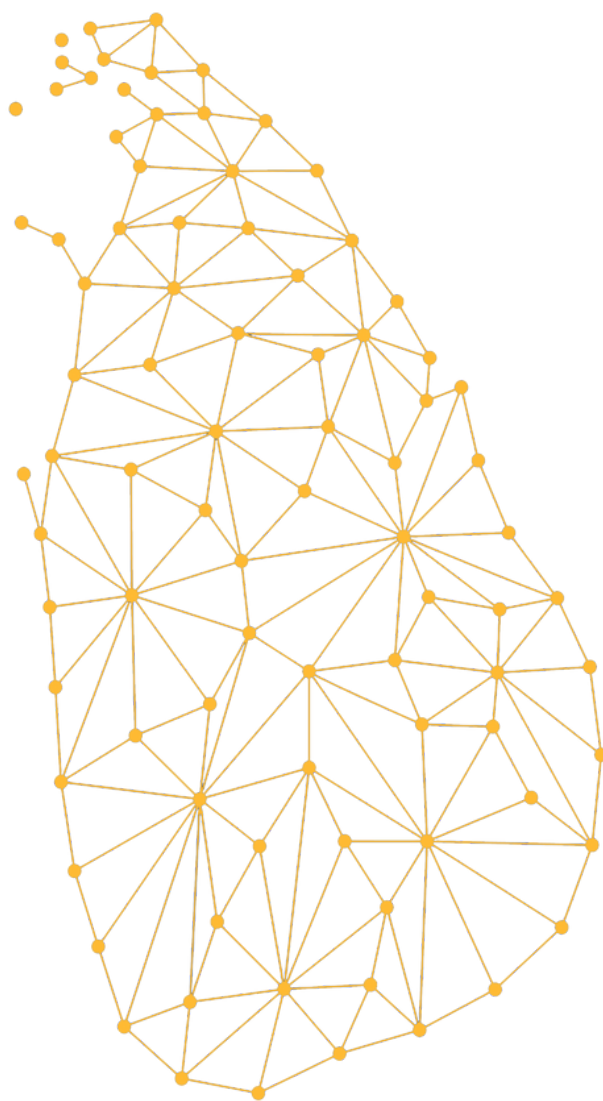


# SURVEY ON DEMOCRACY AND RECONCILIATION IN SRI LANKA KEY FINDINGS



Centre for Policy Alternatives - Social Indicator  
March 2024

## Introduction

This brief report aims to share some of the selected key findings of the latest survey on democracy and reconciliation conducted by Social Indicator, the survey arm of the Centre for Policy Alternatives. The poll was designed to capture the current public opinion on matters related to themes of democracy and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. The survey findings on support for democracy, trust in democratic institutions, public assessment of the progress of reconciliation, and attitude toward constitutional reforms are discussed in this brief report.

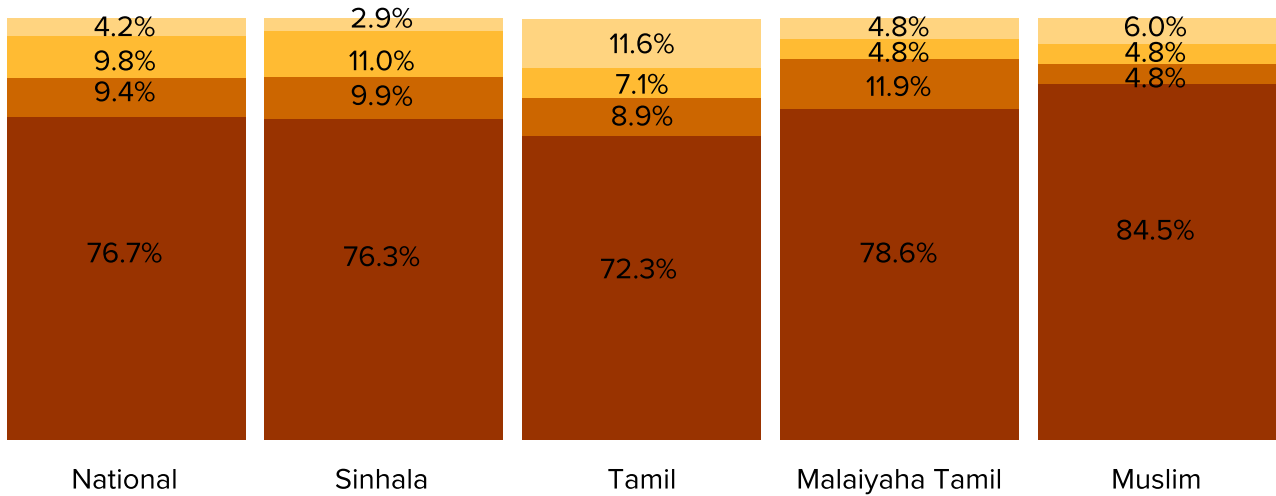
A total of 1350 individuals belonging to the four main ethnic communities - Sinhala, Tamil, Malayaha Tamil, and Muslim - across 25 districts participated in this survey. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered amongst the respondents who were chosen using a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique. The fieldwork was conducted between 4th and 22nd of January 2024 employing 73 field enumerators (male and female) who belong to the four main ethnic communities. Upon completion of the data collection process, the data set 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).

