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CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Executive Summary	5
Findings	9
Graph 01 - Opinion on Budget Allocation	9
Graph 02 - Opinion on Budget Allocation Disaggregated by Age	9
Graph 03 - Opinion on Budget Allocation Disaggregated by Locality	10
Graph 04 - Income and Expenditure	10
Graph 05 - Income and Expenditure Disaggregated by Locality	11
Graph 06 - Opinion on Country's Economy Returning to Normalcy	11
Graph 07 - Opinion on Country's Economy Returning to Normalcy Disaggregated by Age	12
Graph 08 - Opinion on Country's Economy Returning to Normalcy Disaggregated by Locality	12
Table 01 - Perception on Youth who Led/ Participated in Aragalaya	13
Table 02 - Perception on Youth who Led/ Participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> Disaggregated by Age	14
Table 03 - Perception on Youth who Led/ Participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> Disaggregated by Locality	15
Graph 09 - Attitude towards <i>Aragalaya</i>	16
Table 04 - Attitude towards <i>Aragalaya</i> Disaggregated by Age and Locality	17
Graph 10 - Opinion on a Possible System Change	17
Graph 11 - Opinion on a Possible System Change Disaggregated by Age	18
Graph 12 - Opinion on a Possible System Change Disaggregated by Locality	18
Graph 13 - Willingness to make Compromises for a System Change	19

Graph 14 - Willingness to make Compromises for a System Change Disaggregated by Age	20
Table 05 - Willingness to make Compromises for a System Change Disaggregated by Locality	21
Graph 15 - Perception on Privatization	21
Table 06 - Perception on Privatization Disaggregated by Age	22
Graph 16 - Perception on Democratic Governance	22
Graph 17 - Perception on Democratic Governance Disaggregated by Age	23
Graph 18 - Perception on Power Sharing on National level and Disaggregated by Age	23
Graph 19 - Ethnic Relations on National level and Disaggregated by Age	24
Graph 20 - Ethnic Relations on National level and Disaggregated by Age	24
Graph 21 - Perception on Forms of Governance	25
Table 07 - Perception on Forms of Governance Disaggregated by Age	25
Graph 22 - Attitude towards Liberal Economic Policies on National Level and disaggregated by Age	26
Graph 23 - Attitude towards Liberal Economic Policies on National Level and disaggregated by Age	26
Graph 24 - Attitude towards Liberal Economic Policies on National Level and disaggregated by Age	27
Graph 25 - Opinion on Welfare Policies on National level and Disaggregated by Age	27
Graph 26 - Opinion on Welfare Policies on National level and Disaggregated by Age	28
Graph 27 - Opinion on Welfare Policies on National level and Disaggregated by Age	28

INTRODUCTION

This Topline Report presents findings of the Survey conducted on the popular uprising (Aragalaya) against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's government. Amidst severe shortages of essential food items, medicine, fuel, LP gas, and widespread public suffering, people came together to protest against the then government demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and calling an end to the Rajapaksa family's role in Sri Lankan politics. Hundreds of thousands of people joined rallies that denounced corruption and mismanagement, demanded accountability from those in power. Under the growing agitation, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled the country on 09 July and submitted his resignation on 14 July. On 20 July Ranil Wickremesinghe was elected as President by the Parliament. As the new President, Wickremesinghe deployed security forces and police to intimidate and harass protestors and thereby suppressed the continuous public protests against the country's political classes. Against this backdrop of state oppression, public participation in popular protests had gradually waned off. However, though in a lesser magnitude, protests continued against corrupt political classes and especially against President Wickremesinghe. According to protestors, they were firmly of the view that President Wickremesinghe had no mandate to be President. In order to understand public perception and the attitude towards protestors and the protest movement, the survey research arm of the Centre for Policy Alternatives conducted a survey among randomly selected 1000 men and women living in all 25 districts.

The survey team consisted of Dr. Pradeep Peiris, M.Krishnamoorthy, Muditha Pathirana and Ishara Jayarathne. 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. The cover photographs are courtesy of Selvaraja Rajasegar, Editor of Maatram.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out with 1000 sample respondents from the four main ethnic communities (Sinhala, Tamil, Up-Country Tamil, and Muslim) using a semi-structured questionnaire. The sample distribution captured men and women from both urban and rural localities in all districts. A multi-staged random stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample locations, and the respondents were selected using the random sampling technique. Field work for the national poll was conducted during 22 September to 10 October 2022. The dataset was weighted in order 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

Opinion on Budget Allocation

- When asked to rank the sectors that the public thinks government should make budget allocations on, 30% of Sri Lankans' first priority is the agricultural sector. While 29% rank the education sector as their first priority, 18% are of the same opinion that relief on low income families should be prioritized.
- It is mostly the youth (18-29 years) who rank education sector as the first priority, while people in the age bracket of thirty years and above rank agricultural sector as the first.
- In terms of locality, relatively more people in Pradeshiya Sabha (33%) rank the agricultural sector as the first priority.

