

YOUTH AS A CATALYST FOR POLITICAL CHANGE



Social Scientists' Association

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The island wide survey ‘Youth as a Catalyst for Change’ aims to assess youth perspectives on politics in general. At a time when the country is experiencing an unprecedented political and economic struggle, this study aims to inquire into the role of youth as a catalyst for strengthening democratic politics in the country. The overarching goal of this study is to understand youth’s attitudes and expectation towards democratic politics in the country. The in depth understanding on youth politics that this study provides, complements ongoing and future programming efforts undertaken by the Social Scientists’ Association (SSA) in enhancing political literacy, and political participation of youth. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to civil society efforts in enhancing youth participation in democratic politics and thereby improve the quality of democracy in Sri Lanka.

The field work for this study was conducted during end February to mid-April 2022, and therefore SSA would like to caution the audience that the findings reflect the youth opinions just prior to the popular youth uprising that ended former president Gotabaya Rajapakse presidency.

Although the study focused on youth (18 – 29 years) the findings of the study disaggregated data by youth and adults in order to provide a comparative perspective. The research study was conducted by the Social Scientists’ Association, an organization that investigates the way in which social change contours the multiple realities faced by communities in Sri Lanka and South Asia. The survey research team consisted of Dr.Pradeep Peiris, Shashik Silva, Hasini Lecamwasam and Ammaarah Nilafdeen. The SSA would like to thank the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for their generous contribution in funding this study.

Methodology

A survey questionnaire was developed aiming to capture youth perceptions and expectations of democracy, their understanding of the political climate right before mass protests broke out, and the factors that shape their opinion. A conceptual framework and the survey questionnaire were developed based on a desk review of youth surveys implemented both locally and internationally. The survey questionnaire was then carefully translated to vernacular languages and piloted prior to final administration.

For the purpose of this study, youth were regarded as those between ages 18 to 29¹, while adults were regarded as those above the age of 30.

The survey questionnaire was administered among 2173 respondents across the island. The sample consisted of 1423 youth and 750 adults. A population proportionate sampling (PPS) method was used to select the sample respondents. The sample represented the four main ethnic communities (Sinhala, Sri Lankan Tamil, Malaiyaha Tamil, and Muslim) and consisted of both men and women.

Field work for the study was conducted during end- February to mid-April 2022. The data set was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

¹Age range defined by the National Youth Services Council of Sri Lanka

Opinion on Education and Employment

Respondents were asked their opinion on how useful they think their education is, in getting a job. A slight majority (52.4%) of youth and approximately one third of adults (32.0%) indicated that their education was very useful in getting a job. From those who indicated that it was somewhat useful, 36.1% of youth and 33.2% of adults hold this view. It is evident that a lesser percentage among the youth (6.1%) when compared to the adults (20.5%) indicate that their education was not useful in finding them employment. (Please refer Figure 1 below)

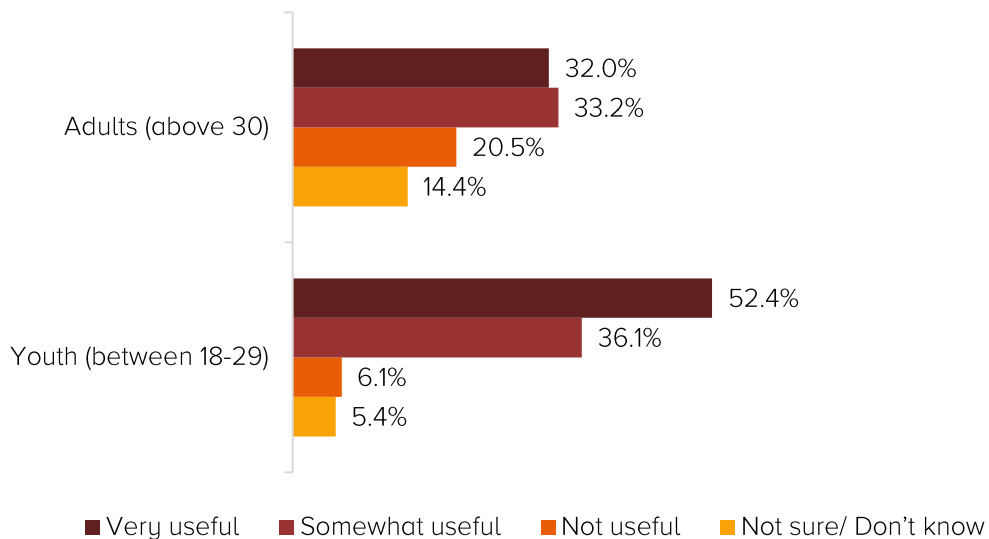


Figure 1: Do you feel the education/training you receive/d is useful in getting a job? by Age

The survey explored whether respondents considered going overseas to pursue their educational qualifications. It is evident that a majority among both youth (74.4%) and adults (92.7%) are of the opinion that they will not consider going overseas to pursue their educational qualifications. On the other hand, a mere 21.3% of youth and 4.7% of adults are of the view that they would consider going overseas to pursue their educational qualifications. (Please refer Figure 2 below)

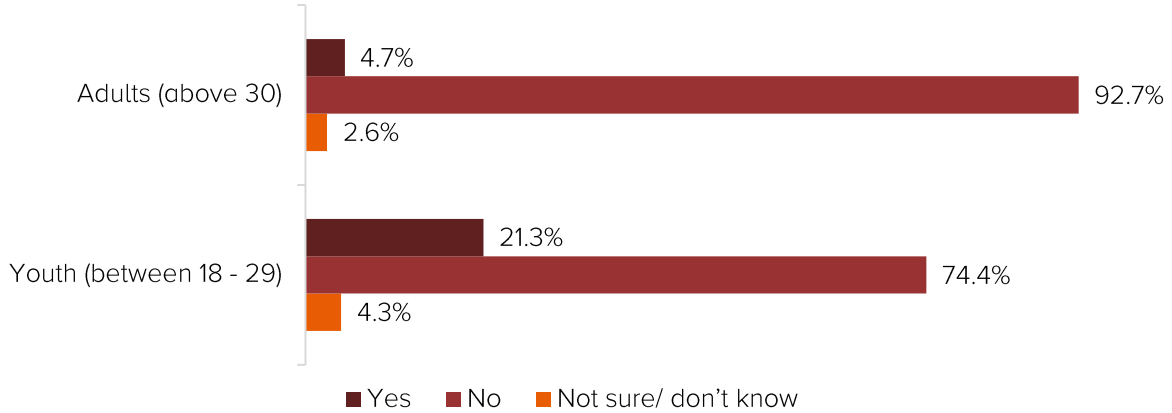


Figure 2: Have you considered going abroad for your education? by Age

Around 75% of both youth and adults are of the opinion that when securing a job, what matters more is merit, as opposed to contacts. In contrast, 22.2% of youth and 20.6% of adults are of the view that contacts matter more when getting a job. (Please refer Figure 3 below)

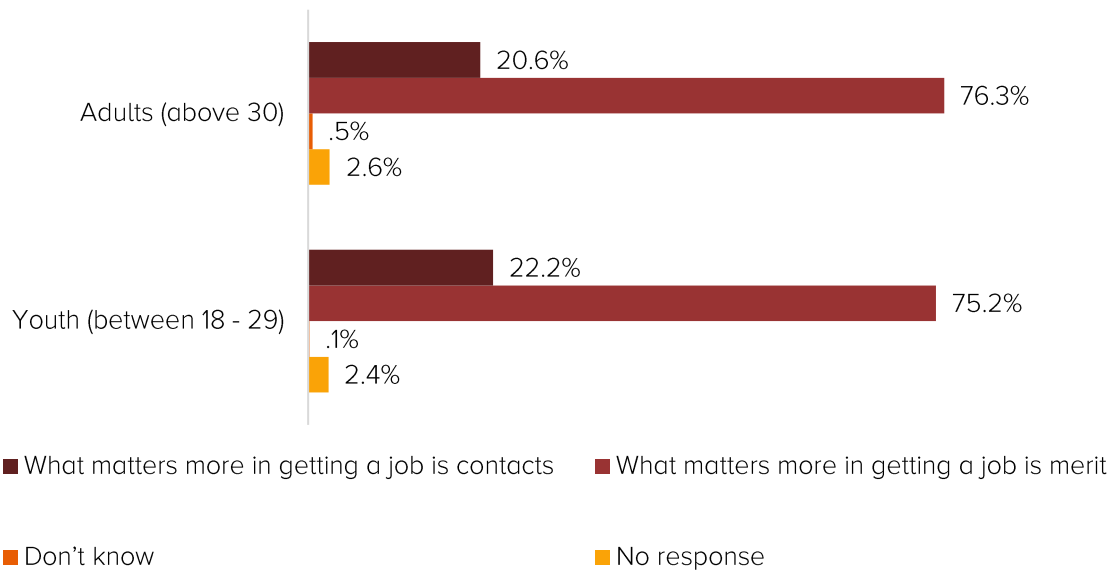


Figure 3: Which is more important in securing a job – Merit or Contacts? by Age

When asked about their preferred sector of employment, 68.7% of youth showed preference towards being employed in the private sector in comparison to the adults (50.0%) who held this same view. It is notable to point out that preference to work in the government sector was markedly low – 22.5% of youth and 36.5% of adults prefer to be employed in the government sector. Preference for piecemeal work² was low among both youth and adults. (Please refer Figure 4 below)

In the survey, respondents were asked to rank the top three factors that they would

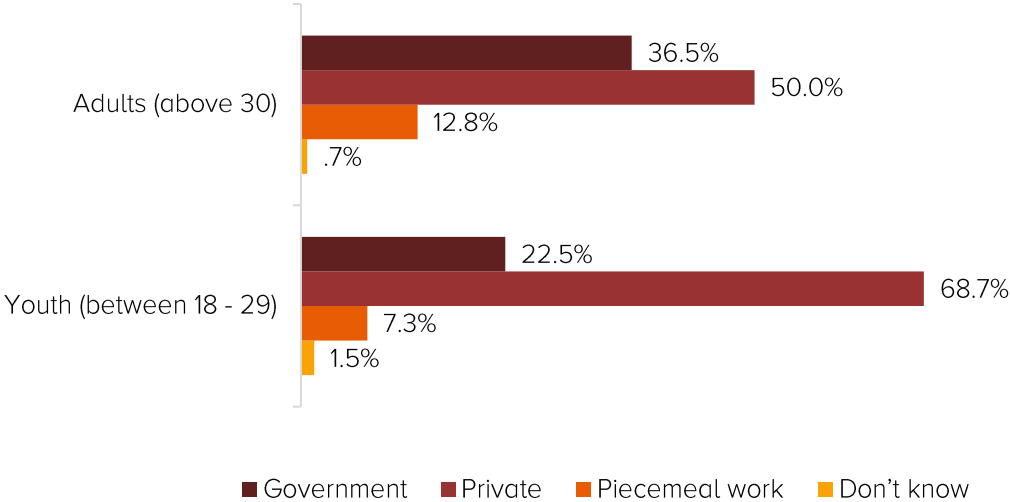


Figure 4: What is your preferred sector for employment? by Age

consider when choosing a job. Remuneration was the top consideration for both youth and adults, although the percentage of youth selecting it as their top priority was less than that of adult percentage. More youth (23.1%) indicated ‘personal interest/ passion’ as their top consideration than when compared to adults (15.6%). Additionally, it is evident that when compared to adults, youth reported a higher level of interest in procuring an employment that is recognized and one which has opportunities for professional advancement. In terms of the second and third preferences, youth seemed to be more motivated by professional

² In the context of this report, ‘piecemeal work’ denotes freelancing, i.e. work performed as it becomes available (but not subject to seasonal contingencies).

benefits than those that tie up with one’s personal life (such as stability and convenience).
 (Please refer Table 1 below)

