

Summary Findings and Overview of the Confidence in Democratic Governance Index - December 2023

INTRODUCTION

This report is prepared by Social Indicator (SI), the survey research arm of the Centre for Policy Alternatives on the findings of the Confidence in Democratic Governance Index (Wave 5). The Wickremesinghe government continues with economic and policy reforms ostensibly to overcome the economic crisis. Although it is not the average citizens who are responsible for the crisis, they have to bear the brunt of the process that the government has taken to resolve it. Against such a backdrop, the poll was designed to capture the public sentiments on the country's current state of governance.

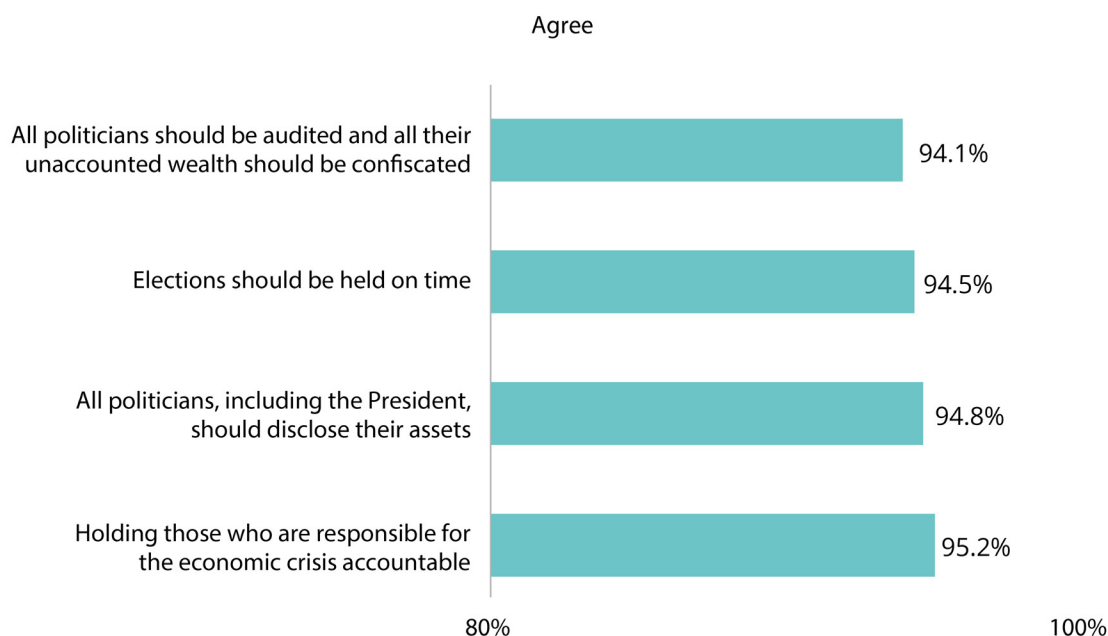
METHODOLOGY

A semi-structured questionnaire was administered amongst a sample of 1350 individuals from the four main ethnic communities - Sinhala, Tamil, Up-Country Tamil, and Muslim. A multi-staged stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample locations and the respondents within a location were selected using a random-walk method. Therefore this sample captured both men and women living in urban as well as rural localities in all 25 districts. The fieldwork for the national poll was carried out between the 6th and 23rd of November 2023 utilizing a total of 80 field enumerators (male and female) from the four main ethnic communities. Following that, the data set was weighted to reflect the actual district and ethnic proportion of the population and was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