## KEY FINDINGS

### Support for Democracy

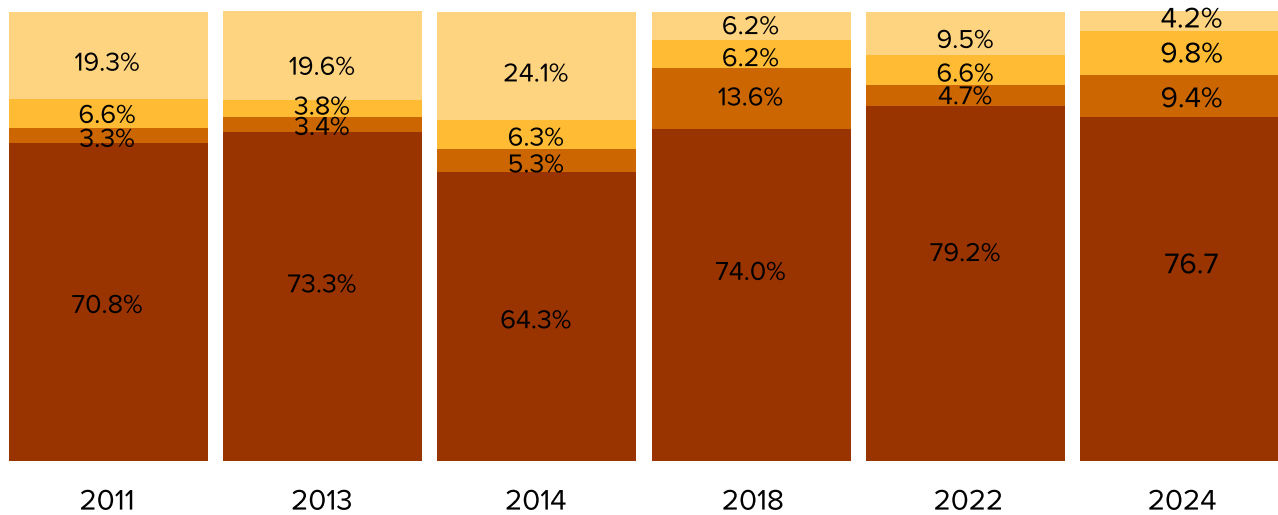
Sri Lankans exhibit a great deal of commitment to democracy. According to the survey findings (Graph 01) more than three-quarter of Sri Lankans think that “Democracy is preferable to any other form of government”. This viewpoint is shared across all main ethnic communities (Sinhala, Tamil, Malayaha Tamil, Muslim). More importantly, according to the SI-CPA surveys over the past 13 years (Graph 02), this strong support for democracy has remained unchanged. However, according to the recent survey findings, one out of every 10 Sri Lankans agree that “In certain situations, a dictatorial government can be preferable to a democratic one”. The survey series shows that this support for dictatorial government was high during 2018 amidst the political chaos of the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government. Therefore, despite strong support for democracy, the survey series suggests that there is a possibility of rejuvenating the support for authoritarian rule when the frustration towards democratic governance increases.