	Youth (between 18 -29)			Adults (above 30)		
	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Salary	49.0%	23.6%	16.5%	62.2%	18.3%	8.5%
Stability	8.1%	21.1%	16.8%	8.3%	26.9%	19.6%
Recognition	7.2%	17.5%	19.2%	3.9%	16.6%	26.4%
Personal interest/ passion	23.1%	17.5%	15.3%	15.6%	15.9%	15.3%
Convenience (travel distance/ daily commute/ work hours/ shift)	7.4%	11.8%	14.5%	7.6%	17.3%	17.9%
Opportunities for professional advancement	5.3%	8.5%	17.3%	2.4%	4.8%	12.0%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%

Table 1: Top three reasons for choosing a job, by Age

When asked about migrating overseas for employment, 52.8% of youth and 81.9% of adults are of the view that they have not considered migrating overseas for employment. (Please refer Figure 5 below)

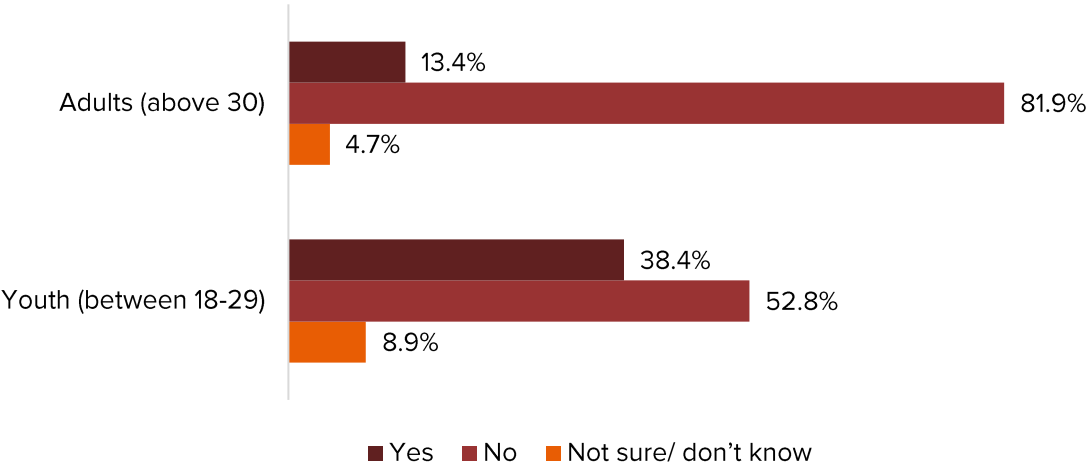


Figure 5: Have you considered migrating abroad for employment? by Age

Opinion on Contemporary Issues and the Economy

When asked about the government’s decision to shift to organic fertilizer, more than 70% of both youth and adults reported that ‘the government’s decision to shift to organic farming was not the right thing to do’. Interestingly, 75.1% of adults are of the view that the government’s decision to shift to organic farming was not the right thing to do, a slightly lower percentage (72.7%) of youth shared this same opinion. In contrast, 27.3% of youth and 24.9% of adults are of the view that despite certain difficulties, the government’s decision to shift to organic farming was the right thing to do. (Please refer Figure 6 below)

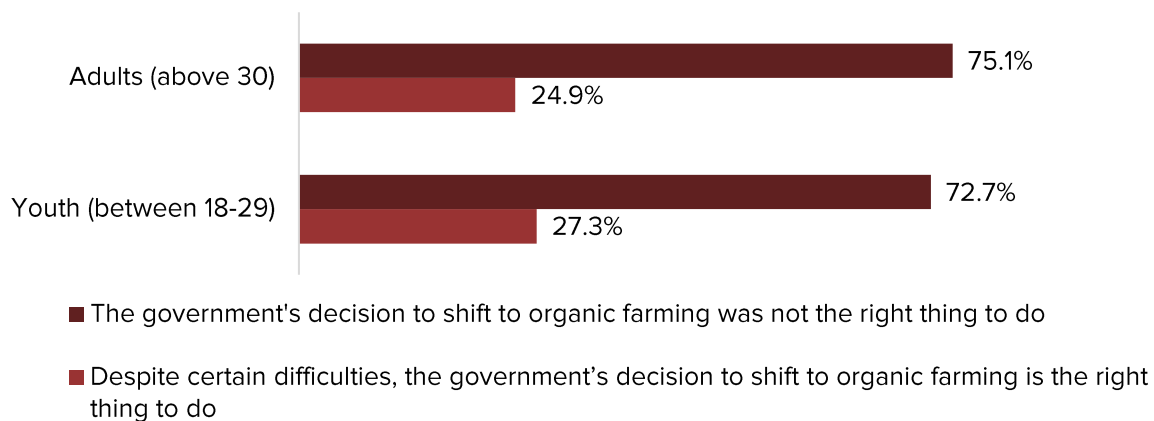


Figure 6: Opinion on government decision to switch to organic farming, by Age

Regarding the sale of national properties to foreign countries, an overwhelming percentage (more than 90%) of both youth and adults reported that ‘Although the country is in a dire situation, selling national properties to foreign countries is unacceptable’ From those who indicated that ‘The country is in a dire situation, where the economic crisis will not be solved without selling national properties to foreign countries’, a mere 6.2% of youth and 6.8% of adults hold this view. (Please refer Figure 7 below)

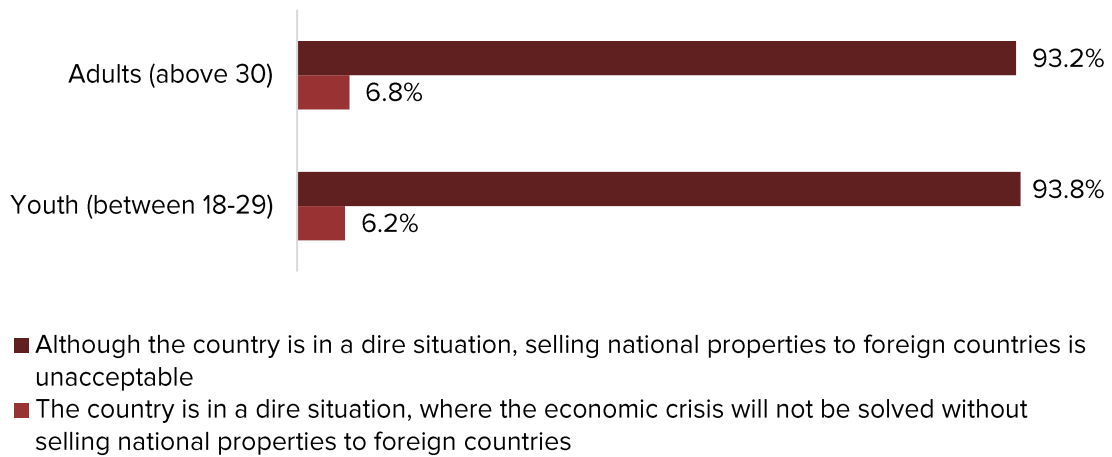


Figure 7: Opinion on selling national properties to foreign countries, by Age

The survey assessed perceptions on postwar development projects to which nearly 70% of both youth and adults indicated that ‘Most development projects that happened in Sri Lanka after the war will bring benefits in the future’. In contrast, close to 31% of both youth and adults are of the opinion that ‘Most developmental projects that happened in Sri Lanka after the war are detrimental to the country’. (Please refer Figure 8 below)

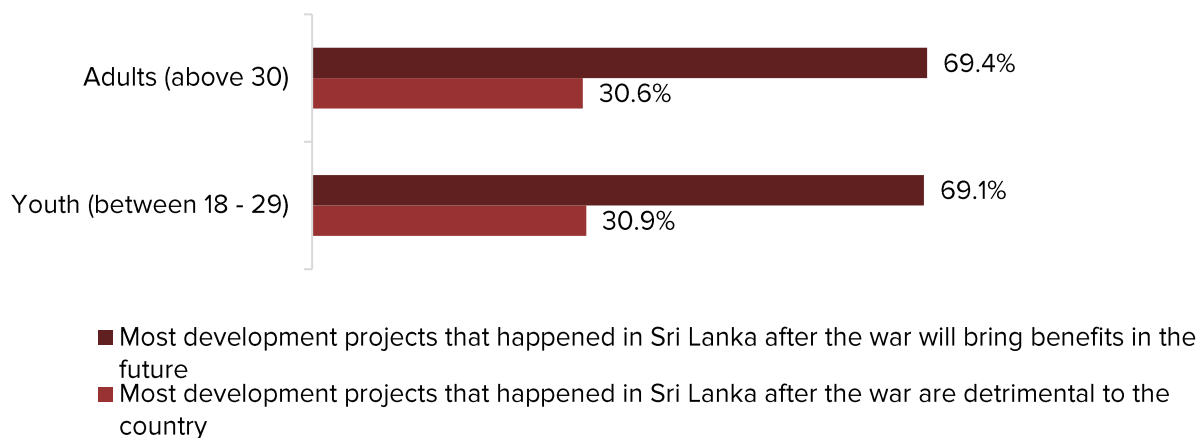


Figure 8: Opinion on post-war development projects and their benefits, by Age

When analyzing perceptions on public welfare provision in Sri Lanka, 73.7% of youth claimed that ‘Sri Lanka's efforts to improve public welfare are not sufficient’. This percentage is slightly higher when compared with adults (70.4%). In contrast, 26.3% of youth indicate that ‘Sri Lanka is making every effort to improve public welfare, this percentage is slightly lower when compared to the adults (29.6%) who hold the same view. (Please refer Figure 9 below)

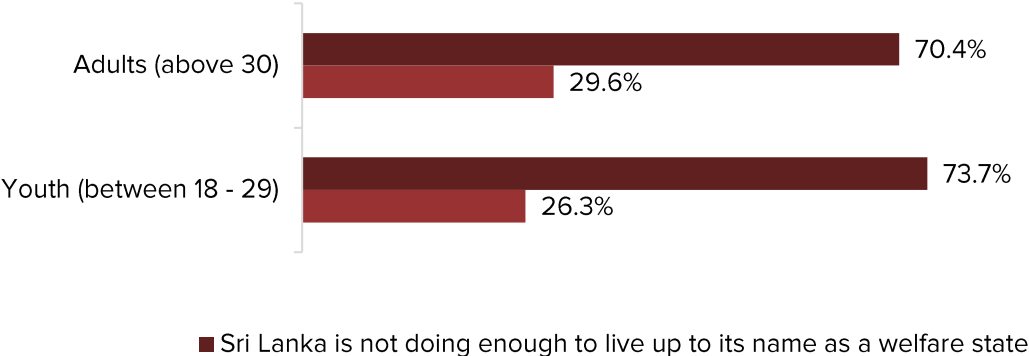


Figure 9: Opinion regarding Sri Lanka as a welfare state, by Age

With regard to their opinion on recruitments to civil service, whilst 57.9% of youth indicated that ‘The government should not cut back on civil service recruitments, considering the situation of those expecting such jobs’ - approximately 53% of adults were also of the same view. In contrast, 42.1% of youth are of the view that ‘Civil service recruitments should be minimized in light of the current economic crisis’ - this is slightly lower than when compared to the adults (47.4%) that held the same view. (Please refer Figure 10 below)

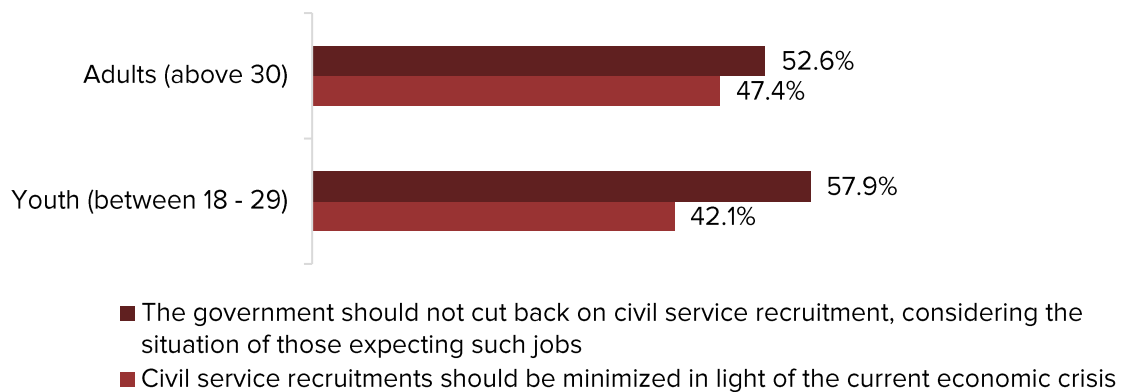


Figure 10: Opinion on civil service recruitments, by Age

When asked about the reason for the current economic crisis, 76.6% of youth claimed that ‘The current economic situation is largely due to the corruption of leaders’ while a slightly lower percentage of adults (71.9%) held the same view. In contrast, whilst 23.4% of youth claimed that ‘The current economic situation is largely due to the COVID19 pandemic’ – a slightly lower percentage of adults (28.1%) held the same view. (Please refer Figure 11 below).