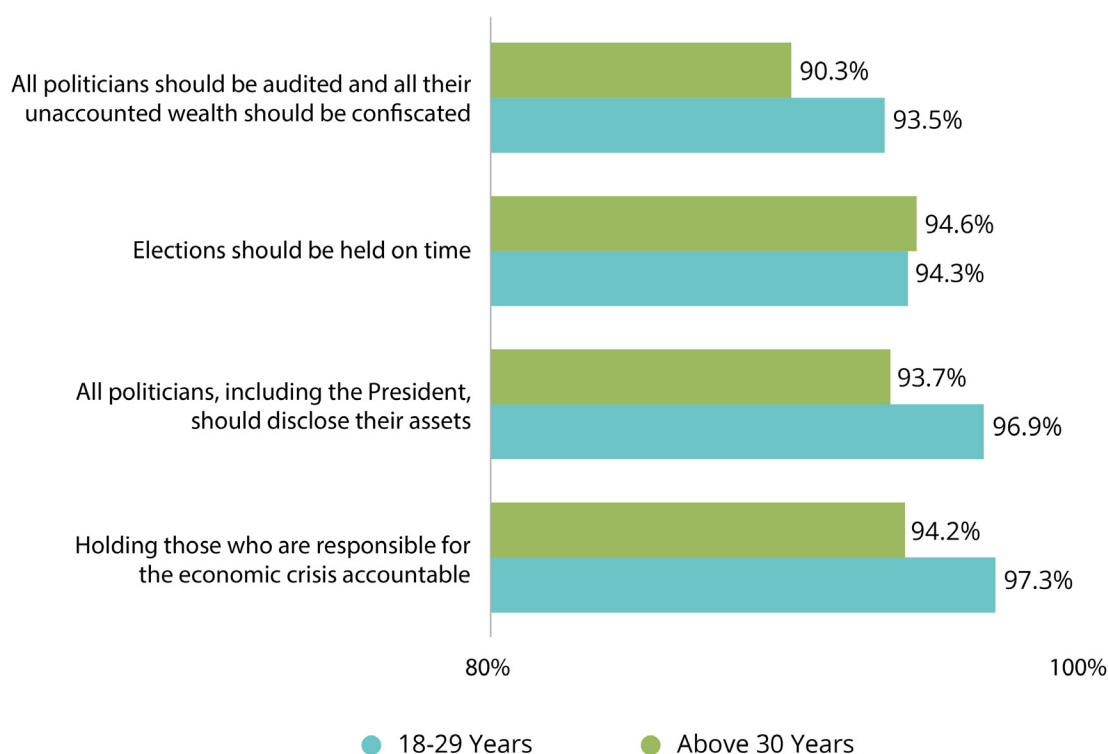
FINDINGS

Public perception on key demands put forward to the incumbent government

Graph 1: Perception on key demands



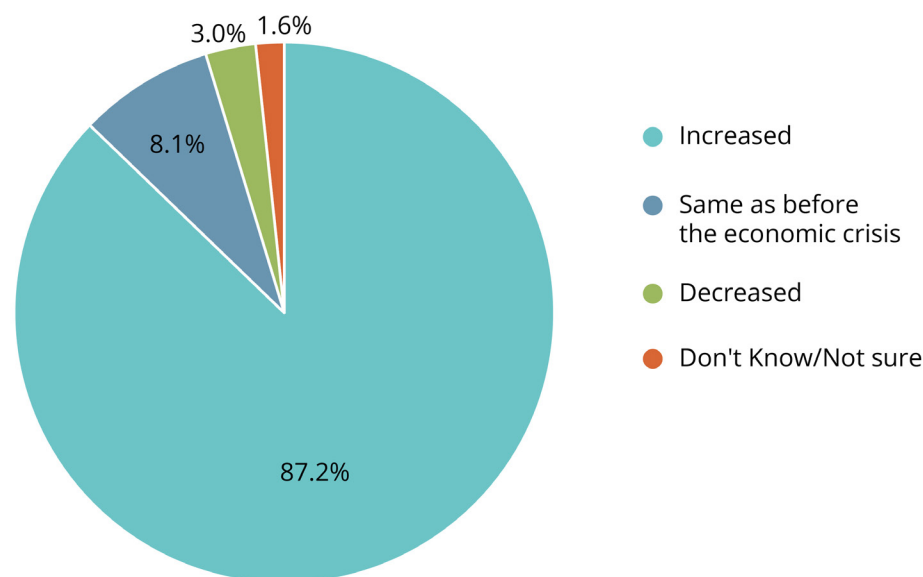
Graph 2: Perception on key demands by Age