**Graph 01: Support for Democracy by National and Ethnicity**



- Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government
- In certain situations, a dictatorial government can be preferable to a democratic one
- It doesn't matter to me whether we have democratic or non-democratic government
- No opinion/ Don't Know

**Graph 02: Support for Democracy by Year**

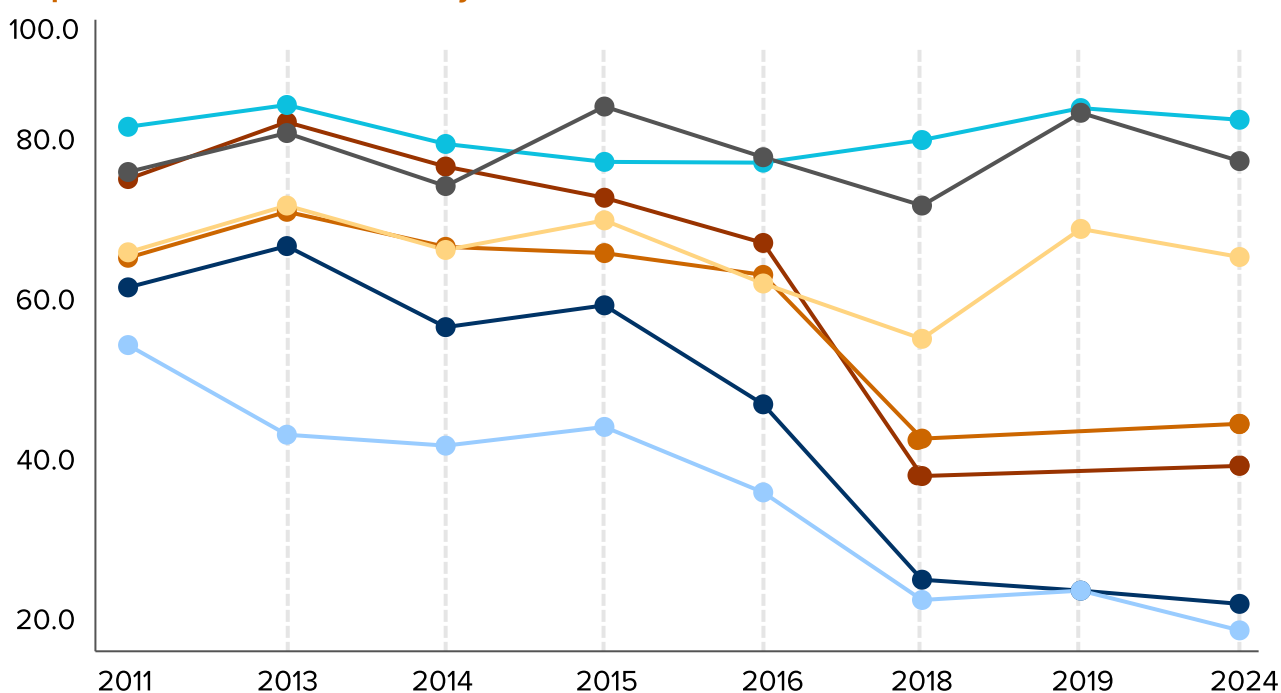


- Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government
- In certain situations, a dictatorial government can be preferable to a democratic one
- It doesn't matter to me whether we have democratic or non-democratic government
- No opinion

## Trust in Institutions

Public trust is extremely important for the legitimacy of democratic institutions. However, not all institutions enjoy public trust equally and all the time. The findings of the survey series suggest that Army and Courts enjoy the status of the most trusted institution in the country. Over the past decades, public trust in these two institutions remained almost unchanged. The police enjoy relatively less public trust compared to the Army and Courts. The level of trust police enjoy has not changed drastically over the past 13 years. However, public trust in legislative institutions and the institutions that produce legislatures – political parties – is not only less compared to the Army and Courts, but also have experienced a slump over the past decade. In 2011, 63% of Sri Lankans trusted the parliament to perform its role, but it has fallen to 22% in 2024. Among the institutions tested in this survey series, people extended the least level of trust toward political parties. The public trust in political parties has fallen from 56% in 2011 to 19% in 2024. These findings allude to the unprecedented challenges that democracy faces in countries like Sri Lanka. Although people trust representative Western democracy as the best form of rule for them, they do not trust its elected representatives to rule them.