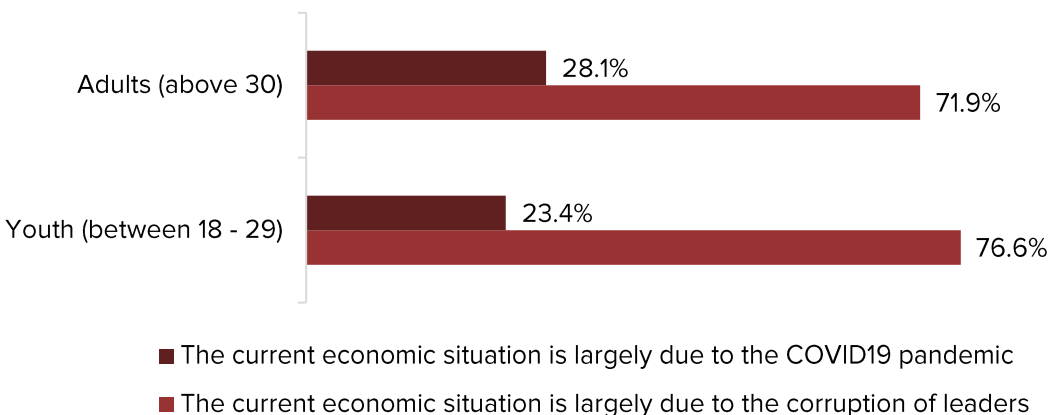


Figure 11: Opinion on the reason for the current economic situation, by Age

Opinion on Ethnic Relations

On ethnic relations, an overwhelming majority 92.9% of youth agreed (59.9% Strongly Agree and 33.0% Agree) that they do not have a problem with their neighbour being someone from another ethnic group. This pattern recurs for the opinion of adults as well. (Please refer Figure 12 below)

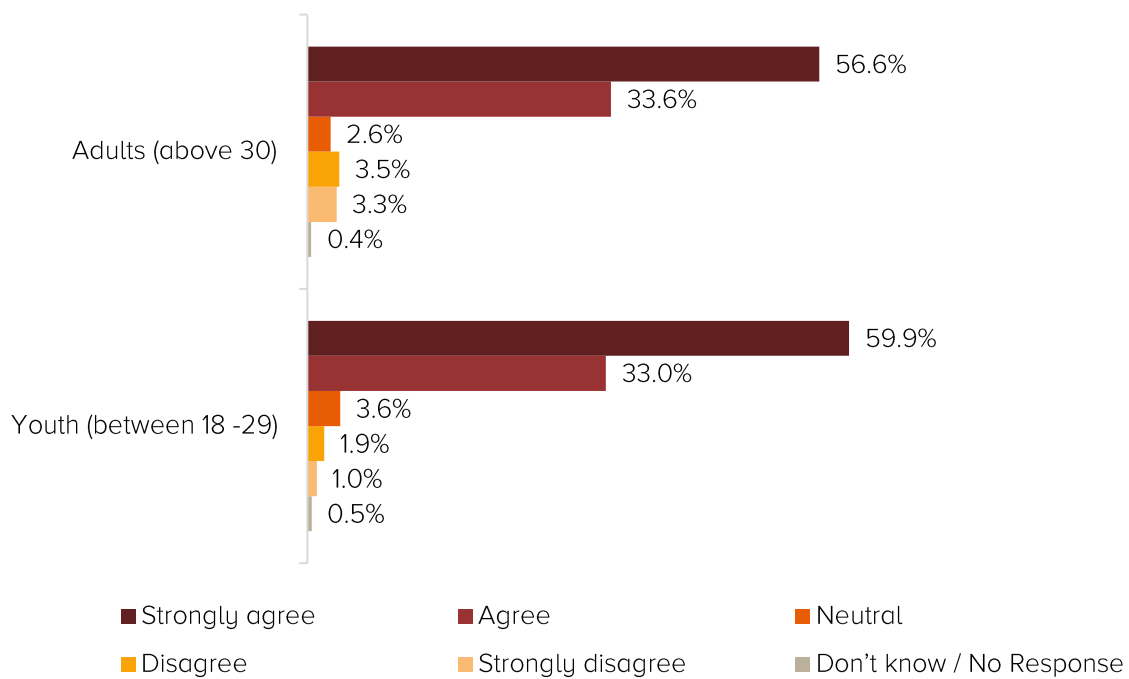


Figure 12: Opinion on 'My neighbour being from another ethnic group is not a problem for me', by Age

Perception towards doing business with someone from a different ethnic group appears to be similar between both the youth and adults. Whilst 88.4% of youth agreed (52.9% Strongly Agree and 35.5% Agree) that it is not a problem for them to do business with someone from another ethnic group - 84.2% (50.1% Strongly Agree and 34.1% Agree) of adults held the same view. (Please refer Figure 13 below)

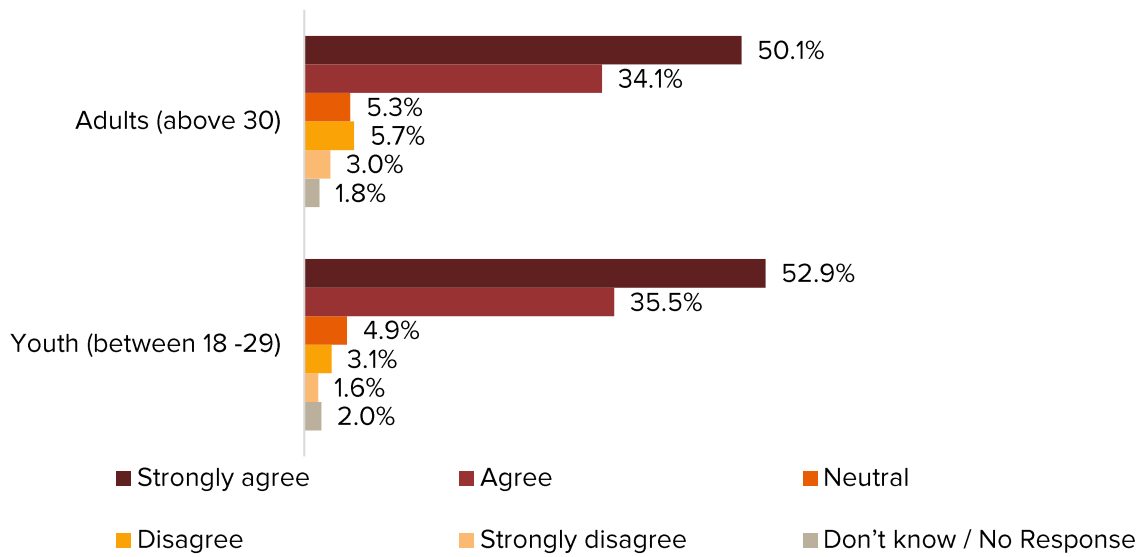


Figure 13: Opinion on 'It is not a problem for me to do business with someone from another ethnic group', by Age

When the respondents were asked their perception on a family member marrying someone from a different ethnic group, 57.4% of youth and around 43% of adults indicated that they had no issues with it, . However, from those who claim that it is an issue, 28.2% from the youth and 44.4% from the adults hold this view. (Please refer Figure 14 below)

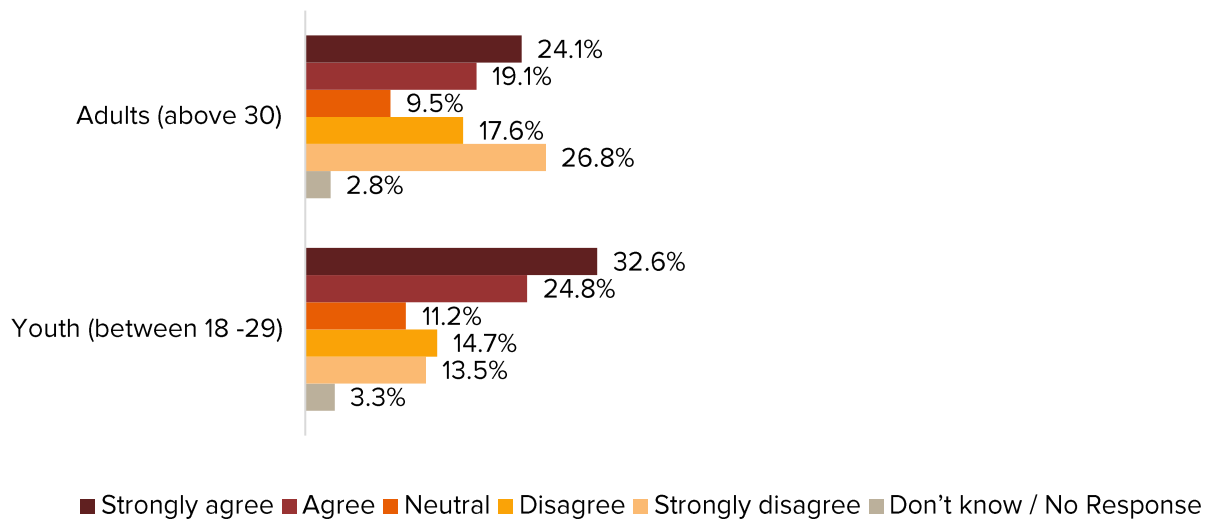


Figure 14: Opinion on 'A family member marrying someone from a different ethnic group is not an issue for me', by Age

On having friends from other ethnic groups, 73.8% of youth and 66.5% of adults claim that they have a lot of friends from other ethnic groups. (Please refer Figure 15 below)