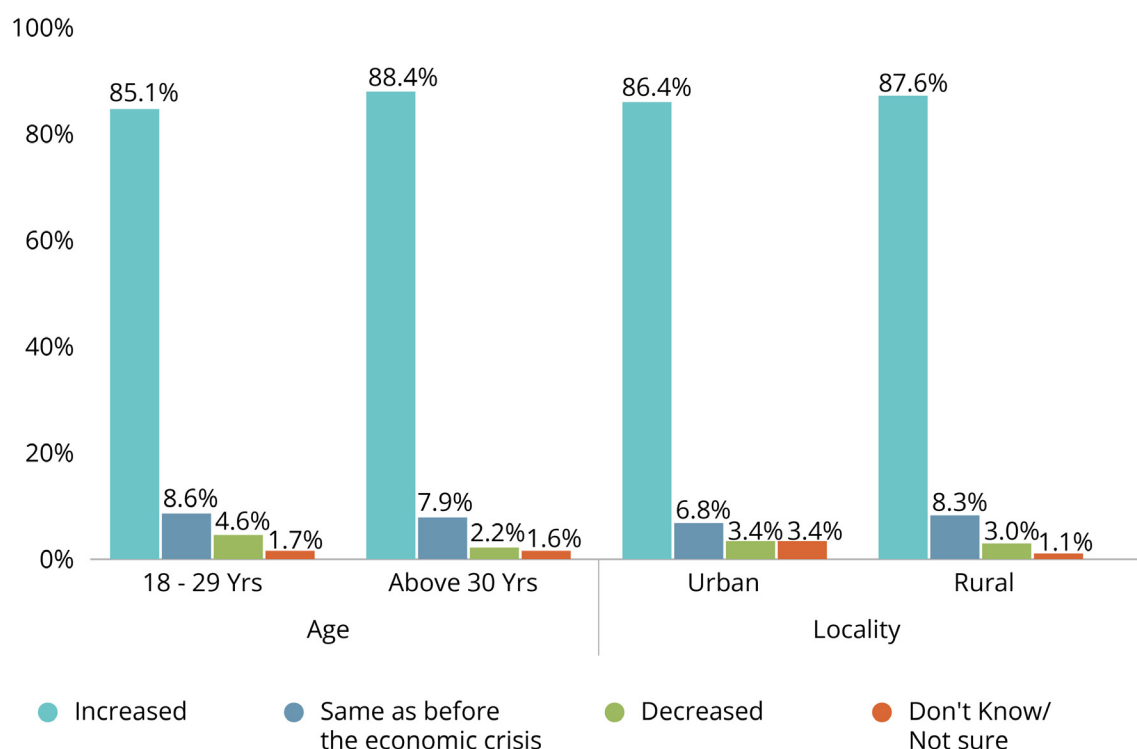
An overwhelming majority of Sri Lankans demand to improve the accountability of political leadership. For instance, almost all respondents demand that those who are responsible for the economic crisis should be held accountable. Similarly, they insist that all politicians including the President, should disclose their assets. Besides, the respondents request that the elections should be held on time, while all politicians should be audited, and their unaccounted wealth should be confiscated by the state. This demand for greater accountability from the political leadership is prominent amongst the younger Sri Lankans than their older counterparts. For example, 97% of those who are between 18 to 29 years of age bracket state that those who are responsible for the economic crisis should be held accountable. Almost the same proportion of youth demand that all politicians including the President should disclose their assets. Furthermore, 93% of the youth believe that all politicians should be audited and their unaccounted wealth should be confiscated.

