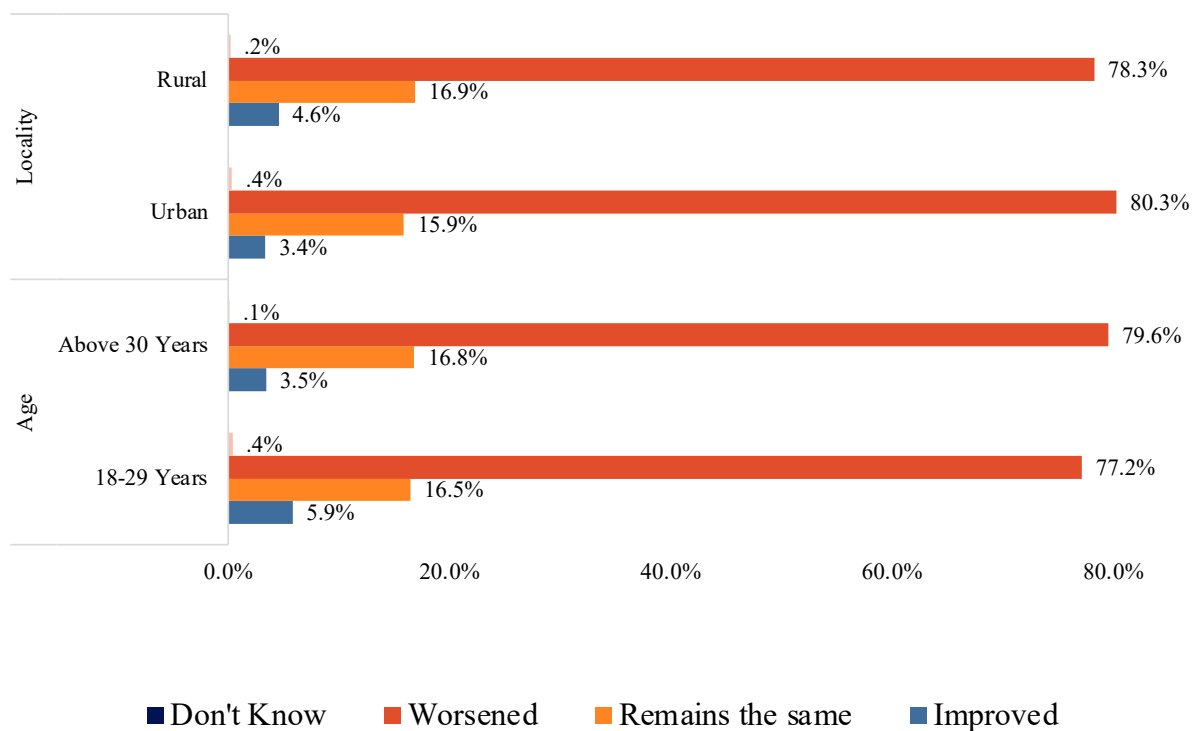
- At present, local government elections are a point of discussion. Hence the people were inquired to state their opinion on holding local government elections. While 58% state that the local government elections should be held on time, 21% state that it should be postponed. This sentiment pattern is shared among urban, rural localities and both age groups (below 30 years and above 30 years).
- Out of the people who think that the local government elections should be held, 46% are of the opinion that the current government does not have a popular mandate, so that the elections should be held. While 23% state that the election is important to ensure democracy, 21% share the opinion that the local government elections are already late and that it was supposed to be held much earlier. It is noteworthy to mention that it is mostly the youth below 30 years of age who share the opinion that the current government does not have a popular mandate (50%).
- Out of those who say that the elections should be postponed, a majority (71%) are of the same opinion that the government should not spend on an election under the economic crisis situation. This is the commonly shared opinion across both localities and both age categories (below 30 years and above 30 years).

FINDINGS

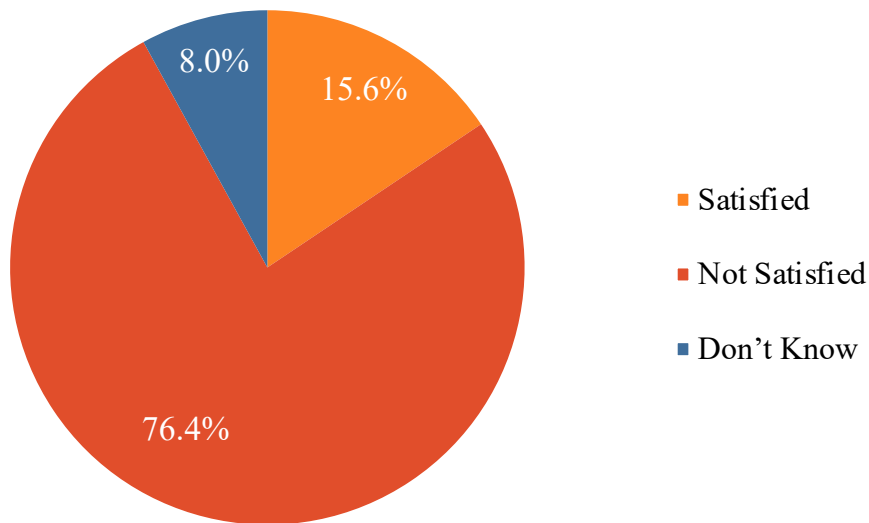
Graph 01: Perception on Household Economy