Income and Expenditure

- A significant majority of Sri Lankans (81%) state that their incomes do not cover their needs and that they have difficulties. Out of them, 46% are experiencing great difficulties.
- It is mostly the people outside of Municipality areas who experience more difficulties.

Opinion on Country's Economy Returning to Normalcy

• According to the survey findings, a majority of the Sri Lankans are skeptical about the country's economy returning to normalcy. A considerable proportion (63%) are of the opinion that it will take a long time for the country's economy to return to its normal status while 20% state that they are not sure. This opinion does not change either by age or locality.

Perception on Youth who Led/ Participated in Aragalaya

- The survey also examined the public perception on the youth who led/ participated in *Aragalaya* and the accusations made against them. Findings indicate that a majority of Sri Lankans share favorable opinions and less criticism of them.
- 82% of Sri Lankans believe that *Aragalaya* was led by civic-minded youth with the aim of reforming the country to a better democracy. An equal percentage state that the youth protested for a common course concerning the country's better future.
- Relatively, the youth (18-29 years) are more favorable towards the youth who led/participated in *Aragalaya* compared with the people above 30 years of age.
- The positive opinions on the youth who participated in *Aragalaya* are spread across all the localities.

Attitude towards Aragalaya

- An overwhelming majority of Sri Lankans (82%) believe that *Aragalaya* had a positive impact on our country while an equal percentage (81%) believe that *Aragalaya* was a necessity of the moment. Close to 60% are in agreement that legal actions should be taken if the protestors have violated the law.
- Compared with the other, the youth (18-29 years) seem to share more favorable attitudes on *Aragalaya* and on the youth who led it. In terms of locality, it indicates that the support for *Aragalaya* is higher among the people who live in Urban council areas.

Opinion on a Possible System Change

• A significant majority of Sri Lankans (83%) express their support for a system change in the country. This sentiment does not change either by locality or age.

Willingness to make Compromises for a System Change

• The respondents were asked to indicate whether they are agreeable to make compromises for the sake of a system change. According to the survey findings, the public support declines as the compromises for a system change gets harsher. A considerable proportion (76%) state that they agree to support a system change even if they were to compromise their usual traveling or the mode of transportation. 70% state that they would comprise the usual food items that they used to purchase for the sake of a system change. This support drastically declines if they were to pay

more taxes (40%). Only a little more than a quarter of Sri Lankans (26%) still agree to support a system change even if they or their family members were to lose a job. These attitudes don't change by the age of the respondent. However, there are mixed opinions about these compromises among the localities.

Perception on Privatization

• The survey also inquired about the public perception on privatization of two most important sectors - education and health. According to the findings, more than one half of Sri Lankans are against the proposal of privatizing these two sectors. However, roughly a quarter of Sri Lankans agree that the education sector and the health sector should be privatized. Although this sentiment pattern is spread across all the localities and age groups, there is a slightly higher support for privatization among the youth.

Perception on Democratic Governance

• A significant majority express their opinion that Democracy is preferable to any other governance (79%). This opinion does not change by age.

Perception on Power Sharing

• As per the findings of the survey, 39% of Sri Lankans state that the power needs to be devolved to the Provincial Councils while reducing the power of the central government. However, 30 % of Sri Lankans share the opinion that it is alright to decentralize certain powers but powers of the central government should not be reduced. Interestingly, it is mostly the youth less than thirty years of age (42%) who are of the opinion that the power should be devolved to the Provincial Councils and that the power of the central government should be reduced.

Ethnic relations

• 54% of Sri Lankans state, no religion should be given the foremost place in order to maintain every citizens' right to equality. 45% state that all ethnic groups should be given the freedom to remember those who died as a result of the 30 year old war. Slightly higher percentage of young men and women believe that no religion should be given the foremost place and that all ethnic groups should be given the freedom to remember those who died as a result of the 30 year old war.

Perception on Forms of Governance

• Respondents were provided with various ways in which a country could be governed and inquired to state which forms of governance they support. An overwhelming majority of Sri Lankans hold the view that the country should be governed by those chosen by the people in a free and fair election (89%). The least preferred forms of governance are the religious leaders taking all major decisions about the country and the military governing the country. This sentiment pattern is shared among both age categories (above and below 30 years).

Attitude towards Liberal Economic Policies

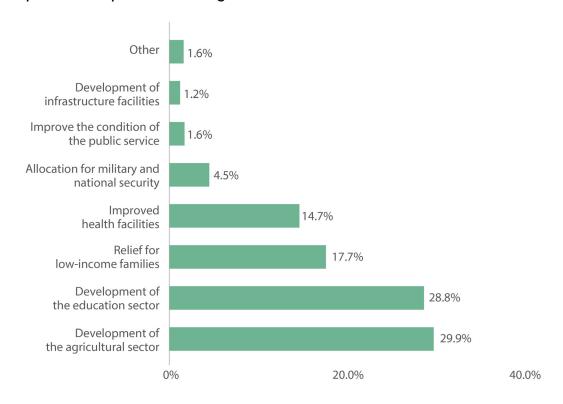
• Survey findings indicate that 60% of people are of the opinion that the government should allow foreign companies to invest in the country. 63% state that the government should not restrict a person's earning capacity while 52% share the opinion that the government corporations should not be privatized as it is necessary for the country's development. From those who are in favor of the government allowing foreign companies to invest in our country - it is mostly the youth (65%).