Perception on level of corruption

Graph 3: Perception on level of corruption



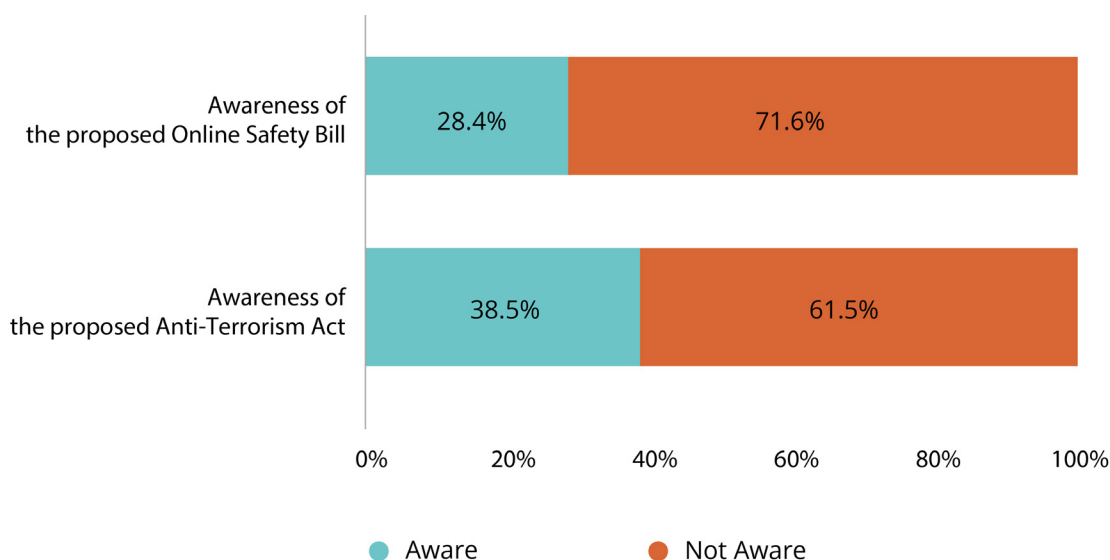
Graph 4: Perception on level of corruption by Age and Locality



The survey further reveals that an overwhelming majority of Sri Lankans believe that the state of corruption in the country has increased compared to the period before the economic crisis. This opinion is shared by people across all age groups and in both urban and rural localities.

Public Opinion on the Anti-Terrorism Act and Online Safety Bill

Graph 5: Awareness of the Anti-Terrorism Act and Online Safety Bill

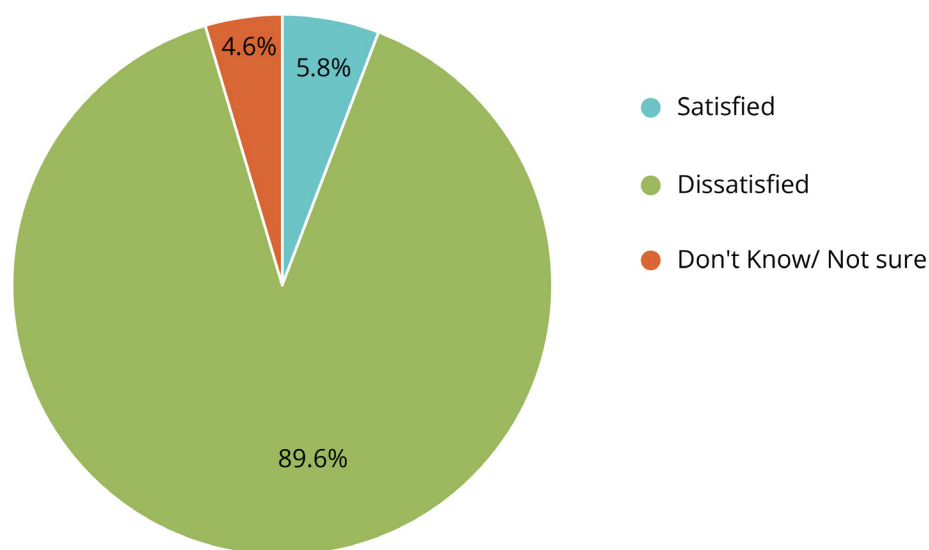


Responding to the Wickremesinghe government's proposed legislation; Anti-Terrorism Act and Online Safety Bill, a majority of Sri Lankans expressed that they are ignorant about both these proposed legislation. Of those who are aware, 40% of individuals across all age groups demonstrated awareness of the Anti-Terrorism Act, as opposed to the minimal percentage (20-30%) who exhibited awareness of the Online Safety Bill.