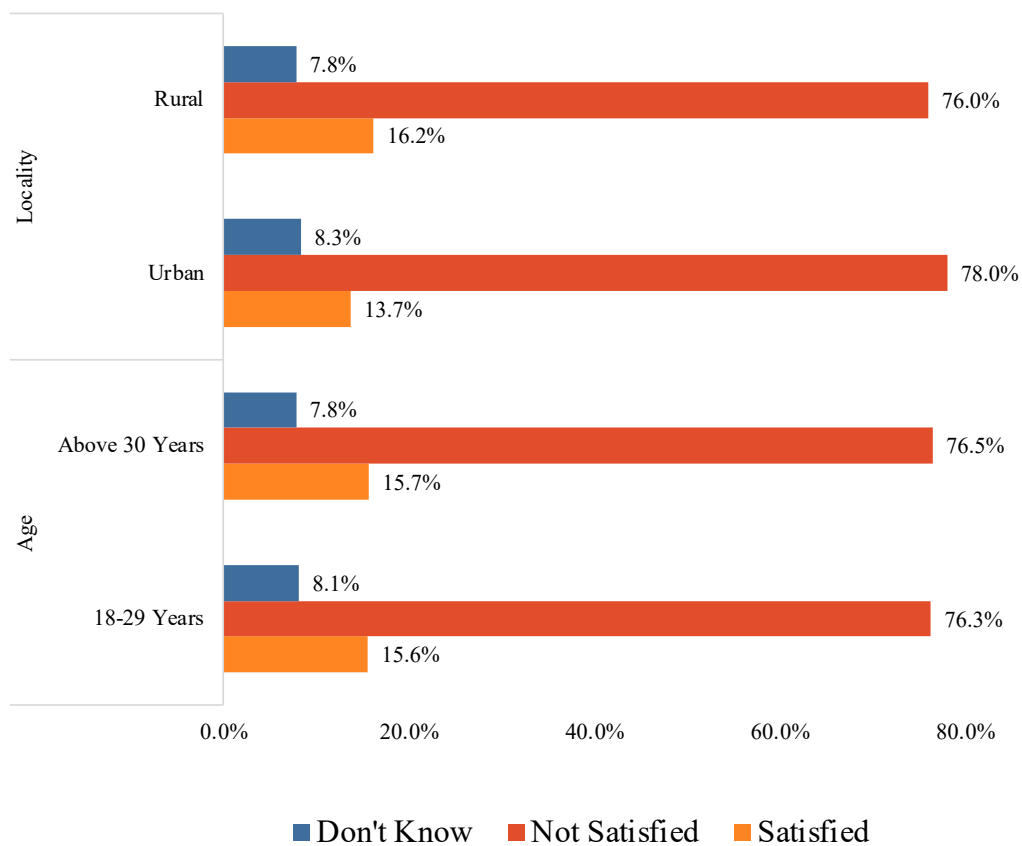
Graph 02: Perception on Household Economy Disaggregated by Age and Locality



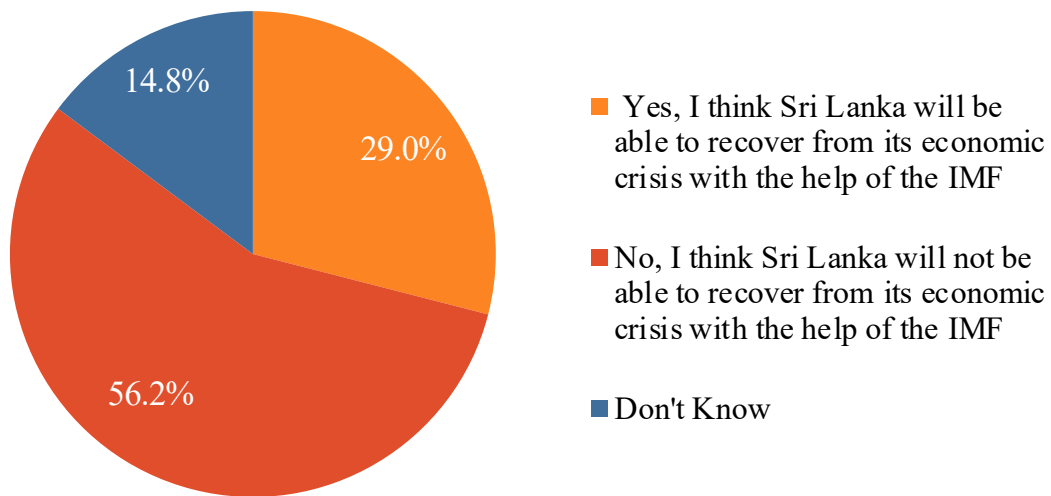
Graph 03: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction on President Wickremesinghe’s Economic Management



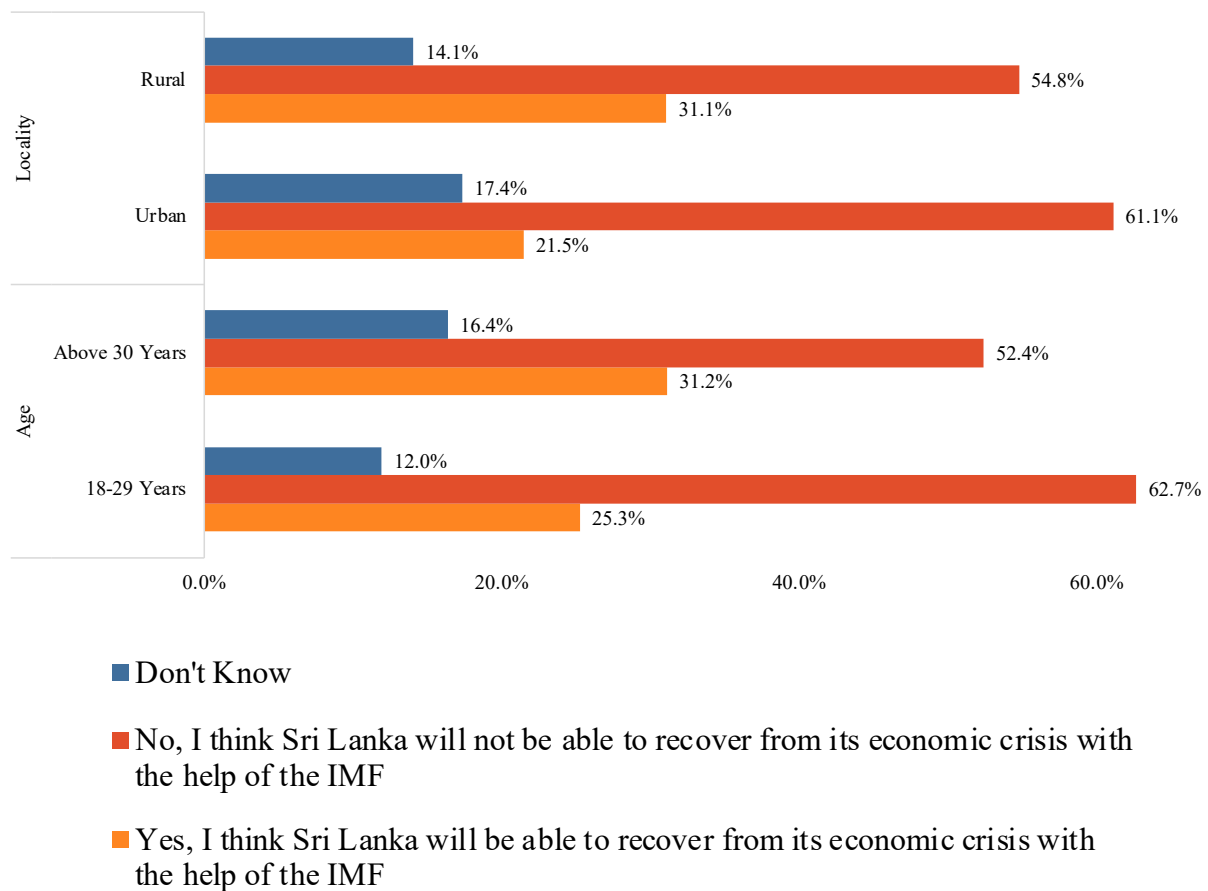
Graph 04: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction on President Wickremesinghe’s Economic Management Disaggregated by Age and Locality