Opinion on Welfare Policies

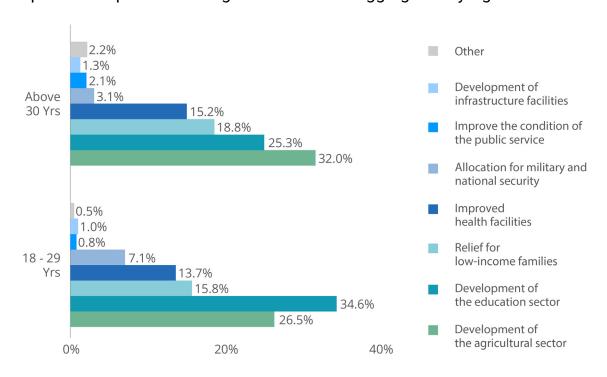
- People express mixed opinions on the question in relation to welfare policies. While a majority support the reduction of government employees (51%), people still expect the government to take responsibility to look after its people and spend on welfare programs (49%). Furthermore, one half of Sri Lankans state that it is the individual's responsibility to find a job.
- From those who believe that the number of government employees should be reduced it is mostly the youth (53%). By contrast, 52% of people above thirty years share the opinion that it is the government's responsibility to take care of its people. Roughly 50% from both age categories believe that it is the individual's responsibility to find a job.

FINDINGS

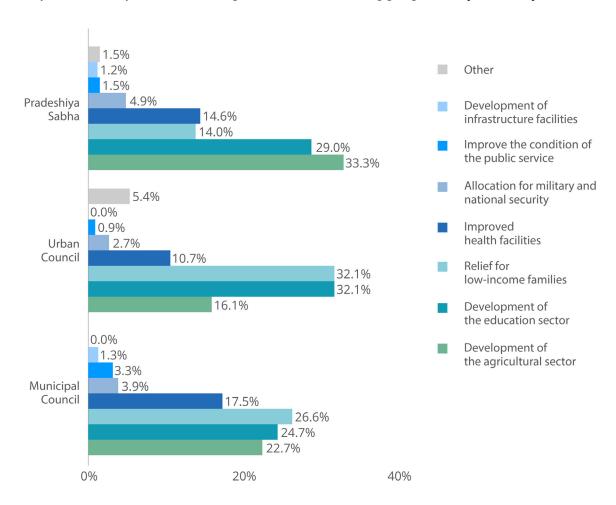
Graph 01 - Opinion on Budget Allocation



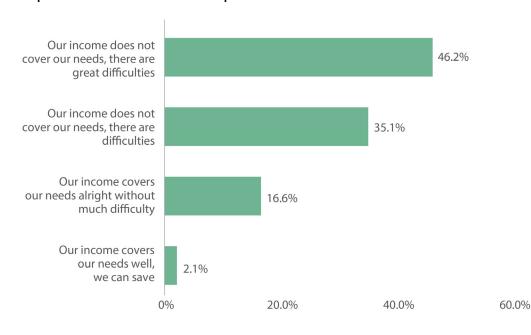
Graph 02 - Opinion on Budget Allocation Disaggregated by Age



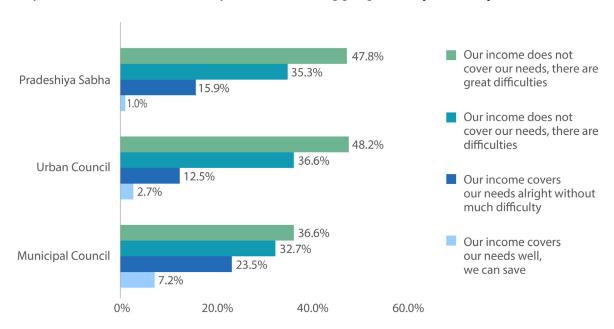
Graph 03 - Opinion on Budget Allocation Disaggregated by Locality



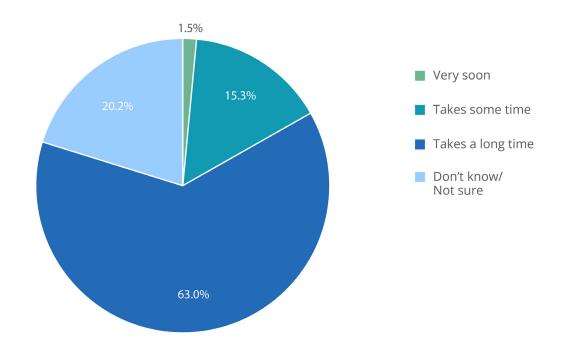
Graph 04 - Income and Expenditure



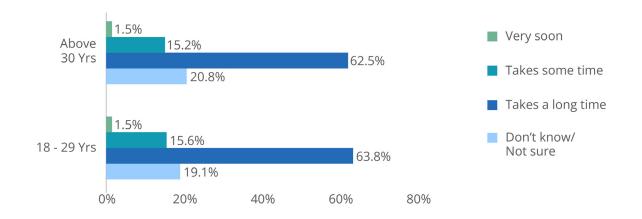
Graph 05 - Income and Expenditure Disaggregated by Locality