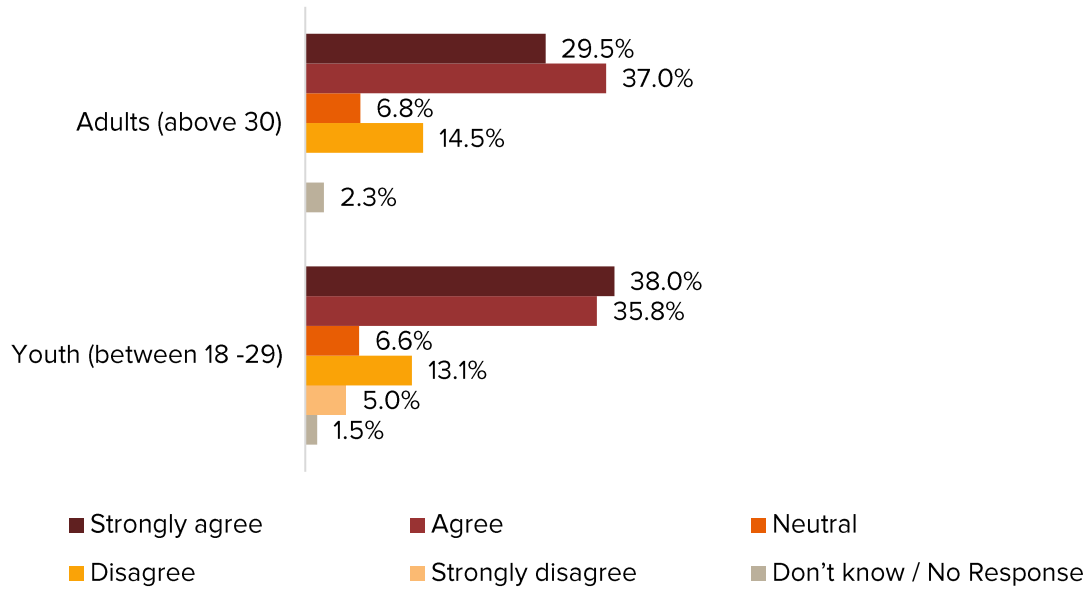


Figure 15: Opinion on 'I have a lot of friends from other ethnic groups', by Age

When asked if 'All ethnic groups should be given the opportunity to remember those who died because of the war' - 76.8% of youth and 71.8% of adults agreed with this statement. (Please refer Figure 16 below)

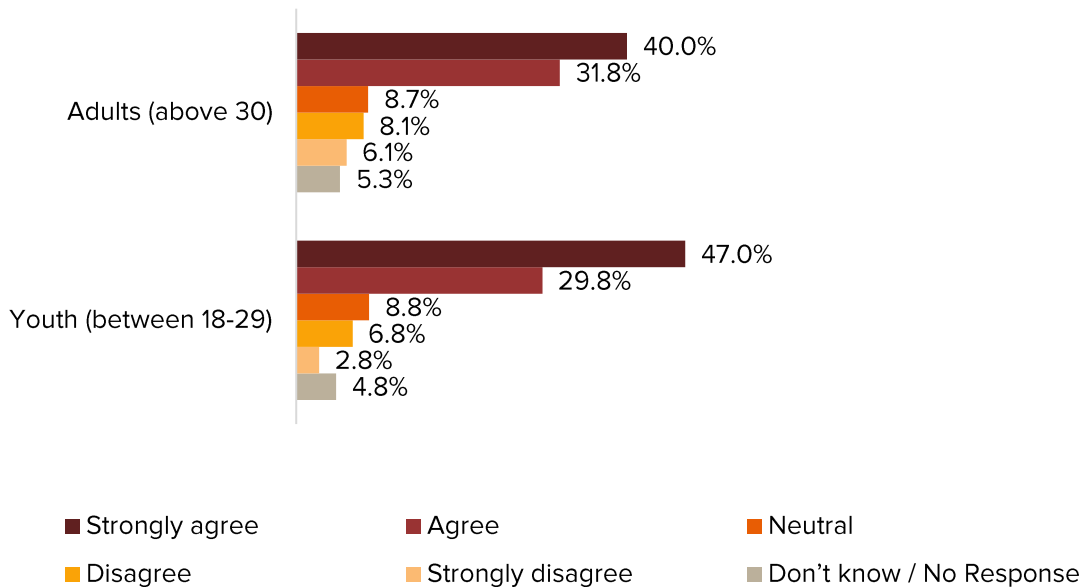


Figure 16: Opinion on 'All ethnic groups should be given the opportunity to remember those who died

When asked if 'The government should protect the personal property (land) rights of all ethnic groups' -82.4% of youth and 80.6% of adults agreed with this statement. (Please refer Figure 17 below)

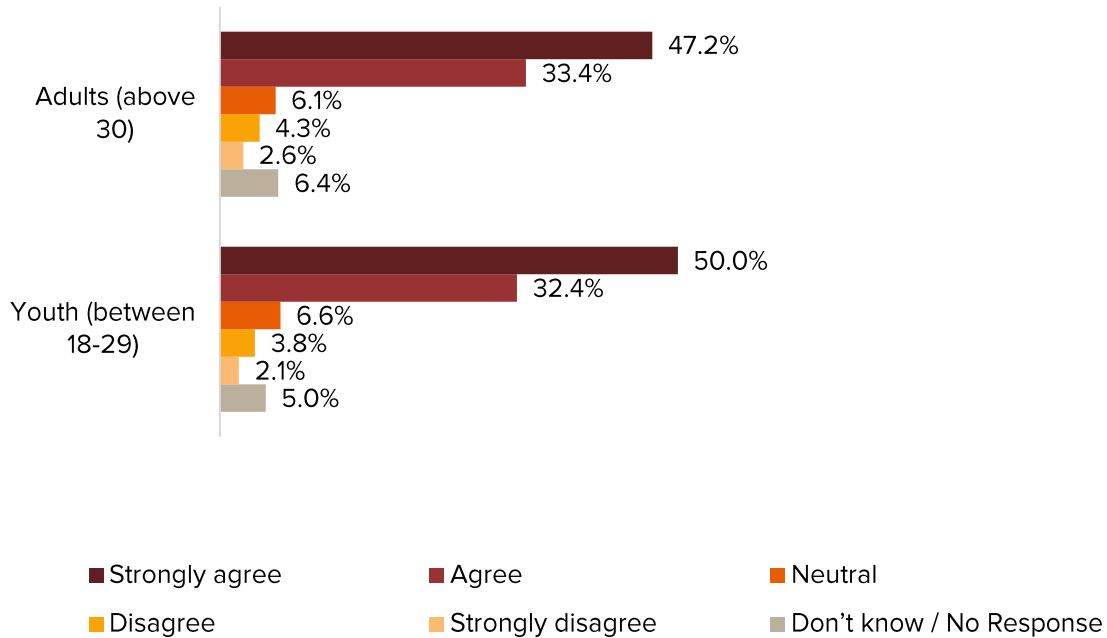


Figure 17: Opinion on 'The government should protect the personal property (land) rights of all ethnic groups', by Age

On land issues, the respondents were asked to indicate their views on the Army taking over some lands in the North and East for security purposes- around 37.2% of youth (12.6% Strongly Agree and 24.6% Agree) and nearly 40% of adults (14.4% Strongly Agree and 24.3% Agree) are of the opinion that the Army taking over some lands for security purposes can be justified. (Please refer Figure 18 below)

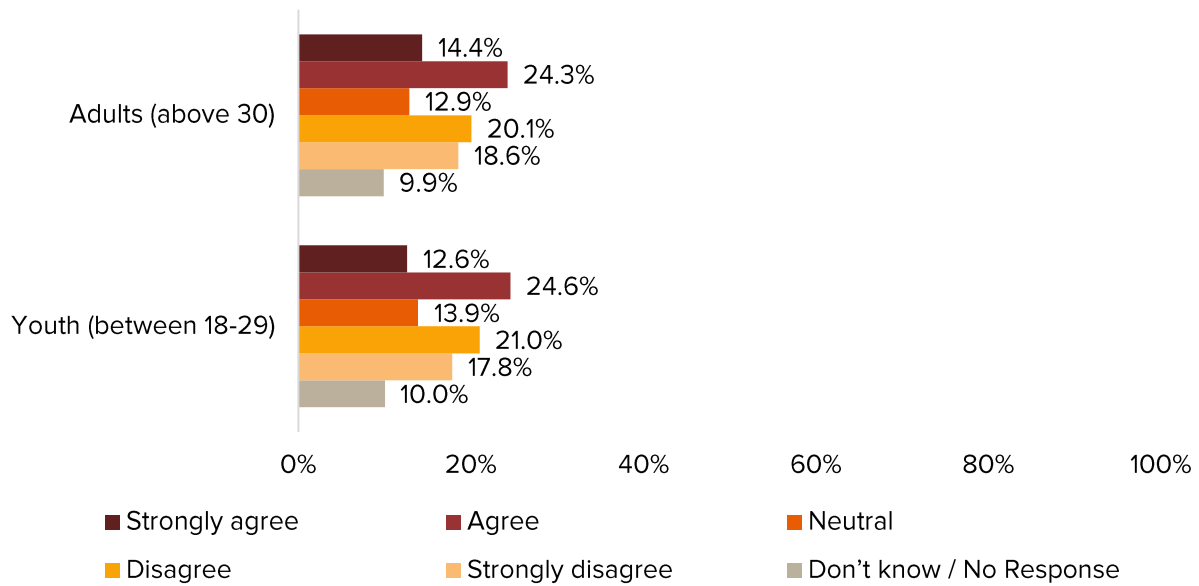


Figure 18: Opinion on 'The army taking over some lands in the North and East for security purposes can be justified', by Age

When asked if investigating into missing persons cases will land the government in trouble internationally, nearly half of the youth (49.0%) and adults (51.4%) agreed to this statement. (Please refer Figure 19 below)

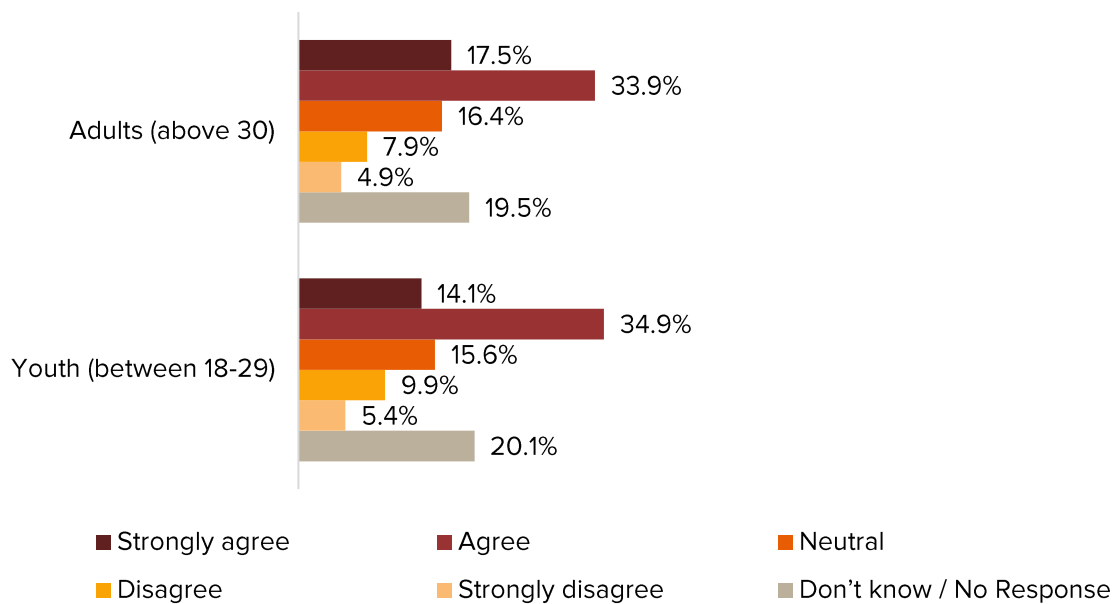


Figure 19: Opinion on 'Investigating into missing persons cases will land the government in trouble internationally', by Age

Associational Life

The survey assessed the extent to which respondent's engaged in various activities in their day to day lives.

As per Figure 20 below,

- More youth (53.8%) claim to go on trips [with 14.6% reporting very frequently and 39.2% reporting now and then] than when compared to their adult 29.4% counterparts [with 5.6% reporting very frequently and 23.8% reporting now and then].
- More youth (65.8%) claim to meet with friends [with 31.0% reporting very frequently and 34.8% reporting now and then] than when compared to their adult (52.1%) counter parts [with 18.7% reporting very frequently and 33.4% reporting now and then].
- Less youth (65.8%) claim to go to weddings or other invited functions [with 31.0% reporting very frequently and 34.8% reporting now and then] than when compared to their adult (76.9%) counter parts [with 37.7% reporting very frequently and 39.2% reporting now and then].
- A slightly lesser percentage of youth (78.5%) claim to go to funerals [with 40.8% reporting very frequently and 37.7% reporting now and then] than when compared to their adult (81.9%) counterparts [with 52.1% reporting very frequently and 29.8% reporting now and then].
- A slightly lesser percentage of youth (72.5%) claim to partake in religious activities [with 37.9% reporting very frequently and 34.6% reporting now and then] than when compared to their adult (75.8%) counter parts [with 44.5% reporting very frequently and 31.3% reporting now and then].