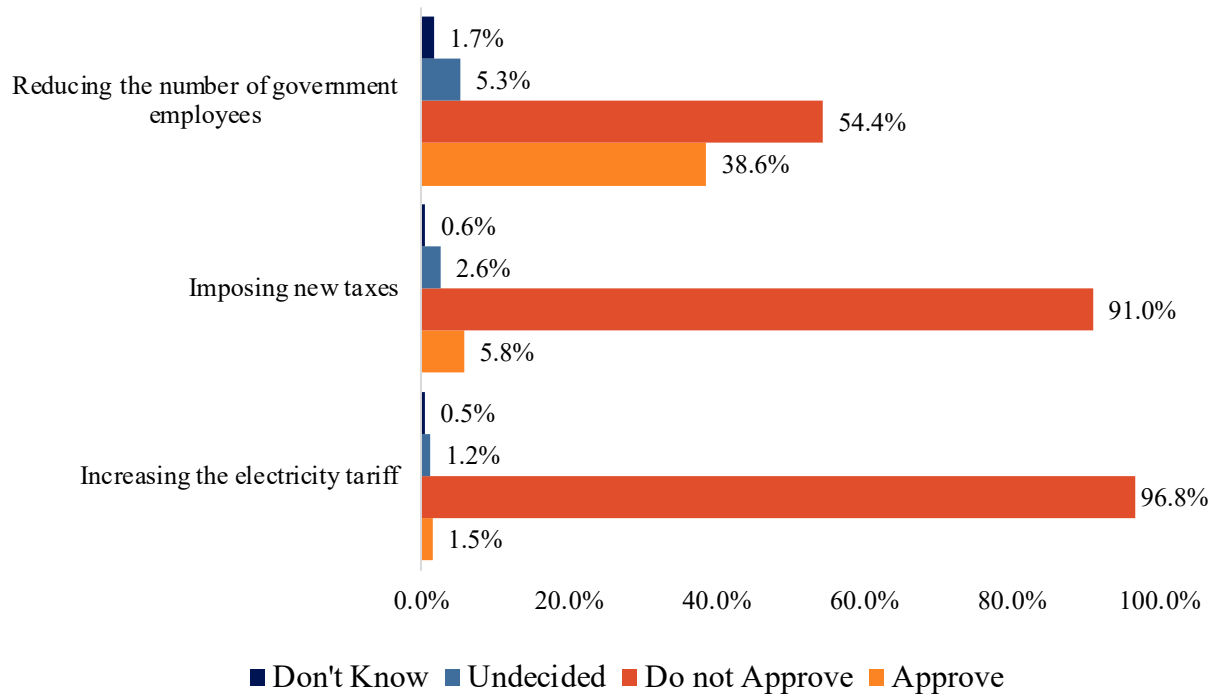
Graph 05: Perception on the Possibility of Sri Lanka Overcoming the Economic Crisis with the Help of the IMF



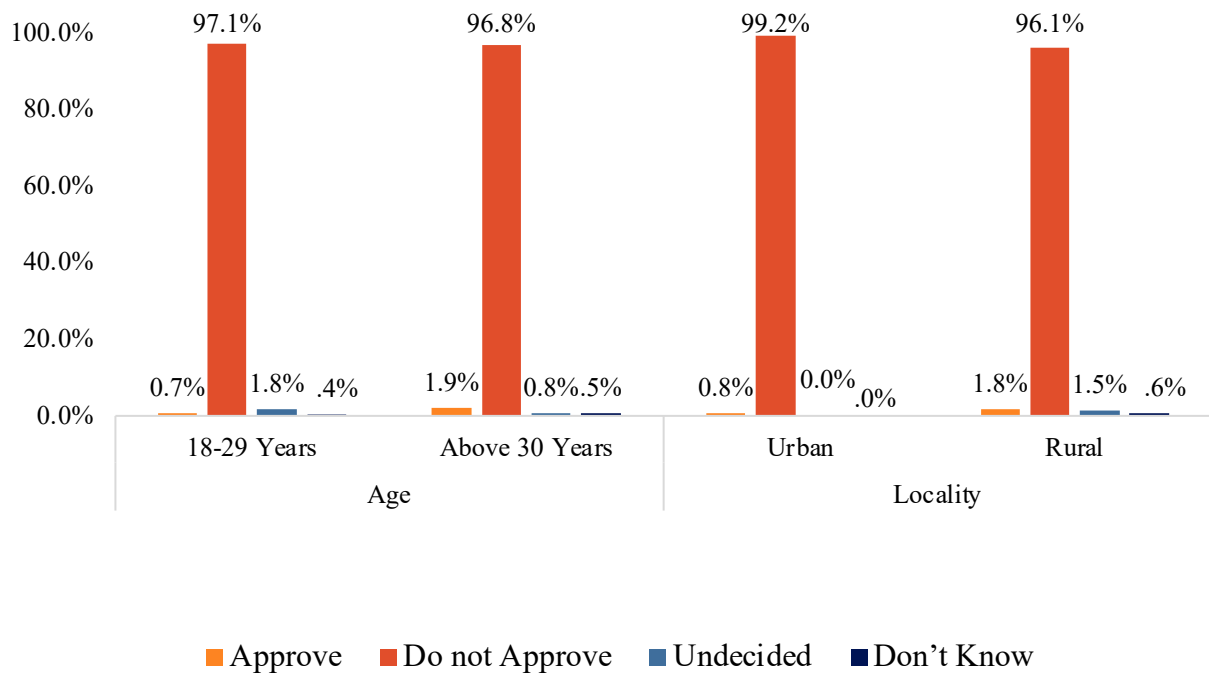
Graph 06: Perception on the Possibility of Sri Lanka Overcoming the Economic Crisis with the Help of the IMF Disaggregated by Age and Locality