Graph 06 - Opinion on Country's Economy Returning to Normalcy



Graph 07 - Opinion on Country's Economy Returning to Normalcy Disaggregated by Age



Graph 08 - Opinion on Country's Economy Returning to Normalcy Disaggregated by Locality

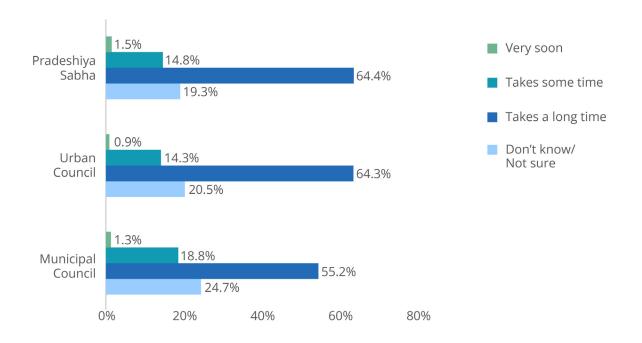


Table 01 - Perception on Youth who Led/ Participated in Aragalaya

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't Know
I think the <i>Aragalaya</i> was led by civic-minded youth with the aim of reforming the country to a better democracy.	81.7%	6.4%	7.9%	4.0%
I think the <i>Aragalaya</i> is an inclusive event and people from all ethnic and religious groups participated in it.	88.4%	3.6%	5.0%	3.0%
I think the <i>Aragalaya</i> is an inclusive event and both males and females participated in it.	93.7%	2.8%	1.0%	2.5%
I think people voluntarily participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> and they were not there because they were allied to any political party.	73.7%	10.1%	9.2%	7.0%
I think that the people who participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> protested for a common course concerning the country's better future.	82.0%	7.7%	5.8%	4.5%
I think that the people who engaged in <i>Aragalaya</i> are broad-minded and modern in their thinking.	72.5%	11.4%	9.2%	6.9%
I think that <i>Aragalaya</i> is led by a group of people who are uncivilised and drug users.	11.7%	11.7%	64.9%	11.7%
I think the youth who participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> also took part in unleashing violence.	19.5%	12.7%	57.1%	10.7%
I think the young people who led the <i>Aragalaya</i> were connected to anti-democratic parties.	16.6%	13.2%	54.2%	16.0%

Table 02 - Perception on Youth who Led/ Participated in *Aragalaya* Disaggregated by Age

		Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't Know
I think the <i>Aragalaya</i> was led by	18 - 29 Years	89.0%	4.6%	4.3%	2.1%
civic-minded youth with the aim of reforming the country to a better democracy.	Above 30 Years	77.3%	7.4%	10.0%	5.3%
I think the <i>Aragalaya</i> is an inclusive	18 - 29 Years	91.1%	3.8%	4.1%	1.0%
event and people from all ethnic and religious groups participated in it.	Above 30 Years	87.0%	3.4%	5.5%	4.1%
I think the <i>Aragalaya</i> is an inclusive event and both males and females	18 - 29 Years	96.7%	2.3%	0.5%	.5%
participated in it.	Above 30 Years	92.2%	2.9%	1.2%	3.7%
I think people voluntarily	18 - 29 Years	78.9%	12.2%	4.6%	4.3%
participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> and they were not there because they were allied to any political party.	Above 30 Years	70.6%	8.9%	12.0%	8.5%
I think that the people who	18 - 29 Years	90.3%	4.9%	3.3%	1.5%
participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> protested for a common course concerning the country's better future.	Above 30 Years	77.1%	9.3%	7.4%	6.2%
I think that the people who engaged	18 - 29 Years	78.3%	10.0%	6.6%	5.1%
in <i>Aragalaya</i> are broad-minded and modern in their thinking.	Above 30 Years	69.3%	12.3%	10.6%	7.8%
I think that <i>Aragalaya</i> is led by a	18 - 29 Years	9.2%	14.8%	67.1%	8.9%
group of people who are uncivilised and drug users.	Above 30 Years	13.1%	9.9%	63.7%	13.3%
I think the youth who participated	18 - 29 Years	17.9%	12.2%	61.2%	8.7%
in <i>Aragalaya</i> also took part in unleashing violence.	Above 30 Years	20.5%	13.0%	54.5%	12.0%
I think the young people who led	18 - 29 Years	12.0%	16.3%	56.2%	15.5%
the <i>Aragalaya</i> were connected to anti-democratic parties.	Above 30 Years	19.2%	11.5%	52.9%	16.4%

Table 03 - Perception on Youth who Led/ Participated in *Aragalaya* Disaggregated by Locality

		Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't Know
I think the <i>Aragalaya</i> was led by	Municipal Council	76.8%	5.2%	12.8%	5.2%
civic-minded youth with the aim of reforming the country to a better	Urban Council	90.9%	3.6%	0.0%	5.5%
democracy.	Pradeshiya Sabha	81.4%	7.0%	8.0%	3.6%
I think the Aragalaya is an inclusive	Municipal Council	88.4%	1.9%	5.8%	3.9%
event and people from all ethnic and religious groups participated	Urban Council	90.0%	3.6%	0.0%	6.4%
in it.	Pradeshiya Sabha	88.4%	3.9%	5.3%	2.4%
I think the Aragalaya is an inclusive	Municipal Council	95.5%	0.0%	2.6%	1.9%
event and both males and females participated in it.	Urban Council	91.9%	2.7%	0.0%	5.4%
	Pradeshiya Sabha	93.8%	3.2%	0.8%	2.2%
I think people voluntarily	Municipal Council	77.4%	6.5%	6.5%	9.6%
participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> and they were not there because they were	Urban Council	79.5%	10.7%	1.8%	8.0%
allied to any political party.	Pradeshiya Sabha	72.1%	10.8%	10.7%	6.4%
I think that the people who	Municipal Council	84.5%	3.2%	7.1%	5.2%
participated in <i>Aragalaya</i> protested for a common course concerning	Urban Council	78.4%	12.6%	1.8%	7.2%
the country's better future.	Pradeshiya Sabha	82.1%	7.8%	6.2%	3.9%
I think that the people who engaged	Municipal Council	71.2%	13.5%	11.5%	3.8%
in <i>Aragalaya</i> are broad-minded and modern in their thinking.	Urban Council	70.5%	14.3%	4.5%	10.7%
, and the second	Pradeshiya Sabha	73.0%	10.4%	9.6%	7.0%
I think that Aragalaya is led by a	Municipal Council	14.2%	10.3%	60.7%	14.8%
group of people who are uncivilised and drug users.	Urban Council	8.0%	12.5%	62.5%	17.0%
	Pradeshiya Sabha	11.8%	11.8%	65.9%	10.5%
I think the youth who participated	Municipal Council	20.0%	8.4%	60.0%	11.6%
in <i>Aragalaya</i> also took part in unleashing violence.	Urban Council	13.6%	15.5%	58.2%	12.7%
	Pradeshiya Sabha	20.2%	13.2%	56.4%	10.2%
I think the young people who led the	Municipal Council	20.9%	9.2%	56.2%	13.7%
Aragalaya were connected to antidemocratic parties.	Urban Council	15.2%	10.7%	57.1%	17.0%
asimosiano parmosi	Pradeshiya Sabha	15.9%	14.3%	53.5%	16.3%

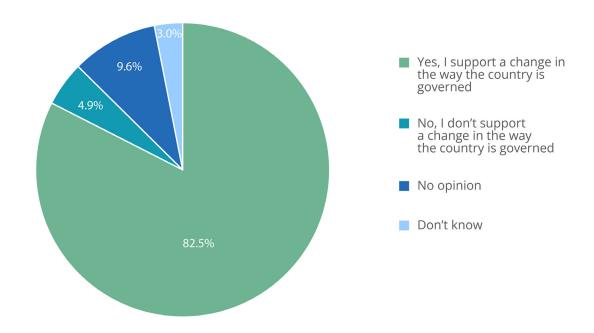
Graph 09 - Attitude towards Aragalaya



Table 04 - Attitude towards Aragalaya Disaggregated by Age and Locality

		Age			Locality	
	18 - 29 Years	Above 30 Years	Municipal Council	Urban Council	Pradeshiya Sabha	
Aragalaya had a positive impact on our country	87.8%	78.6%	80.2%	84.3%	82.0%	
Aragalaya left more negative things to the society and the country	12.2%	21.4%	19.8%	15.7%	18.0%	
Base	311	528	121	89	628	
Aragalaya was a necessity of the moment	85.9%	78.0%	79.2%	85.1%	80.7%	
Aragalaya was a result of the opportunistic politics	14.1%	22.0%	20.8%	14.9%	19.3%	
Base	341	596	130	87	720	
Legal actions should not be taken against the young people who engaged in <i>Aragalaya</i>	45.7%	39.8%	49.6%	61.2%	38.1%	
If the protesters have violated the law it is okay to take legal actions against them	54.3%	60.2%	50.4%	38.8%	61.9%	
Base	346	573	137	85	698	

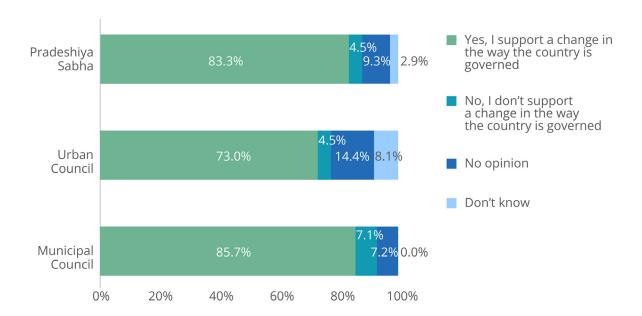
Graph 10 - Opinion on a Possible System Change