**Graph 03: Trust in Institutions by Year**

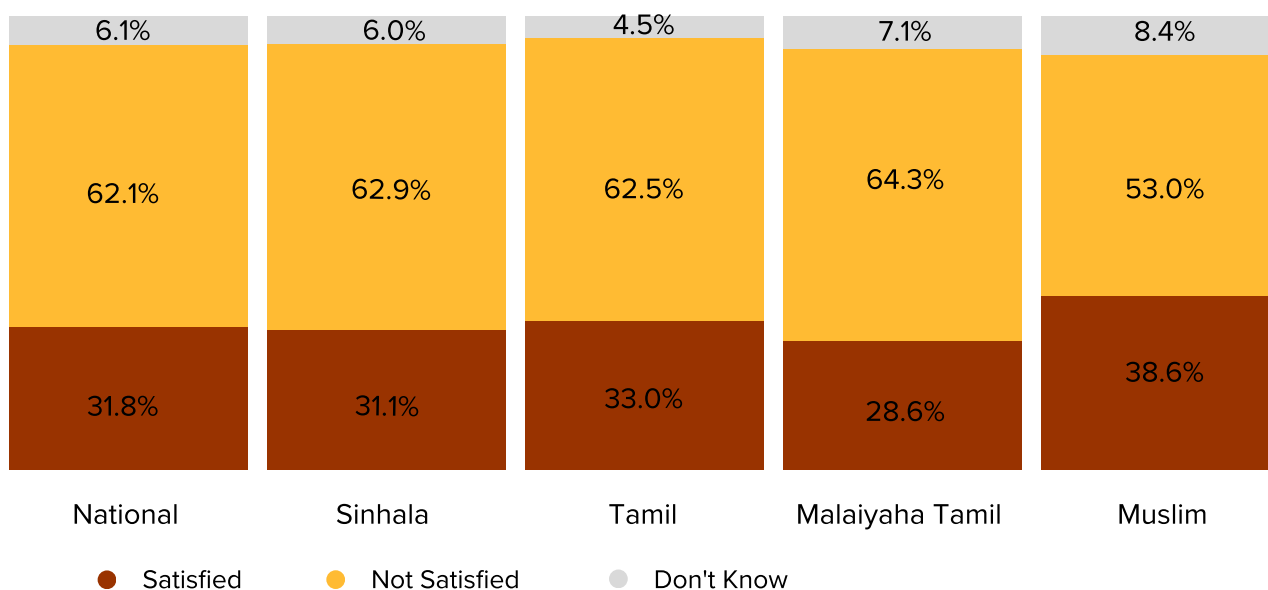


Institutions		2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	2019	2024
	National government	76.9%	84.2%	78.5%	74.5%	68.7%	38.8%		40.1%
	Provincial government	66.8%	72.7%	68.2%	67.4%	64.6%	43.6%		45.5%
	Police	67.5%	73.5%	67.8%	71.6%	63.5%	56.4%	70.5%	66.9%
	Army	83.6%	86.4%	81.4%	79.1%	79.0%	81.9%	86.1%	84.5%
	Courts	77.8%	82.8%	76.0%	86.2%	79.7%	73.5%	85.4%	79.2%
	Parliament	63.0%	68.3%	57.9%	60.7%	48.0%	25.5%	24.1%	22.4%
	Political parties	55.6%	44.1%	42.7%	45.1%	36.7%	22.9%	24.1%	19.0%

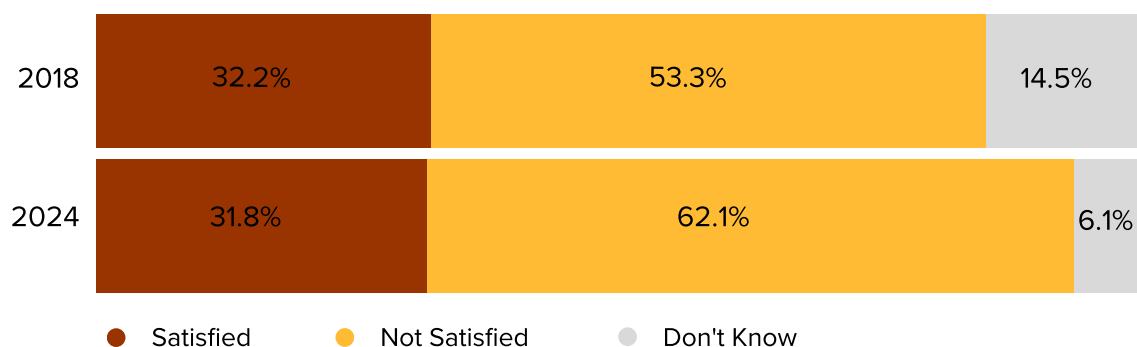
## Progress in addressing Reconciliation