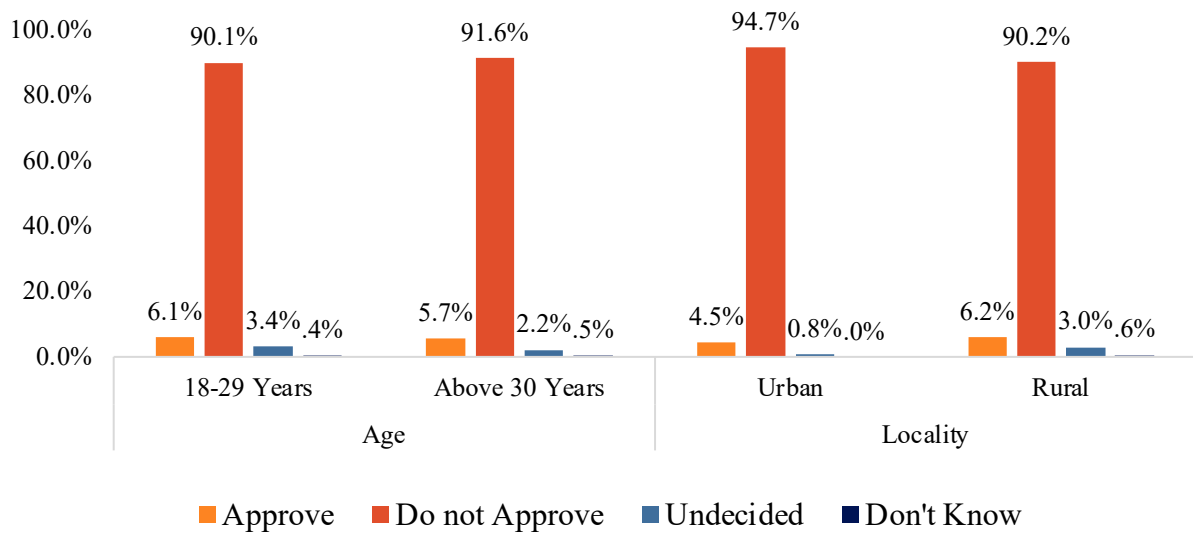
Graph 07: Perception on New Economic Policies under the Wickremesinghe Government



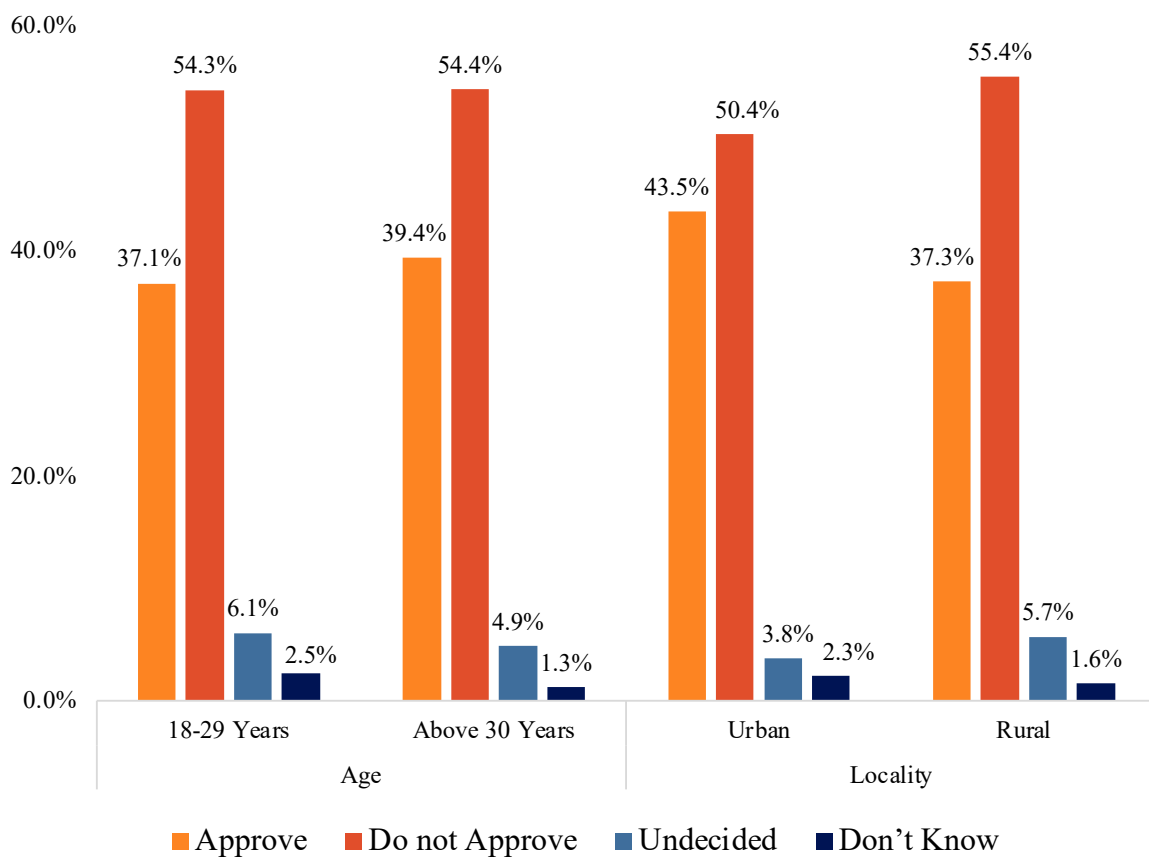
Graph 08: Perception on Increasing the Electricity Tariff Disaggregated by Age and Locality