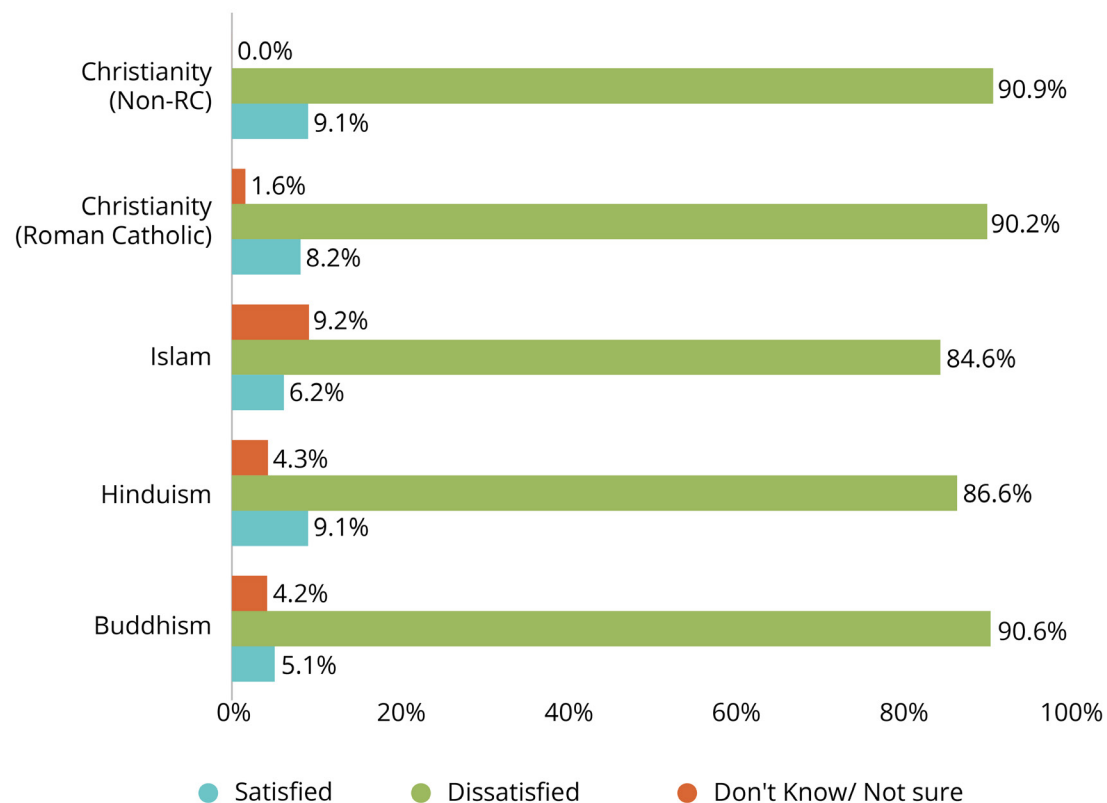
Of the 38.5% of respondents who are aware of the proposed Anti-Terrorism Act, the majority (72.6%) disapprove of the Act mainly on the grounds, that those who are in power will misuse it for their benefit as well as its negative impact on human rights. Likewise, with regards to the 28.4% of the respondents who are aware of the proposed Online Safety Bill, the majority (71.1%) disapprove of the Bill, citing concerns that those who are in power will misuse it for their benefit and the existing laws are sufficient, eliminating the need for new legislation at the moment.

Perception on measures taken by the government with regard to Easter Sunday Attacks

Graph 6: Perception on measures taken by the government with regard to Easter Sunday Attacks



Graph 7: Perception on measures taken by the government with regard to Easter Sunday Attacks by Religion

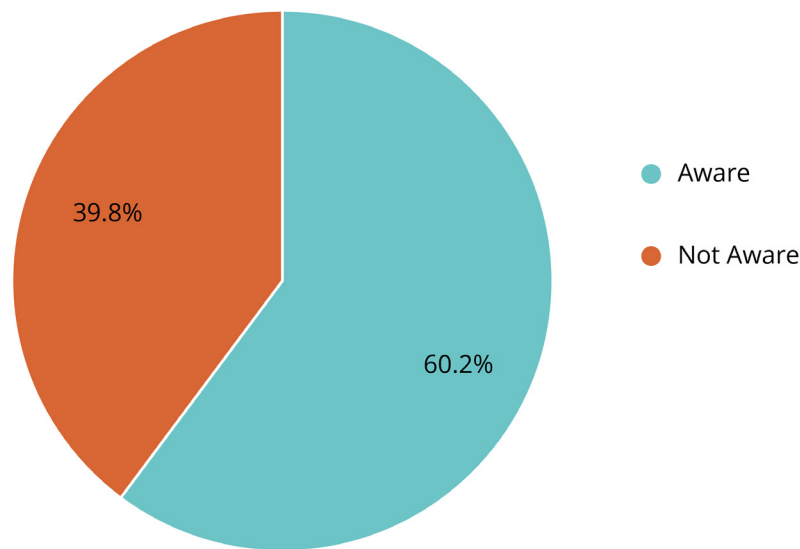


Sharing the frustration of the Catholic Church, an overwhelming majority (89.6%) voice their dissatisfaction with the measures taken by the Sri Lankan Government to investigate the Easter Sunday Attacks and hold those who are accountable, responsible. This sentiment is reflected across all four religious communities.