Even after 14 years since the war between the security forces and the LTTE ended, reconciliation remained an unfinished job. According to the survey findings, the majority of Sri Lankans (62.1%) are not satisfied with the current government's progress on reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka. This opinion is shared across all main ethnic communities (Sinhala, Tamil, Malaiyaha Tamil and Muslim). When compared to similar survey results in 2018, more people have expressed their dissatisfaction with the current government's progress on reconciliation.

**Graph 04: Satisfaction on the Progress in Addressing Reconciliation by National and Ethnicity**



**Graph 05: Satisfaction on the Progress in Addressing Reconciliation by Year**

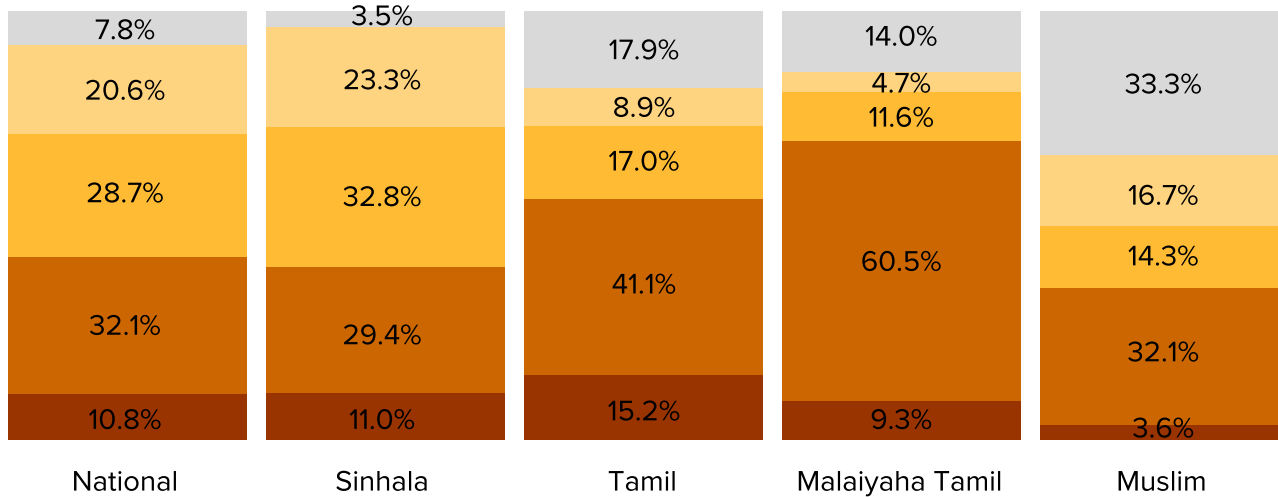


## Attitude towards Constitutional Reforms

Sri Lankans have a moderate awareness of the ongoing Constitutional reform process in Sri Lanka, which is reflected in nearly half of the Sri Lankans (42.9%) expressing awareness. Among those, the awareness is considerably high amongst the Tamil (56.3%) and the Malaiyaha Tamil (69.8%)