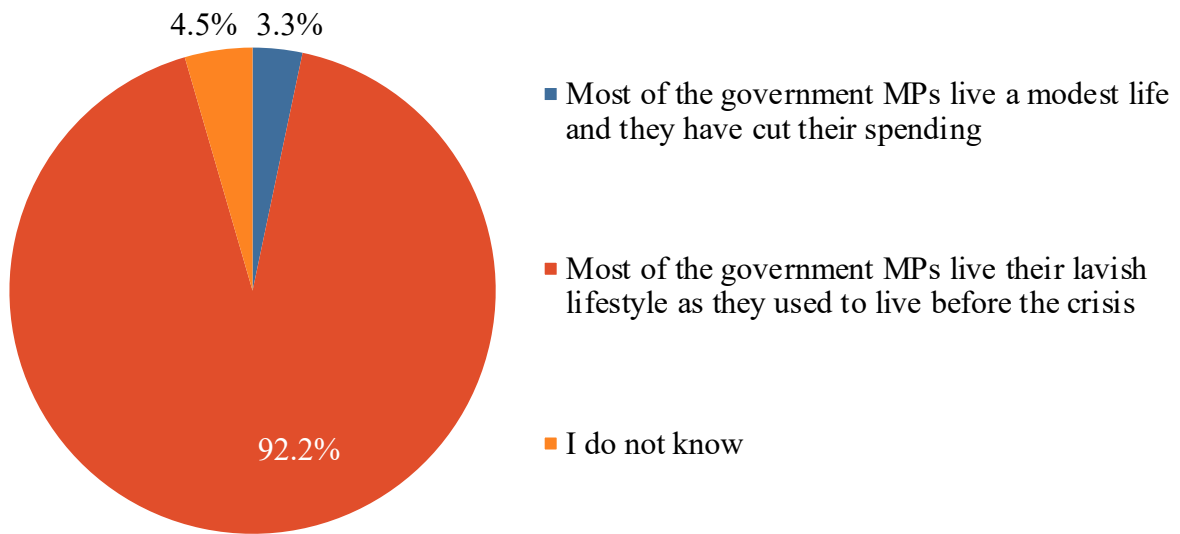
Graph 09: Perception on Imposing New Taxes Disaggregated by Age and Locality



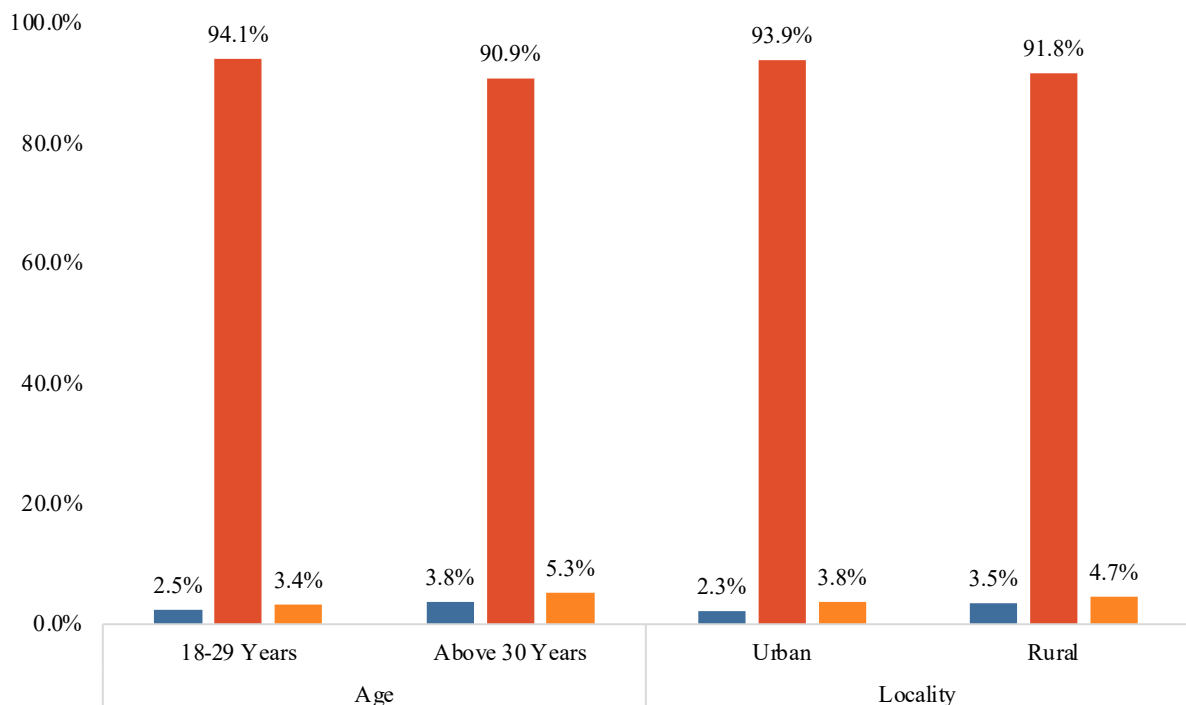
Graph 10: Perception on Reducing the Number of Government Employees Disaggregated by Age and Locality



Graph 11: Opinion on the Lifestyle of the Government MPs

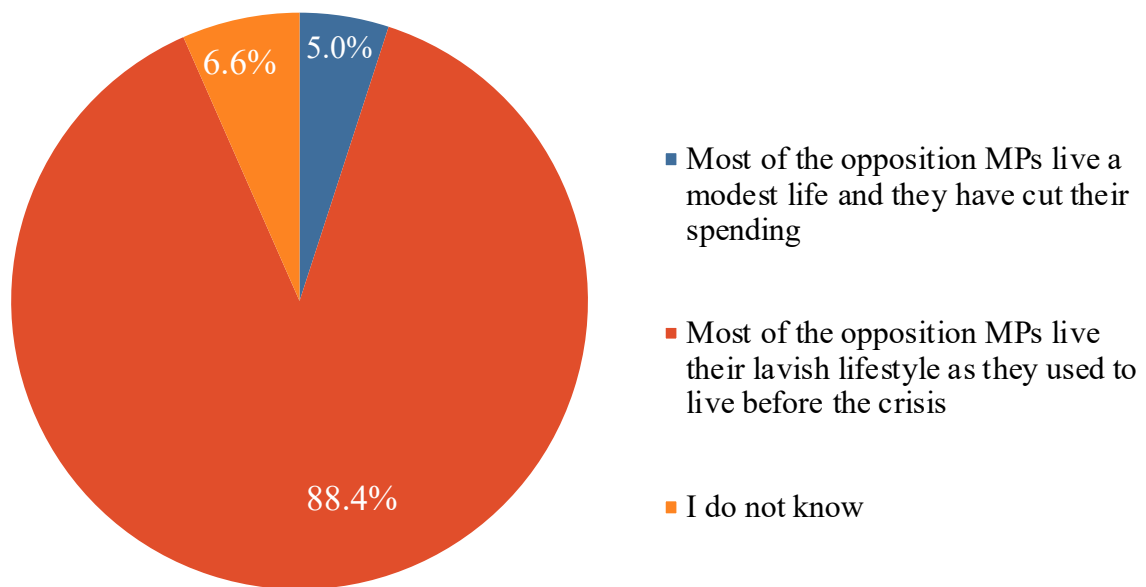


Graph 12: Opinion on the Lifestyle of the Government MPs Disaggregated by Age and Locality