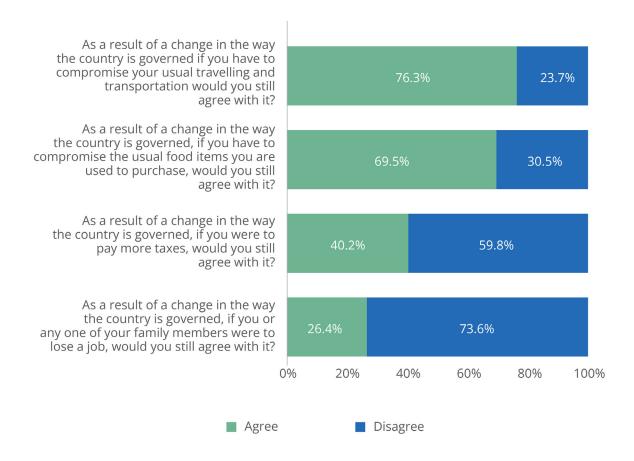
Graph 11 - Opinion on a Possible System Change Disaggregated by Age



Graph 12 - Opinion on a Possible System Change Disaggregated by Locality



Graph 13 - Willingness to make Compromises for a System Change



Graph 14 - Willingness to make Compromises for a System Change Disaggregated by Age

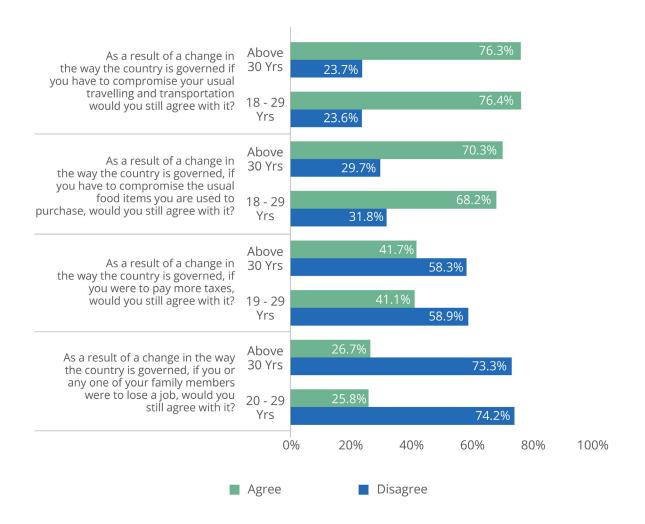


Table 05 - Willingness to make Compromises for a System Change Disaggregated by Locality

		Agree	Disagree
As a result of a change in the way the country is governed if you have to compromise your usual travelling and transportation would you still agree with it?	Municipal Council	85.9%	14.1%
	Urban Council	72.1%	27.9%
	Pradeshiya Sabha	75.1%	24.9%
As a result of a change in the way the country is	Municipal Council	73.4%	26.6%
governed, if you have to compromise the usual food items you are used to purchase, would you	Urban Council	56.3%	43.7%
still agree with it?	Pradeshiya Sabha	70.5%	29.5%
As a result of a change in the way the country is	Municipal Council	33.8%	66.2%
governed, if you were to pay more taxes, would you still agree with it?	Urban Council	27.2%	72.8%
	Pradeshiya Sabha	44.8%	55.2%
As a result of a change in the way the country	Municipal Council	18.9%	81.1%
is governed, if you or any one of your family members were to lose a job, would you still agree with it?	Urban Council	21.4%	78.6%
	Pradeshiya Sabha	28.5%	71.5%

Graph 15 - Perception on Privatization

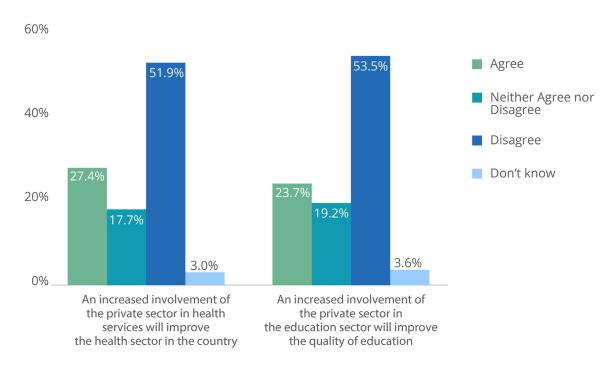
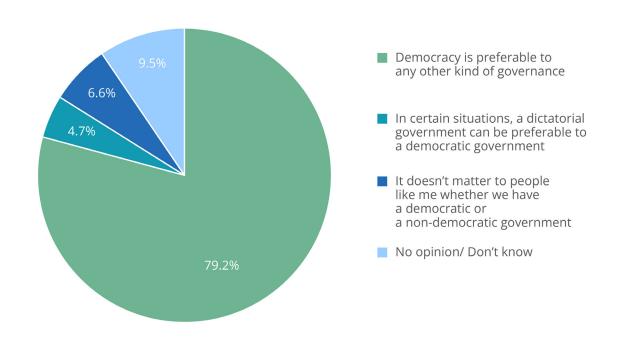