- More youth (39.3%) claim to participate in group sports [19.0% reporting very frequently and 20.3% reporting now and then] than when compared to their adult (11.9%) counterparts [with 4.4% reporting very frequently and 7.5% reporting now and then].
- More youth (24.1%) claim that they participate in online video/sports [10.4% reporting very frequently and 13.7% reporting now and then] than when compared to their adult (3.0%) counterparts [1.1% reporting very frequently and 1.9% reporting now and then].

Overall, the youth who participated in the survey seemed to be more engaged in activities such as going on trips with friends, meeting friends, group sports and online video/sports more than their adult counterparts. In contrast, youth seemed less engaged in activities like going to weddings and other functions as opposed to their adult counterparts.

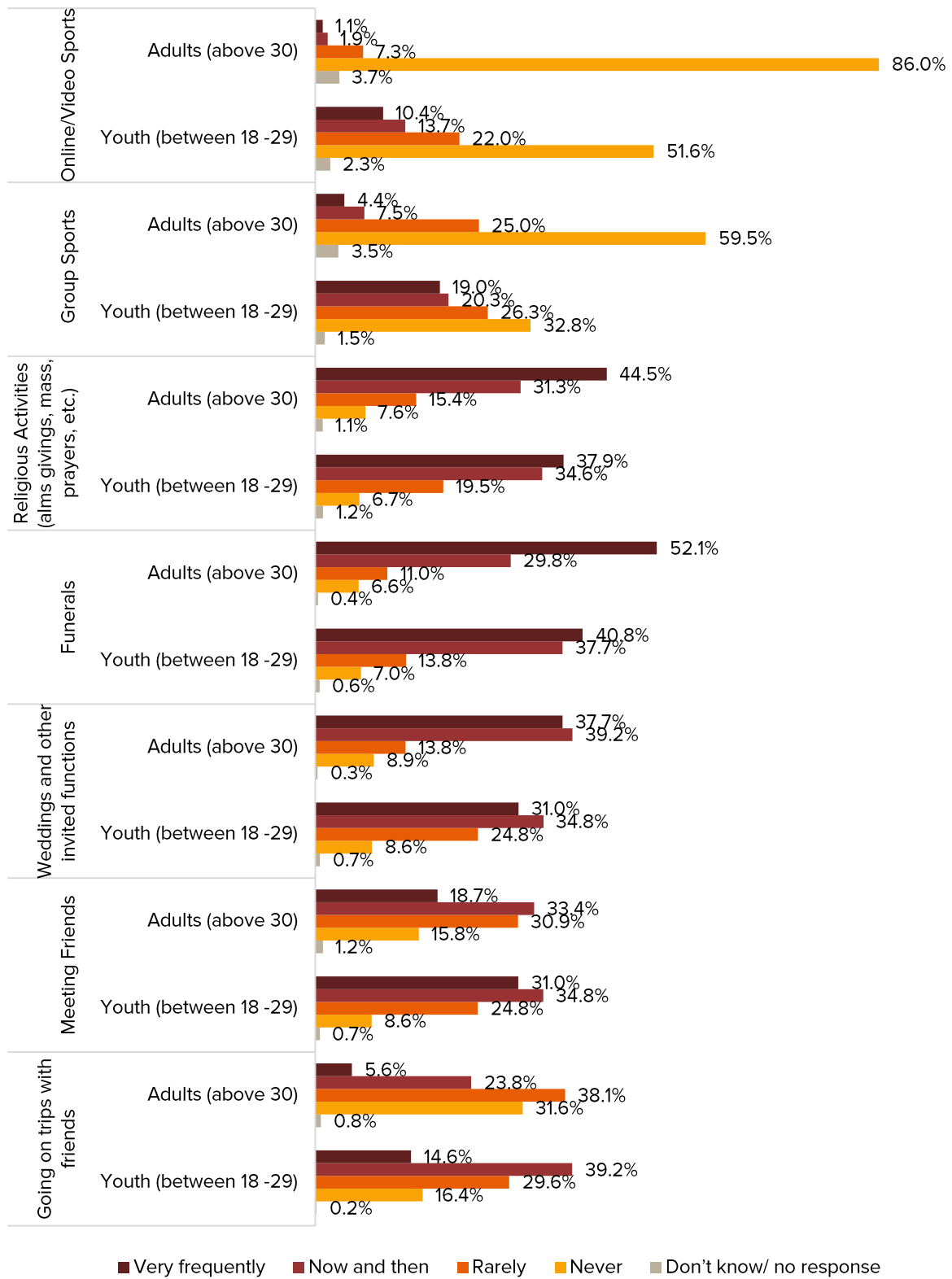


Figure 20: Engagement in regular activities in day-to-day life, by Age

As per Figure 21 below,

- Less youth claim that they have been part of a religious organization (13.3% at present and 7.5% in the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (34.4% present and 11.4% in the past).
- More youth claim that they have been part of a sports or recreation group (19.8% present and 21.1% the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (5.1% present and 18.2% in the past).
- Lesser youth claim that they have been part of a funeral society (11.9% present and 2.0% in the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (45.9% present and 7.1% in the past).
- Lesser youth claim that they have been part of a community organization setup by the local government institution (5.5% present and 2.3% in the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (16.2% present and 7.6% in the past).
- Lesser youth claim that they have been part of a credit or microfinance group (3.1% present and 1.7% in the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (9.5% present and 6.4% in the past).
- Lesser youth claim that they have been part of a labour union, welfare society at the workplace (5.5% present and 1.8% in the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (8.4% present and 6.3% in the past).
- There was no noticeable age-wise difference between youth that claim to have been a part of Peace organization, Humanitarian aid/Human Rights organization (1.2% present and 1.1% in the past) and adults (0.6% present and 2.0% in the past).
- Lesser youth claim that they have been part of a branch/ sub-organization of a political party (2.0% present and 1.7% in the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (5.0% present and 6.2% in the past).

- Lesser youth claim that they have been a part of an agricultural / livestock/ fisheries producer's group (2.2% present and 0.8% in the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (11.6% present and 3.5% in the past).
- Lesser youth claim that they have been part of a trade and business association (1.1% present and 0.6% in the past) than when compared to their adult counterparts (2.6% present and 1.6% in the past).

In terms of associational life, youth seemed less involved in traditional community-based organizations such as funeral societies, livelihood-based organizations such agricultural / livestock/ fisheries producer's groups, labour unions, and even branches or sub organizations of political parties when compared to the adults. Their participation was higher than adults only in sports organizations, which are necessarily age dependent.

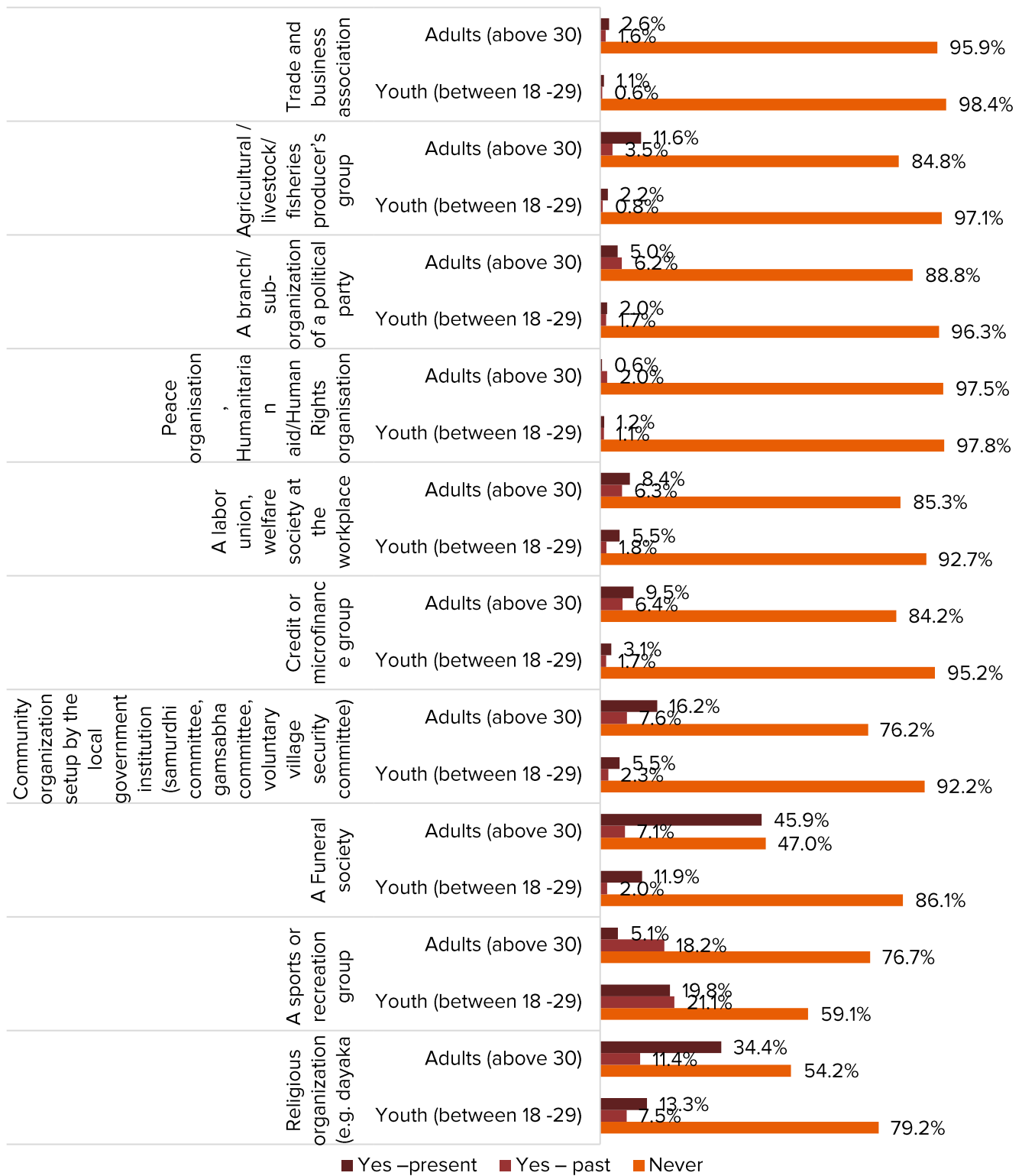


Figure 21: Membership in community organizations and societies, by Age

In terms of the nature of their participation in associational life, there was a clear difference between adults and youth in relation to certain activities. Notably, youth participation was lower when it came to attending meetings (31.9% always and 25.3% often) and participating in decision making activities (16.8% always and 21.3% often) – in contrast more adults claim to attend meetings (42.2% always and 25.6% often) and participate in decision making activities (25.6% always and 18.7% often) and participate in decision making activities (25.6% always and 18.7% often). (Please refer Figure 22 below)