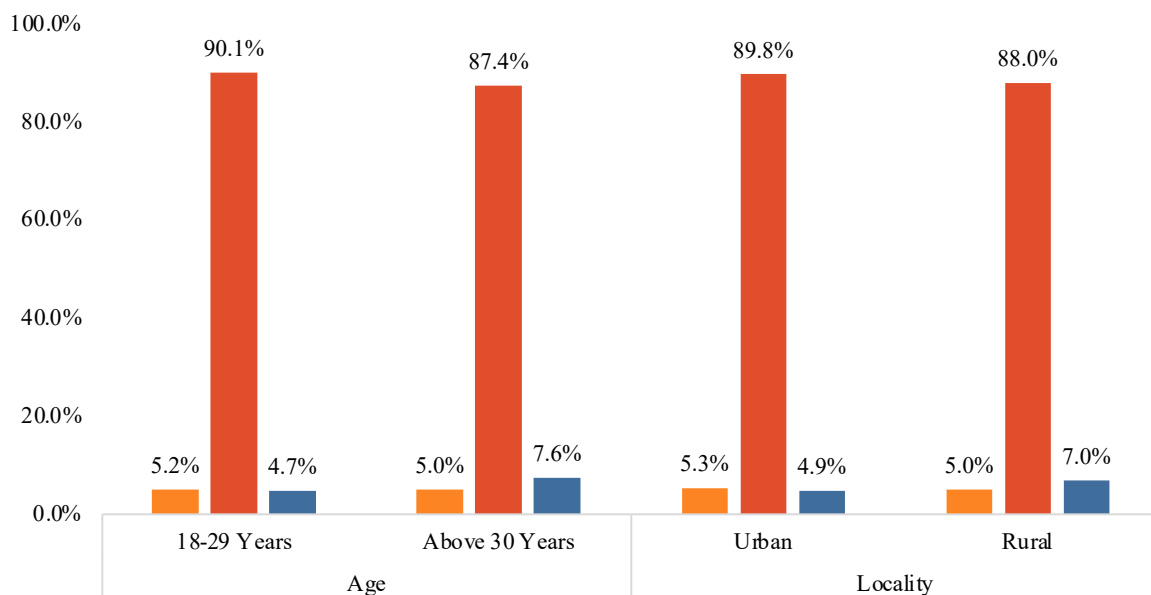


- Most of the government MPs live a modest life and they have cut their spending
- Most of the government MPs live their lavish lifestyle as they used to live before the crisis
- I do not know

Graph 13: Opinion on the Lifestyle of the Opposition MPs

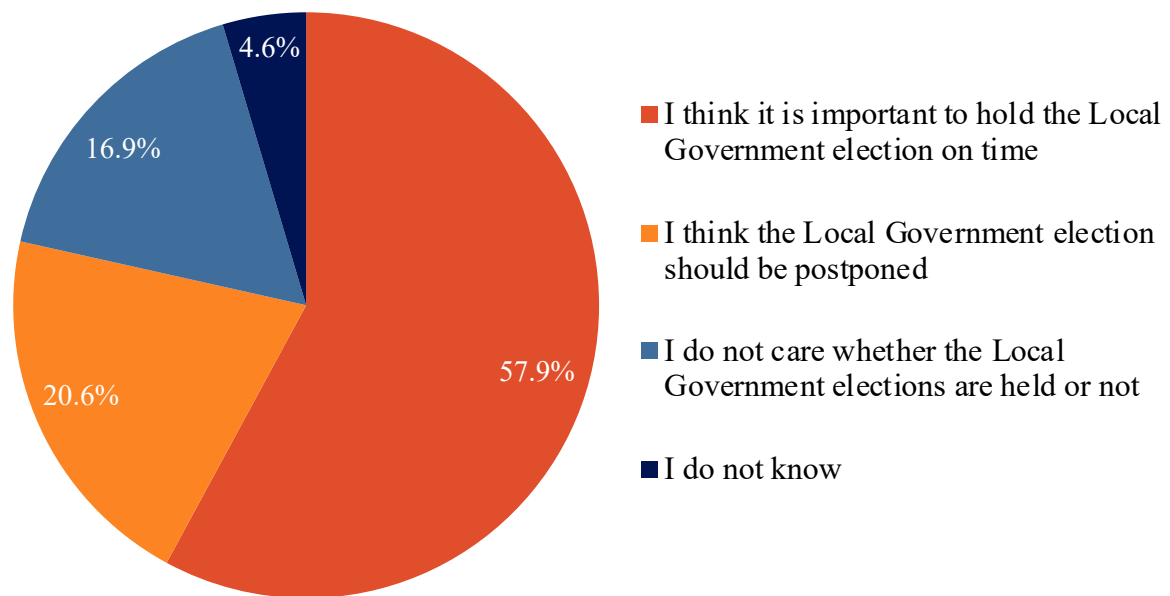


Graph 14: Opinion on the Lifestyle of the Opposition MPs Disaggregated by Age and Locality