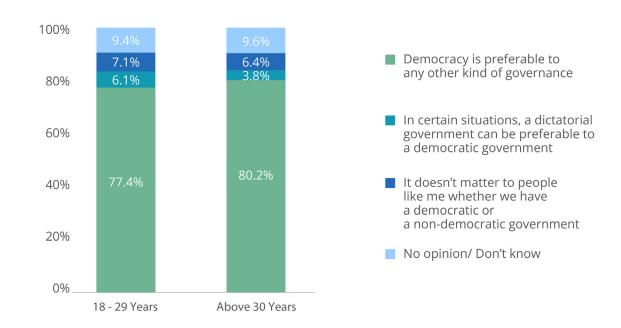
Table 06 - Perception on Privatization Disaggregated by Age

		Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know
An increased involvement of the private sector in health services will improve the health sector in the country.	18 - 29 Years	30.3%	17.3%	50.1%	2.3%
	Above 30 Years	25.8%	17.9%	52.9%	3.4%
An increased involvement of the private sector in the education sector will improve the quality of education.	18 - 29 Years	27.2%	19.9%	50.9%	2.0%
	Above 30 Years	21.6%	18.8%	55.2%	4.4%

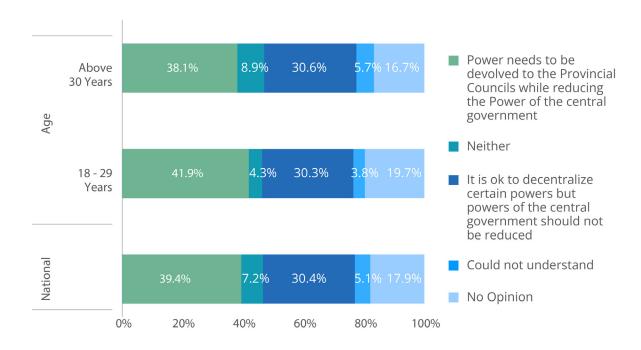
Graph 16 - Perception on Democratic Governance



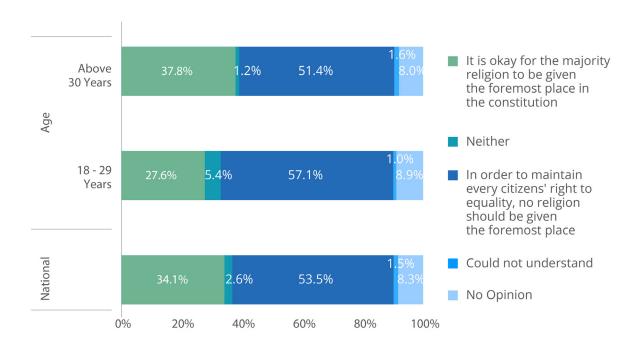
Graph 17 - Perception on Democratic Governance Disaggregated by Age



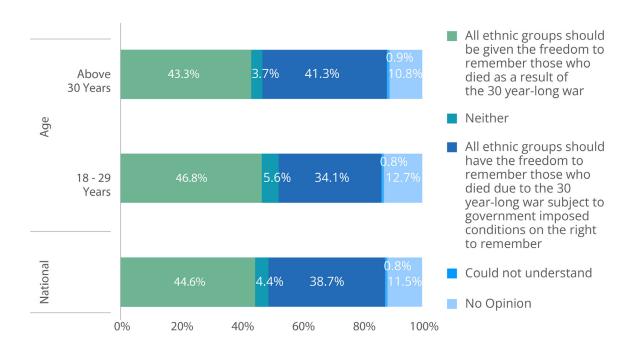
Graph 18 - Perception on Power Sharing on National level and Disaggregated by Age



Graph 19 - Ethnic Relations on National level and Disaggregated by Age



Graph 20 - Ethnic Relations on National level and Disaggregated by Age



Graph 21 - Perception on Forms of Governance

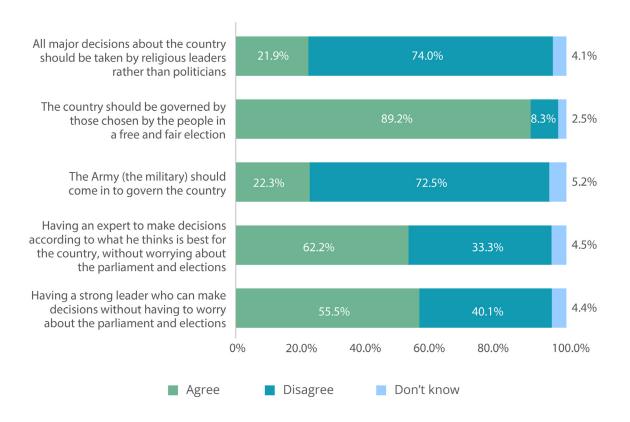
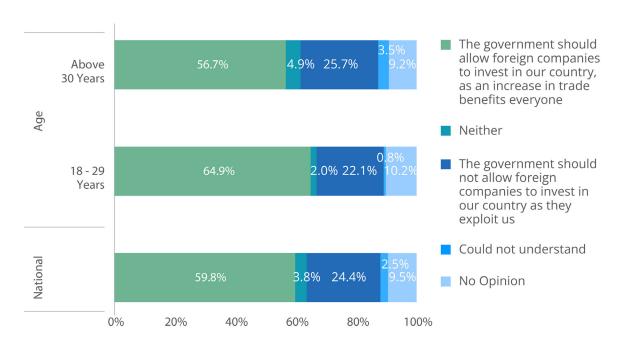