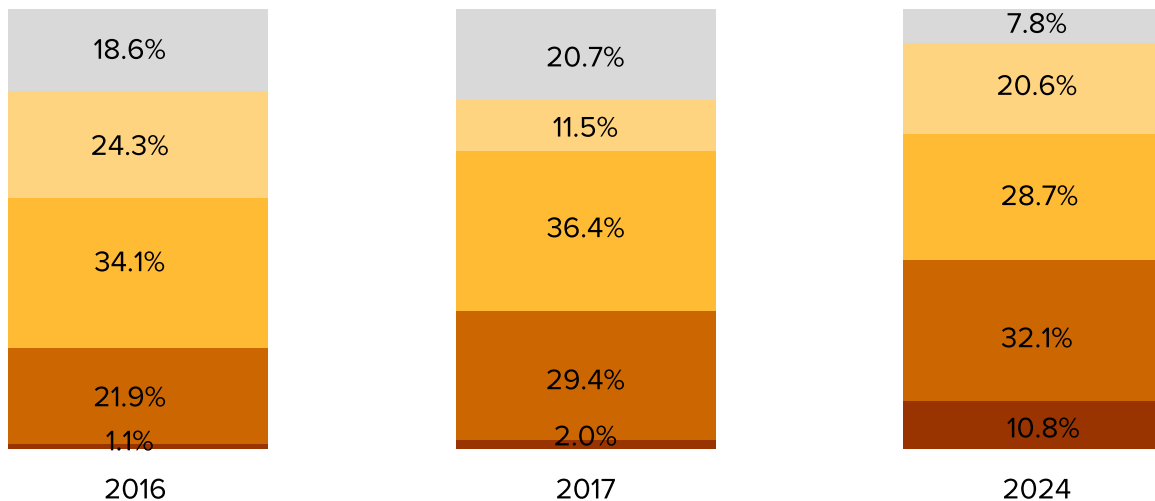
communities as opposed to the Sinhala (35.4%) and Muslim (35.7%) communities. Further, this awareness has notably increased during past 8-year period from 2016 to 2024 (2016 - 23%, 2017 - 31.4%, 2024 – 42.9%).

**Graph 06: Awareness of Constitutional Reforms by National and Ethnicity**



- Extremely aware
- Somewhat aware
- I am aware that it is taking place, but not at all aware about the details and status
- I did not know that a Constitutional reform process is taking place at present
- No Responses/Don't know/ not surees

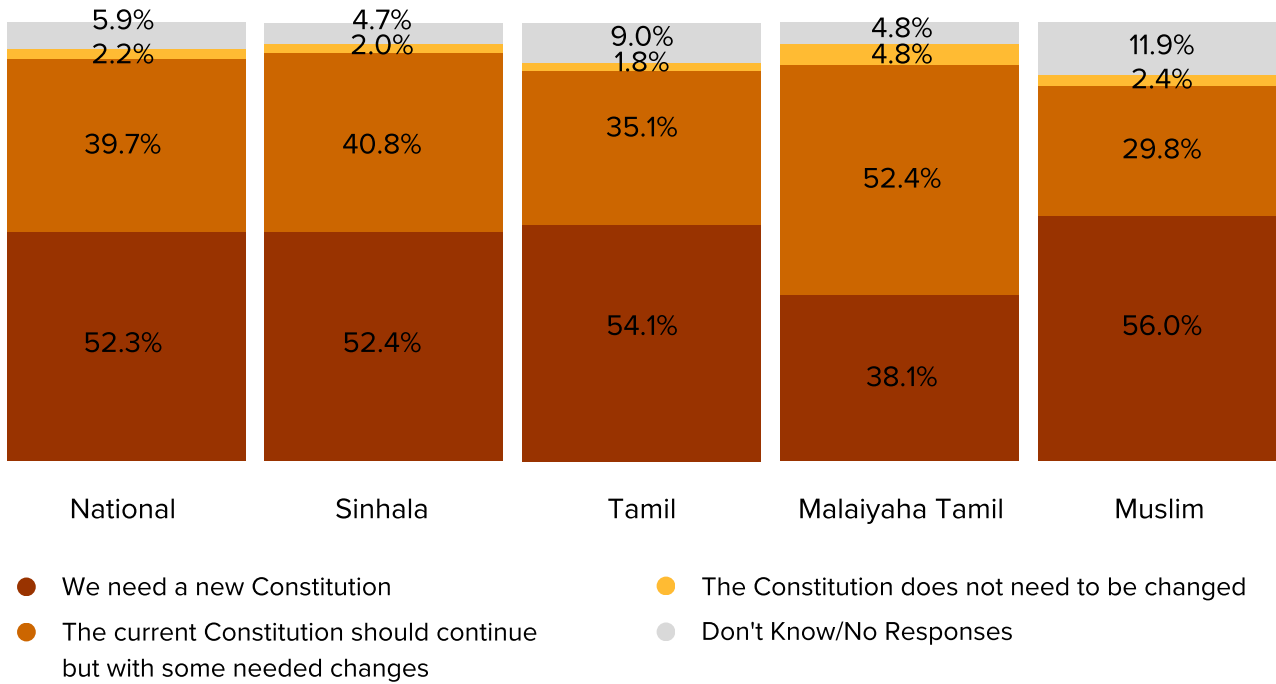
**Graph 07: Awareness of Constitutional Reforms by Year**