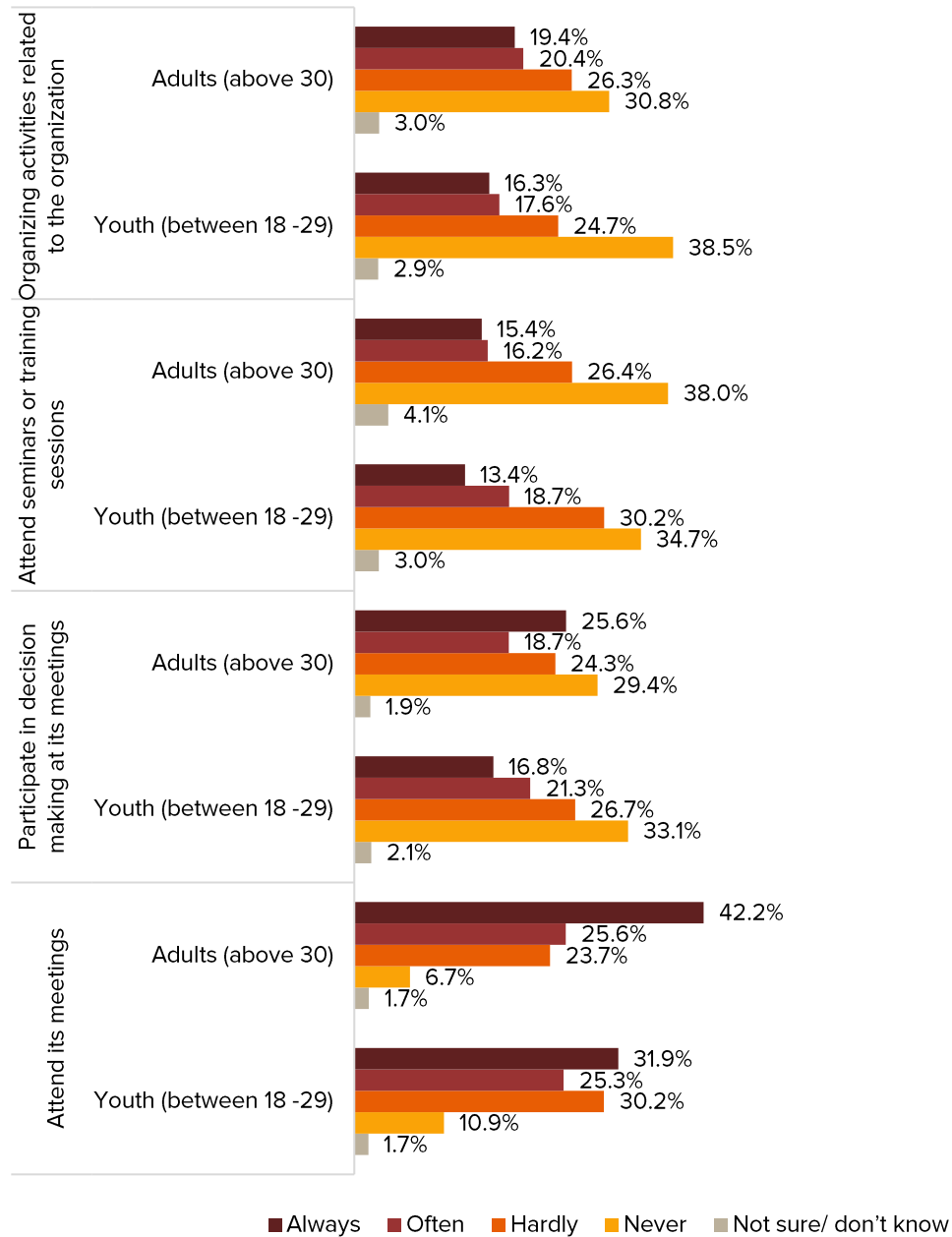


Figure 22: Nature of participation in community organizations and societies, by Age

A lesser percentage of youth claim to have been involved in all activities listed below, than when compared to their adult counterparts. Interestingly, 80% of youth claim to be involved in activities such as *shramadana* and helping at weddings, funerals, etc. Close to half of the youth reported to have taken part in disaster relief efforts and blood donations. (Please refer Figure 23 below)

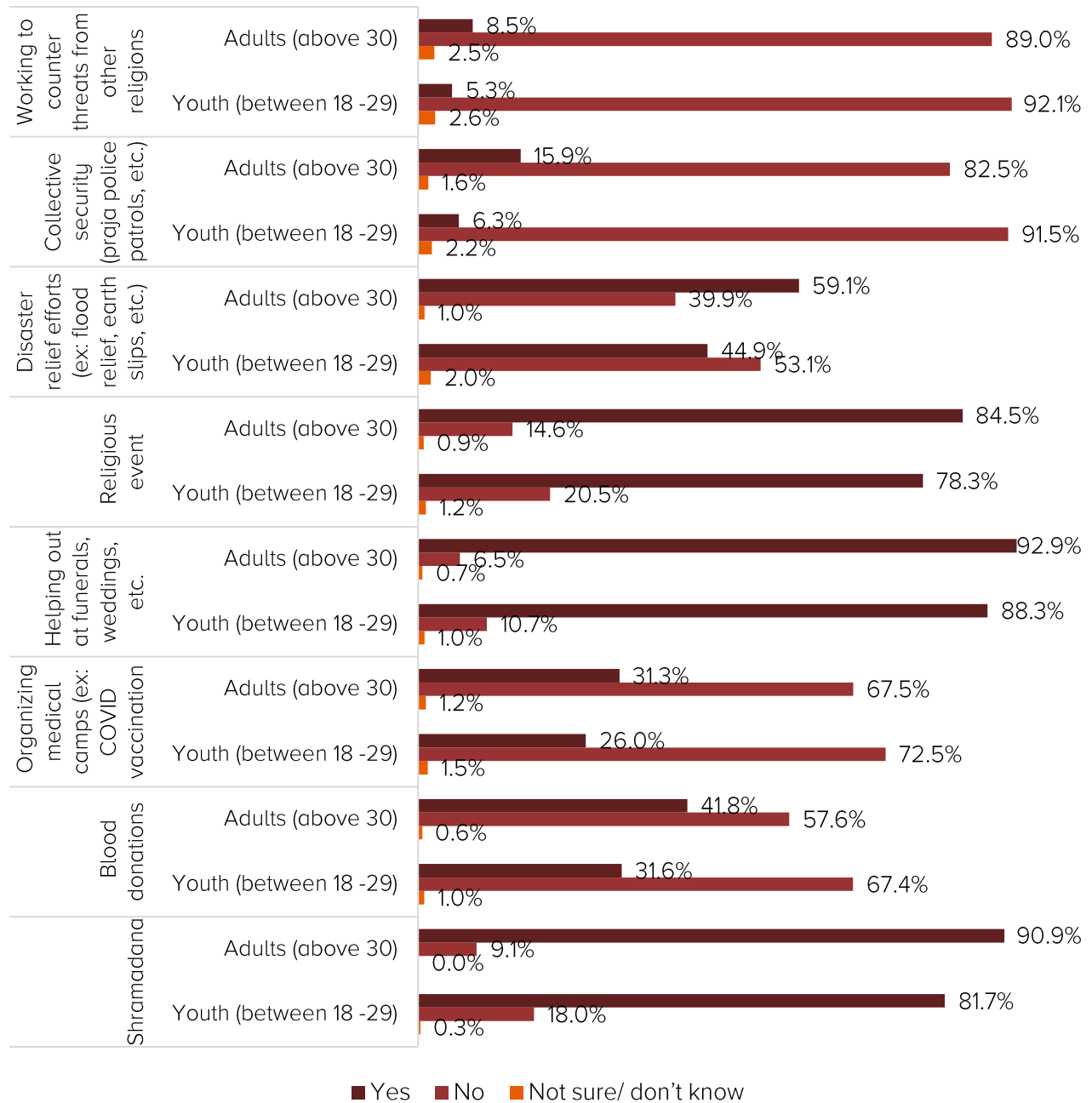


Figure 23: Involvement in collective activities in the neighbourhood, by Age

Politics and politicization

Trust in Institutions

As per Figure 24 below,

- 41.4% of youth indicate that they trust (7.5% Trust fully and 33.9% Trust somewhat) the Office of the President whilst a slightly lower percentage of adults hold this same view - 40.5% (13.0% Trust fully and 27.5% Trust somewhat).
- 33.3% of youth claim to have trust (4.0% Trust fully and 29.3% Trust somewhat) in the Prime minister and cabinet when compared to adults who held the same view - 34.5% (7.2% Trust fully and 27.3% Trust somewhat).
- 28.1% of youth claim to have trust (3.1% Trust fully and 25.0% Trust somewhat) in the Opposition when compared to adults who held this same view - 29.1% (5.3% Trust fully and 23.8% Trust somewhat).
- 69.7% of youth claim to have trust (23.5% Trust fully and 46.2% Trust somewhat) in the Courts when compared to adults who held this same view - 64.6% (26.8% Trust fully and 37.8% Trust somewhat).
- 23.1% of youth claim to have trust (1.4% Trust fully and 21.7% Trust somewhat) in Political Parties (no specific party) when compared to adults who held this same view - 26.3% (3.7% Trust fully and 22.6% Trust somewhat).
- 69.3% of youth claim to have trust (17.1% Trust fully and 52.2% Trust somewhat) in Civil Service when compared to adults who held this same view - 65.6% (16.8% Trust fully and 48.8% Trust somewhat).

- 85.8% of youth claim to have trust (51.9% Trust fully and 33.9% Trust somewhat) in the Military when compared to adults who held this same view - 83.4% (51.8% Trust fully and 31.6% Trust somewhat).
- 67.1% of youth claim to have trust (19.2% Trust fully and 47.9% Trust somewhat) in the Police when compared to adults who held this same view - 64.4% (20.8% Trust fully and 43.6% Trust somewhat).
- 47.8% of youth claim to have trust (6.6% Trust fully and 41.2% Trust somewhat) in the Local Government when compared to adults who held this same view - 48.5% (10.2% Trust fully and 38.3% Trust somewhat).
- 42.4% of youth claim to have trust (5.1% Trust fully and 37.3% Trust somewhat) in the Provincial Council when compared to adults who held this same view - 42.5% (6.8% Trust fully and 35.7% Trust somewhat).
- 45.9% of youth claim to have trust (6.6% Trust fully and 39.3% Trust somewhat) in non-governmental organizations when compared to adults - 38.9% (7.1% Trust fully and 31.8% Trust somewhat).
- 56.9% of youth claim to have trust (11.2% Trust fully and 45.7% Trust somewhat) in the Media when compared to adults who held this same view - 60.6% (13.7% Trust fully and 46.9% Trust somewhat).

According to Figure 24 below, the Military, Courts, Civil Service, and the Police are among the most trusted branches of government among both the youth and adult population. However, a higher percentage of youth indicate that they have trust in institutions such as Non-Governmental Organizations, the Media, Civil Service, Courts than when compared to their adult counterparts.