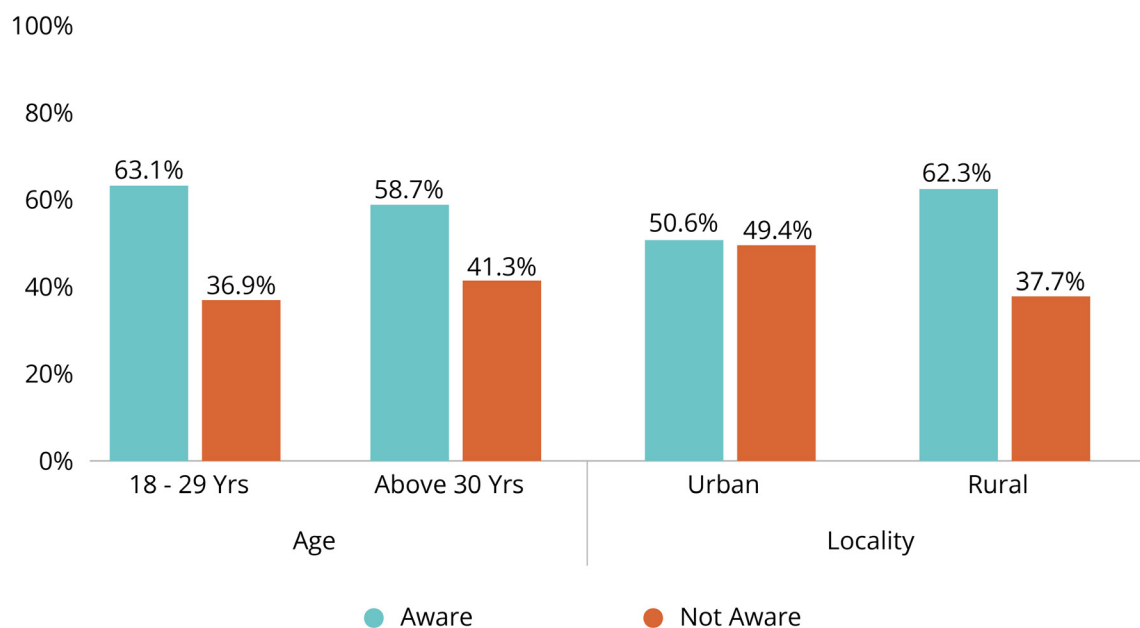
Concerning the diverse opinions expressed by different parties regarding the investigations into the Easter Sunday Attacks, 34.4% believe that there should be an international investigation into the incident. Another 32.8% emphasize that there should be an internal investigation with international monitors, while 21.8% believe only an internal investigation is sufficient. However, a noticeable percentage of the Christian community (Roman Catholic and Non-Roman Catholic) express the viewpoint that there should be an international investigation into the Easter Sunday Attacks implying their skepticism of only internal involvement in the matter.

Perceptions on IMF's suggested policy changes/structural reforms

Graph 8: Awareness on IMF's suggested policy changes/structural reforms



Graph 9: Awareness on IMF's suggested policy changes/structural reforms by Age and Locality



According to the survey findings, 60.2% of the Sri Lankans claim they are aware that the IMF has proposed some policy changes and structural reforms as recommendations to provide financial assistance for Sri Lanka to overcome the economic crisis. Interestingly, this awareness is comparatively high among the rural population.

Almost 68.9% of those who are aware, believe that these IMF policy changes/structural reforms are important for Sri Lanka to overcome the current economic crisis. This viewpoint is held across all age groups and in both urban and rural settings with the support of over 60% of the respondents.

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