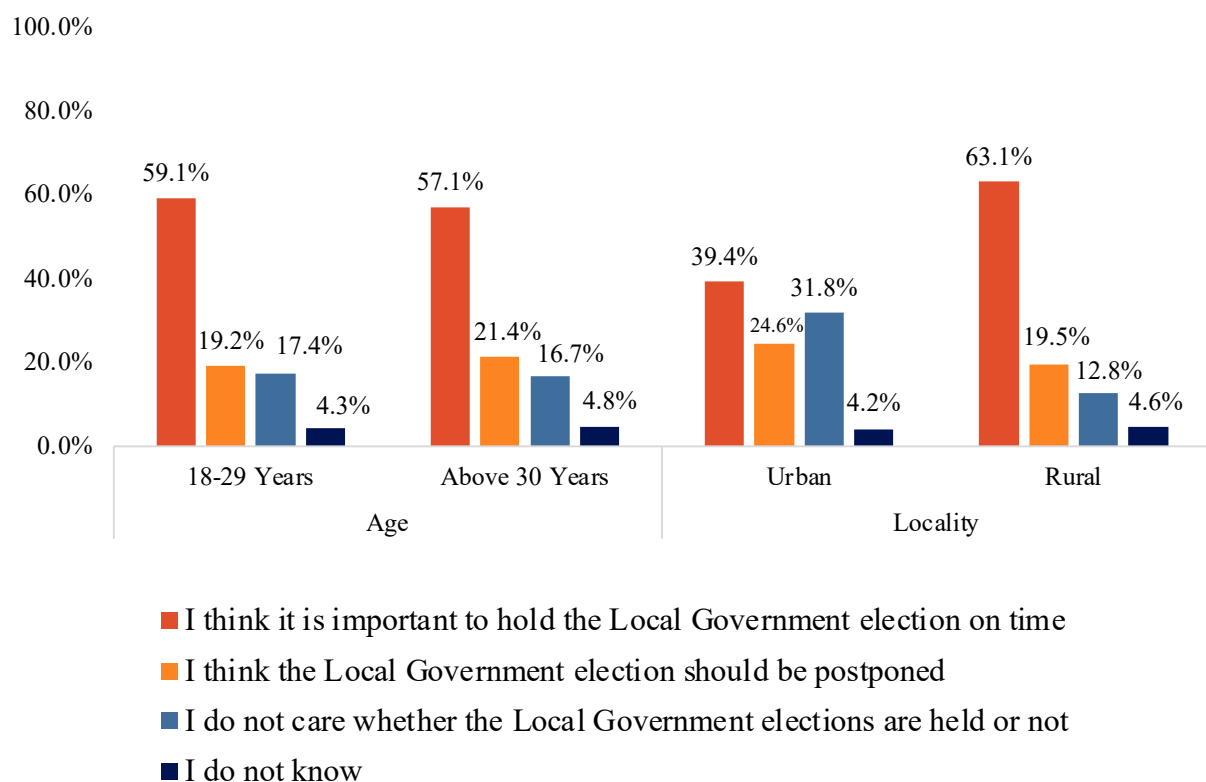


- Most of the opposition MPs live a modest life and they have cut their spending
- Most of the opposition MPs live their lavish lifestyle as they used to live before the crisis
- I do not know

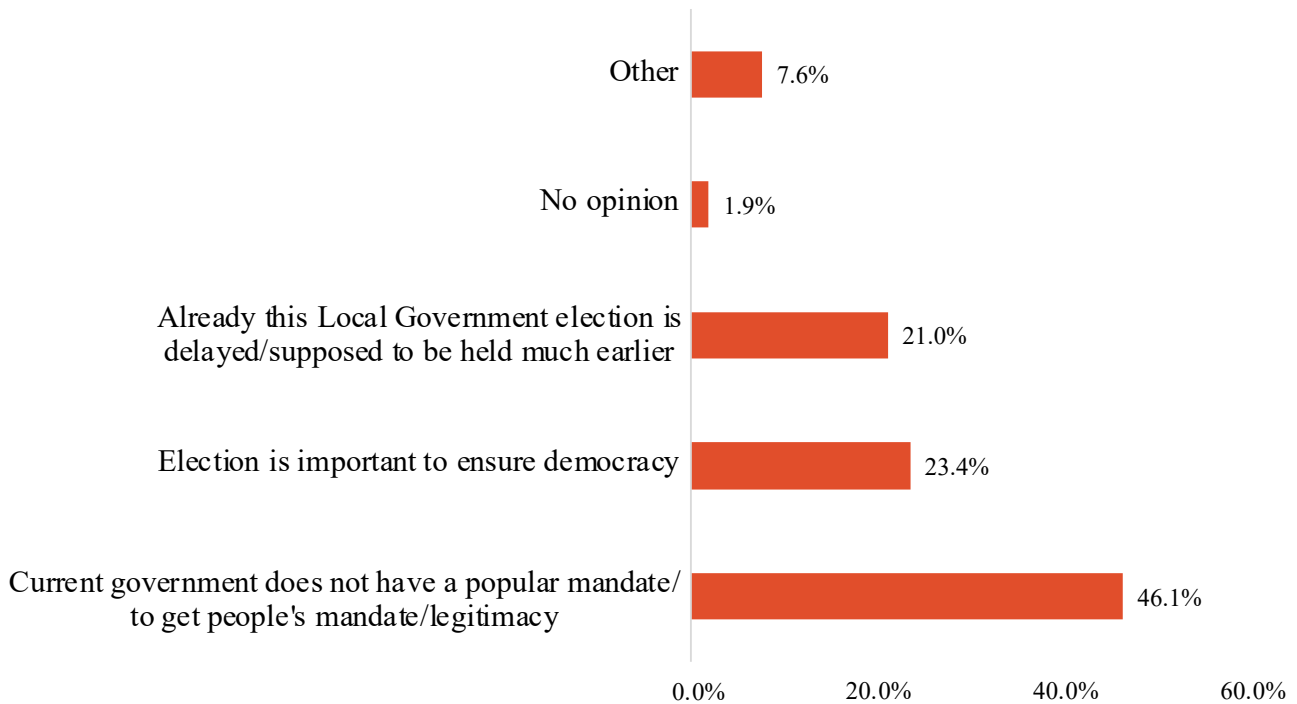
Graph 15: Opinion on Holding the Local Government Elections