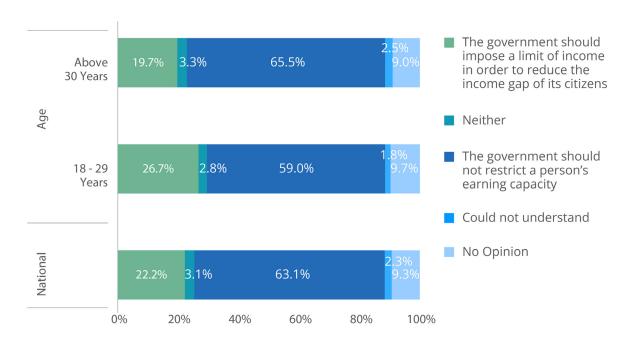
Table 07 - Perception on Forms of Governance Disaggregated by Age

		Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Having a strong leader who can make decisions	18 - 29 Years	56.5%	39.4%	4.1%
without having to worry about the parliament and elections.	Above 30 Years	54.8%	40.6%	4.6%
Having an expert to make decisions according	19 - 29 Years	68.1%	28.1%	3.8%
to what he thinks is best for the country, without worrying about the parliament and elections.	Above 30 Years	58.8%	36.3%	4.9%
The Army (the military) should come in to govern	20 - 29 Years	25.0%	69.9%	5.1%
the country.	Above 30 Years	20.7%	74.0%	5.3%
The country should be governed by those chosen	21 - 29 Years	88.5%	8.4%	3.1%
by the people in a free and fair election.	Above 30 Years	89.5%	8.3%	2.2%
All major decisions about the country should be taken by religious leaders rather than politicians.	22 - 29 Years	21.4%	75.0%	3.6%
	Above 30 Years	22.1%	73.5%	4.4%

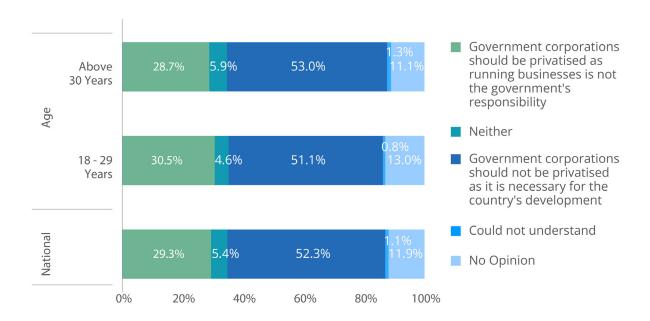
Graph 22 - Attitude towards Liberal Economic Policies on National Level and disaggregated by Age



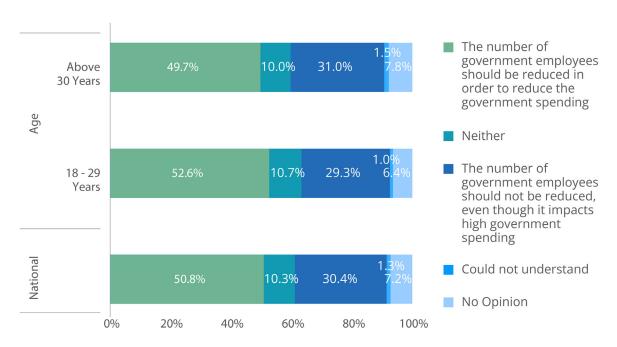
Graph 23 - Attitude towards Liberal Economic Policies on National Level and disaggregated by Age



Graph 24 - Attitude towards Liberal Economic Policies on National Level and disaggregated by Age



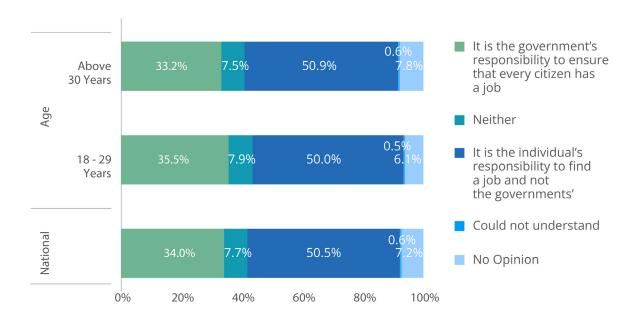
Graph 25 - Opinion on Welfare Policies on National level and Disaggregated by Age



Graph 26 - Opinion on Welfare Policies on National level and Disaggregated by Age



Graph 27 - Opinion on Welfare Policies on National level and Disaggregated by Age



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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