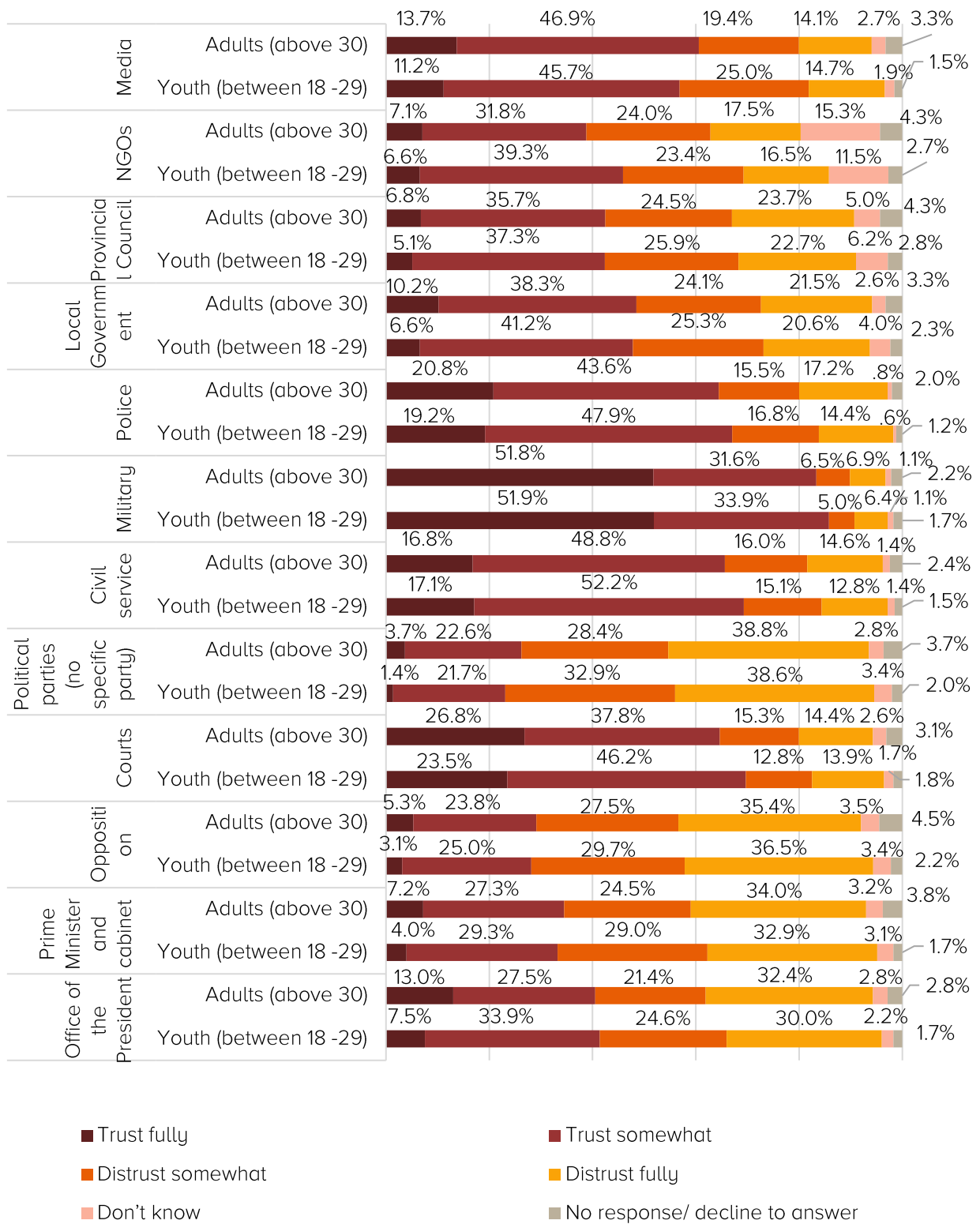


Figure 24: Trust in institutions, by Age

Opinion on various forms of governance

Respondents were also asked to indicate either their agreement or disagreement with a set of questions designed to capture their reactions on various forms of government.

The respondents were asked ‘*Whatever their drawbacks, democratically elected leaders are always preferable to others*’; To this, 63.2% of youth (26.2% strongly agree and 37.0% agree) and 62.6% of adults agreed to the same (24.2% strongly agree and 38.4% agree). (Please refer Figure 25 below)

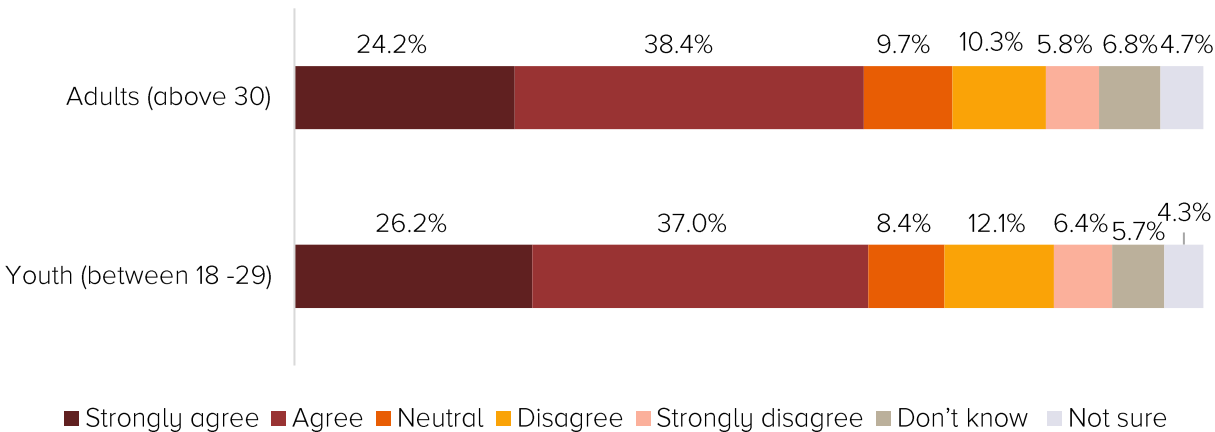


Figure 25: *Whatever their drawbacks, democratically elected leaders are always preferable to others, by Age*

Respondents were asked to indicate either their agreement or disagreement with the statement, ‘*I think the army (Sri Lanka) can run the country better than career politicians*’. To this, 40.0% of youth (15.0% strongly agree and 25.0% agree) and 38.8% of the adults (15.4% strongly agree and 23.4% agree) agreed to the same. (Please refer Figure 26 below)

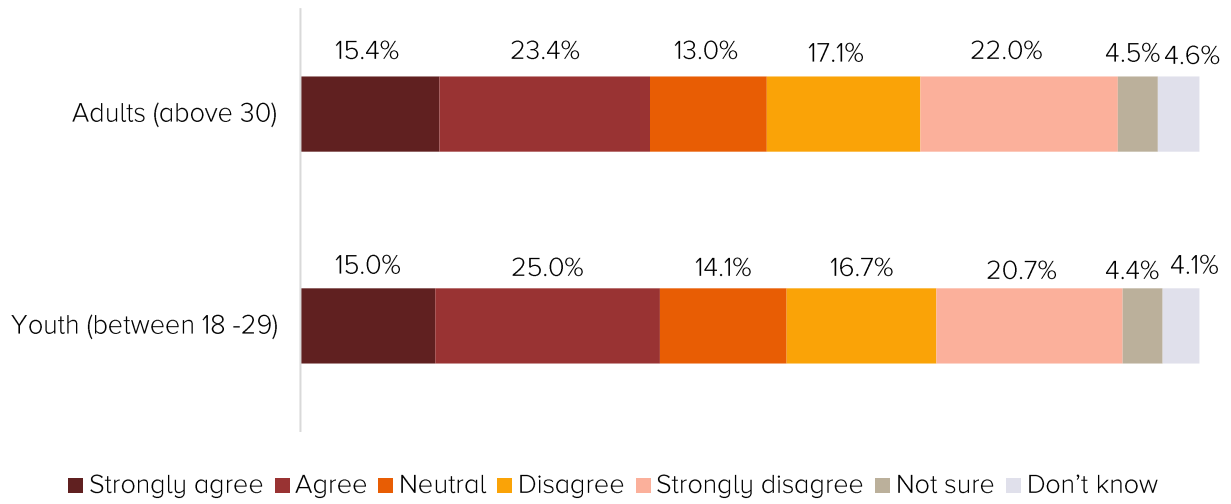


Figure 26: I think the army (Sri Lanka) can run the country better than career politicians, by Age

Nearly 30% of youth (7.4% strongly agree and 21.2% agree) and 30.3% of adults (9.2% strongly agree and 21.1% agree) are of the view that it is acceptable to have a leader who doesn't bother with democracy too much, so long as they develop the country. (Please refer Figure 27 below)

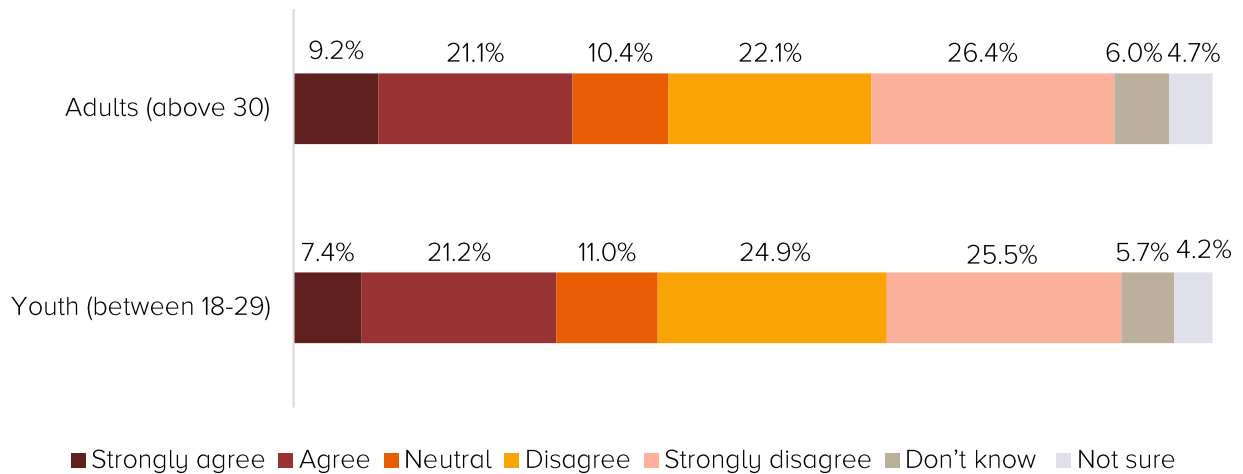


Figure 27: Preference for developmentalist leaders who don't bother with democracy too much, age disaggregation

Opinion on protests

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferences on people protesting, around 44% of youth (10.5% strongly agree and 33.7% agree) and 45.8% of adults (12.5% strongly agree and 33.3% agree) indicate that they do not like when people protest. (Please refer Figure 28 below)

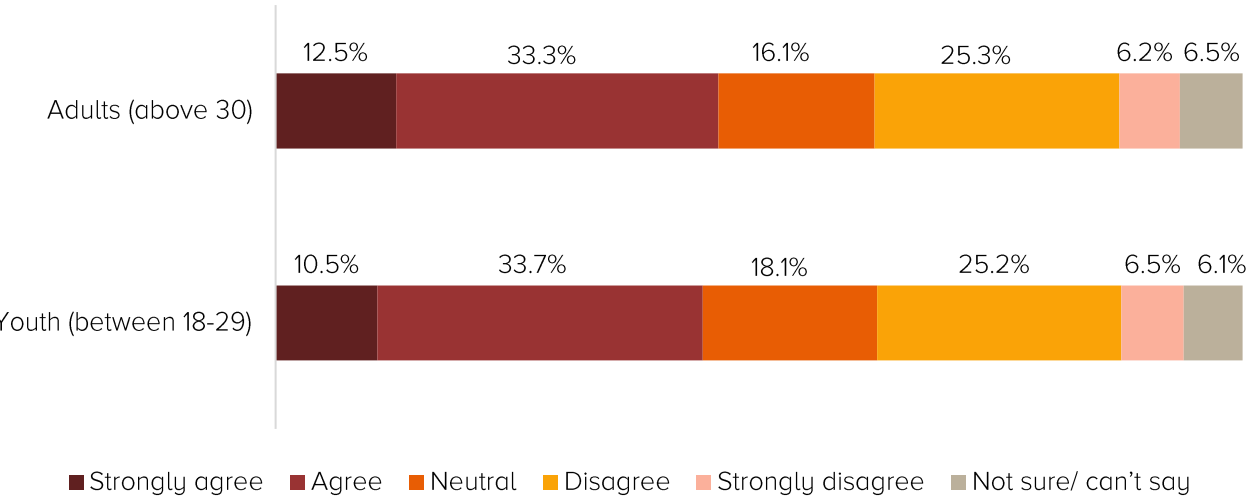


Figure 28: I don't like it when people protest, by Age

When asked if they don't mind protests so long as it does not disturb everyday life - 79.8% of youth (32.8% strongly agree and 47.0% agree) and 77.9% of adults agree with this view. (31.3% strongly agree and 46.6% agree). (Please refer Figure 29 below)