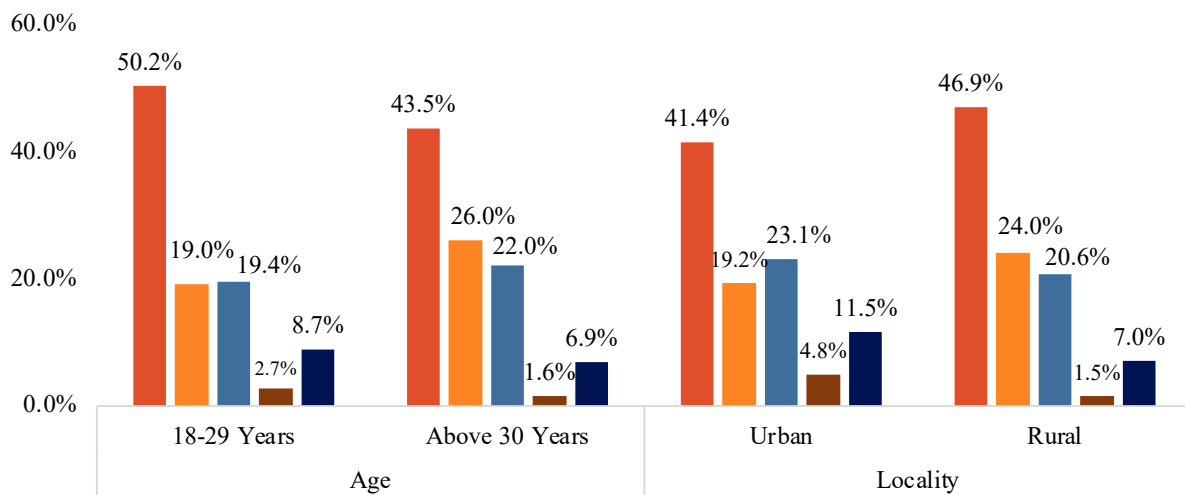
Graph 16: Opinion on Holding the Local Government Elections Disaggregated by Age and Locality



Graph 17: Reasons why the Local Government Elections should be held

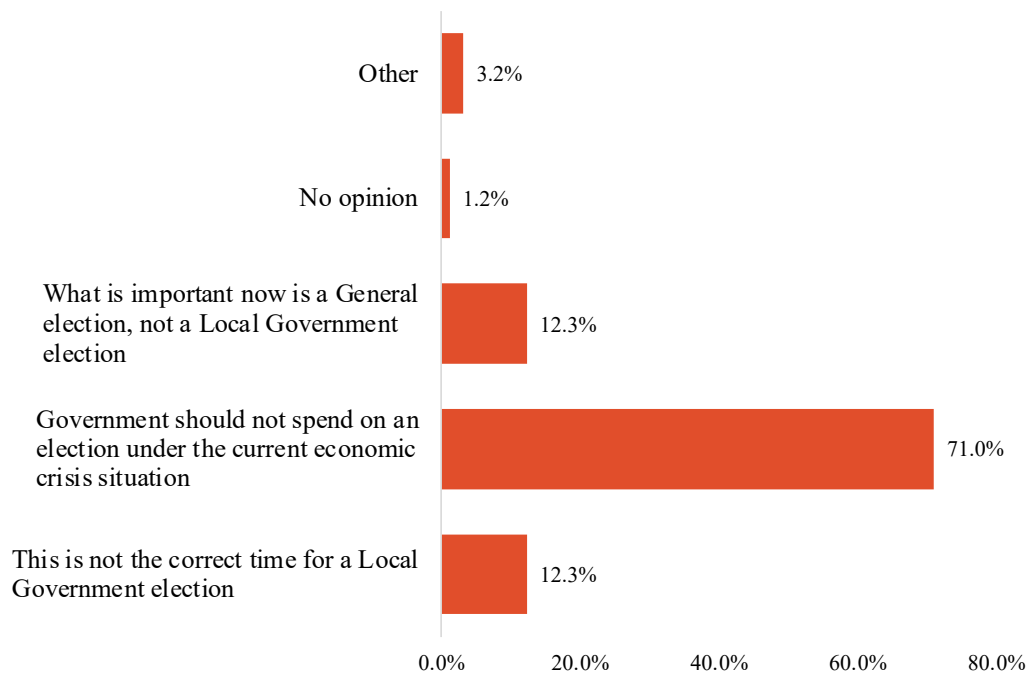


Graph 18: Reasons why the Local Government Elections should be held Disaggregated by Age and Locality

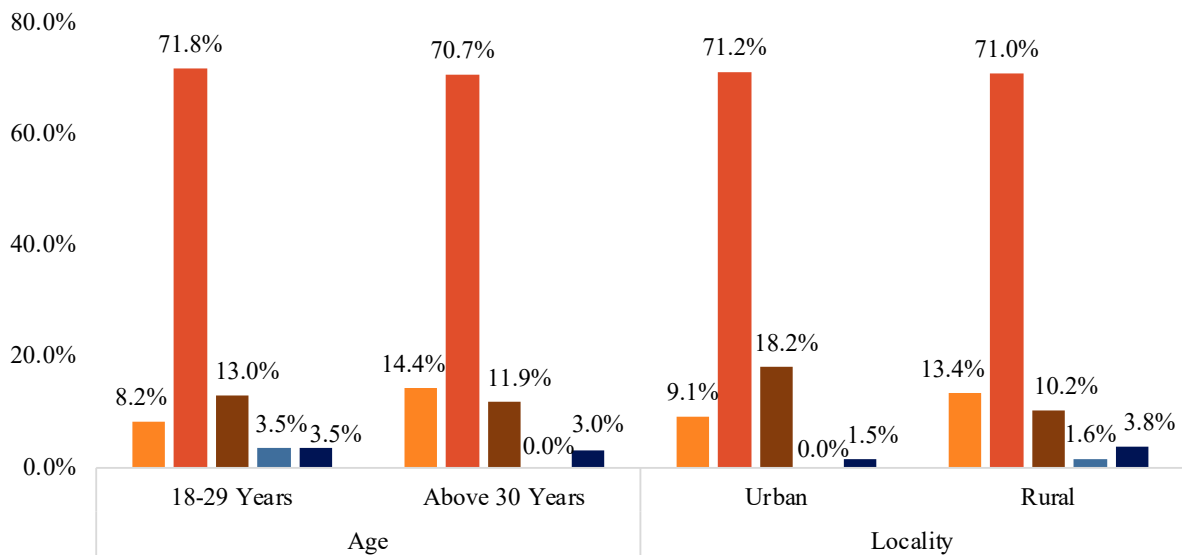


- Current government does not have a popular mandate/ to get people's mandate/legitimacy
- Election is important to ensure democracy
- Already this Local Government election is delayed/supposed to be held much earlier
- No opinion
- Other

Graph 19: Reasons why the Local Government Elections should be postponed



Graph 20: Reasons why the Local Government Elections should be postponed Disaggregated by Age and Locality



- This is not the correct time for a Local Government Election
- Government should not spend on an election under the current economic crisis situation
- What is important now is a General election, not a Local Government election
- No opinion
- Other

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) is an independent, non-partisan organization that focuses primarily on issues of governance and conflict resolution. Formed in 1996 in the firm belief that civil society's vital contribution to the public policy debate requires 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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