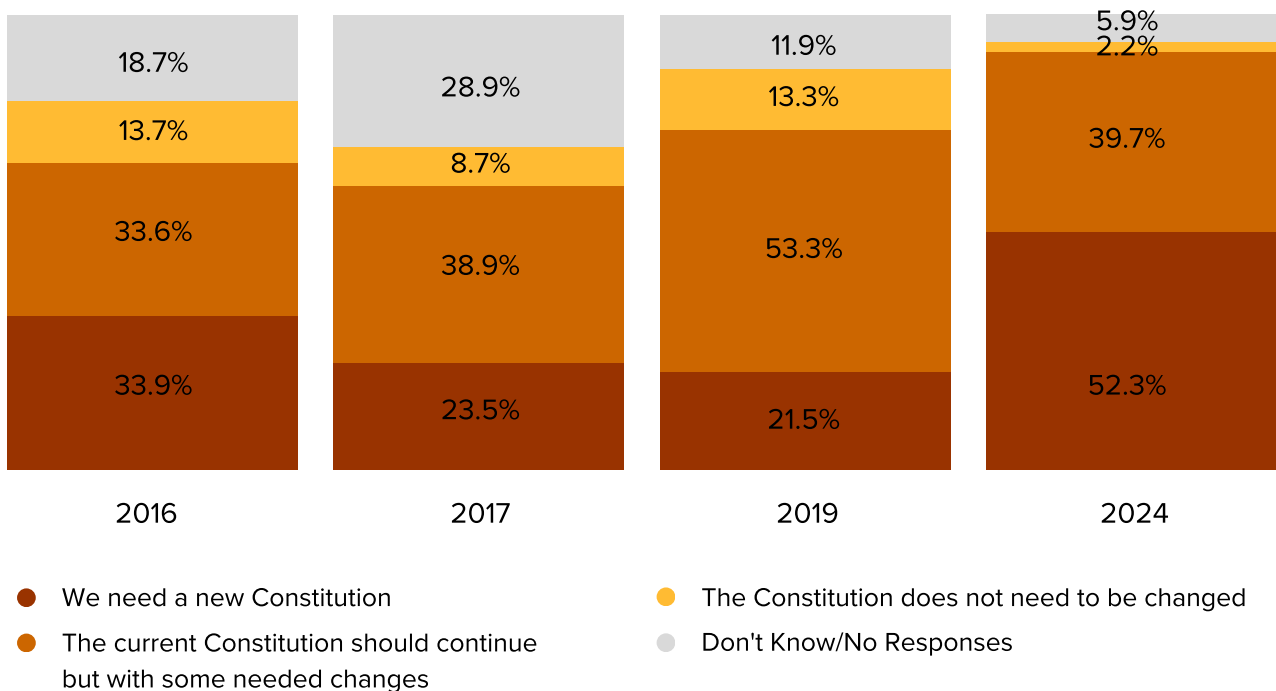
- Extremely aware
- Somewhat aware
- I am aware that it is taking place, but not at all aware about the details and status
- I did not know that a Constitutional reform process is taking place at present
- No Responses/Don't know/ not surees

According to the survey findings, it is apparent that a majority of Sri Lankans prefers a new constitution (52.3%). Those who hold this viewpoint has considerably increased over the past 8-year period from 2016 to 2024 and is reflected across Sinhala (52.4%), Tamil (54.1%) and Muslim (56%) communities. Nevertheless, there is also a segment of Sri Lankans who believe, the current constitution should continue with some needed changes.

**Graph 08: Awareness of Constitutional Reforms by National and Ethnicity**



**Graph 09: Awareness of Constitutional Reforms by Year**



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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