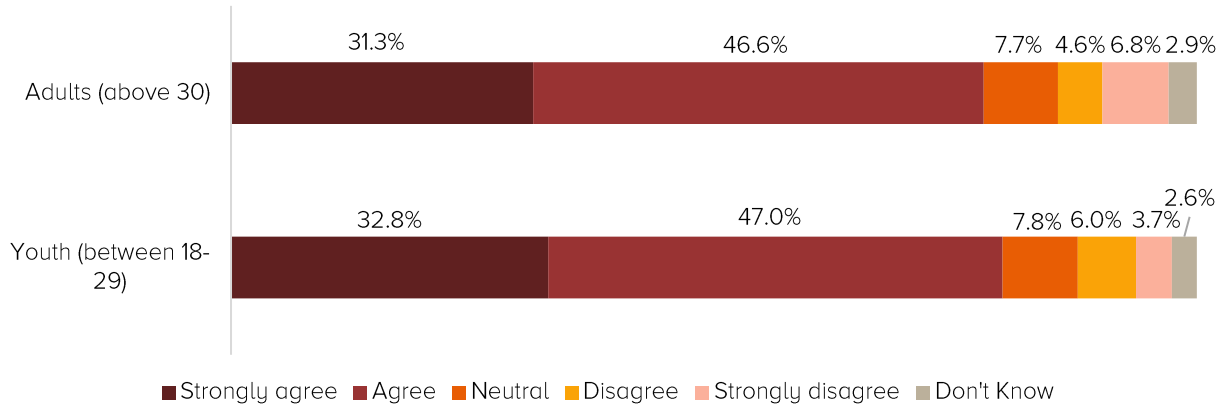


Figure 29: I don't mind protests as long as they don't disturb everyday life, by Age

On protests, 67.7% of youth (24.2% strongly agree and 43.5% agree) and 67.8% of adults agree (24.6% strongly agree and 43.2% agree) that they understand why people take part in violent protests against unjust policies of the government. (Please refer Figure 30 below)

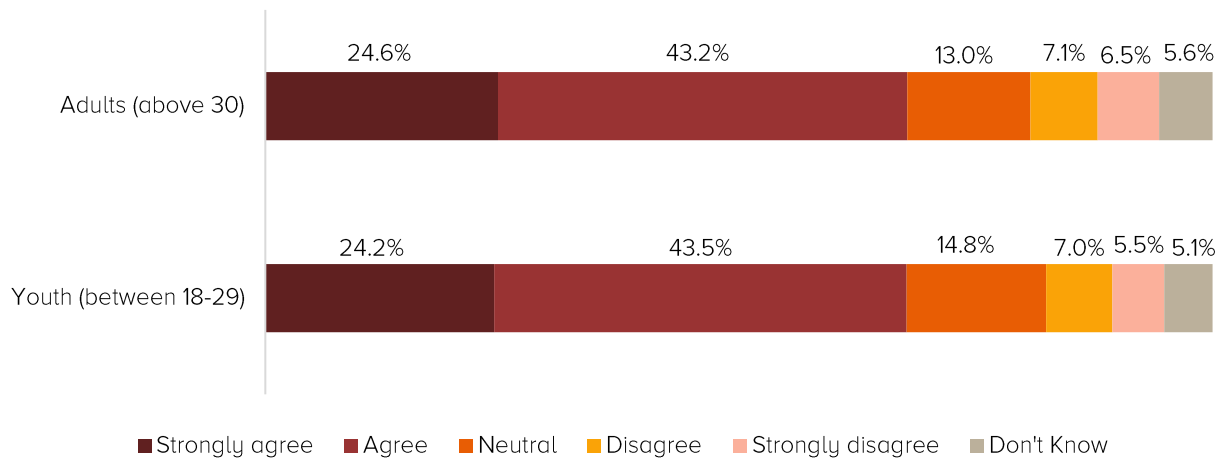


Figure 30: I would understand why people take part in violent protests against unjust policies of the government, by Age

Around 76.3% of youth (33.1% strongly agree and 43.2% agree) and 76% of adults agreed that even though they may not participate in protests, they support those who are protesting against unjust policies of the government. (Please refer Figure 31 below)

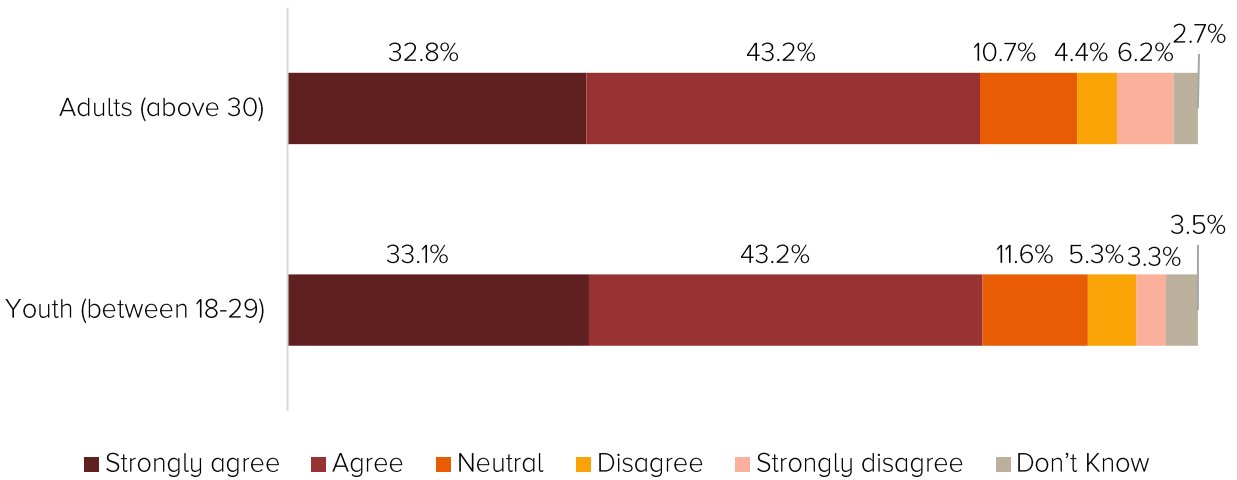


Figure 31: Even though I may not participate, I support those who are protesting against unjust policies of the government, by Age

When asked if the respondents don't mind protesting against unjust policies of the government via social media - 39.5% of youth agreed (7.4% strongly agree and 32.1% agree) with this view. This percentage is higher when compared to that of their adult counterparts [30.3% agree (6.9% strongly agree and 23.4% agree)] (Please refer Figure 32 below)

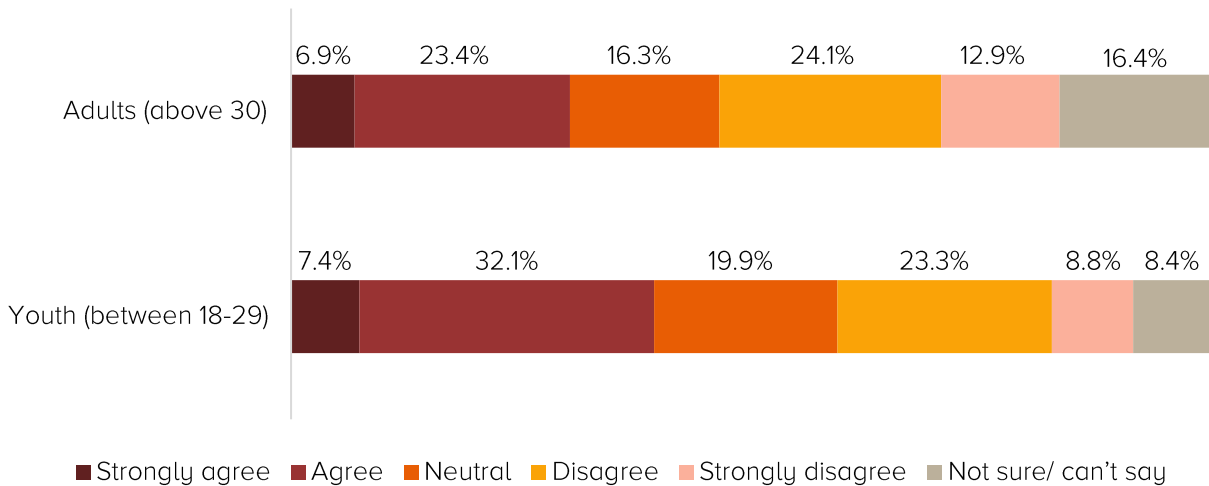


Figure 32: I do not mind protesting against unjust policies of the government through social media, by Age

When asked if the respondents would not mind signing a petition against unjust policies of the government - nearly 46% of youth agreed to this (11.1% strongly agree and 34.7% agree) - a slightly higher percentage than when compared to their adult counterparts (44.3% agreed with 11.9% strongly agreeing and 32.4% agreeing). (Please refer Figure 33 below)

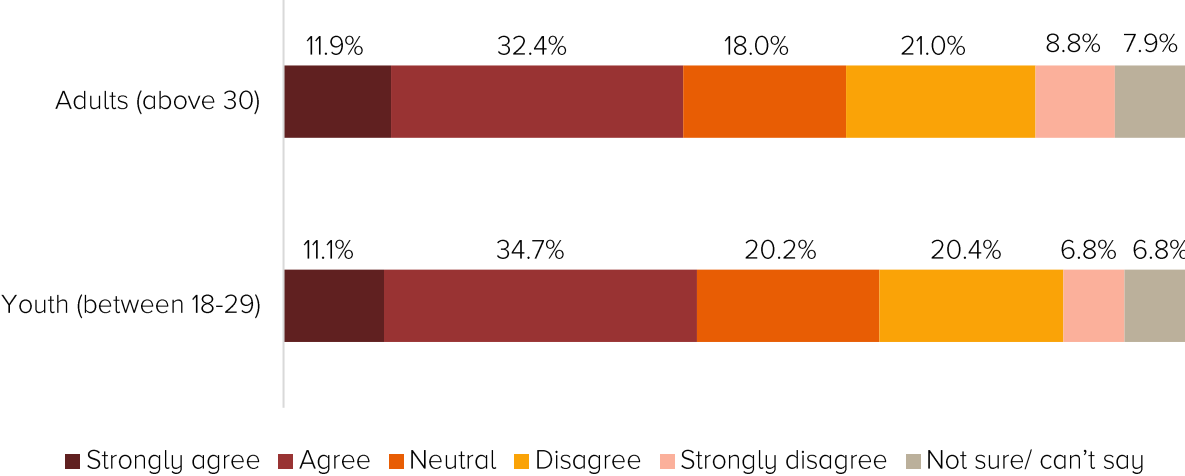


Figure 33: I would not mind signing a petition against unjust policies of the government, by Age

Political Participation

As per Figure 34 below,

- More youth indicate that they comment/ share/ forward web content inclusive of political material [21.5% reporting very frequently (5.6%) and somewhat frequently (15.9%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts (9.7% stated that they do so [very frequently (2.6%) and somewhat frequently (7.1%)]).
- A slightly higher percentage of youth claim that they participate in social media debates on political matters [4.9% reporting very frequently (1.3%) and somewhat frequently (3.6%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [2.3% reporting very frequently (0.5%) and somewhat frequently (1.8%)].
- A higher percentage of youth claim to have created and circulated their own article, blog, picture or video pertaining to a political campaign, candidate or issue to an online site [7.7% reporting very frequently (2.4%) and somewhat frequently (5.3%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [3.4% reporting very frequently (1.5%) and somewhat frequently (1.9%)].

A slightly higher percentage of youth claim to follow someone on Twitter for political information, news, or opinions [2.8% reporting very frequently (0.5%) and somewhat frequently (2.3%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [1.3% reporting very frequently (0.3%) and somewhat frequently (1.0%)].

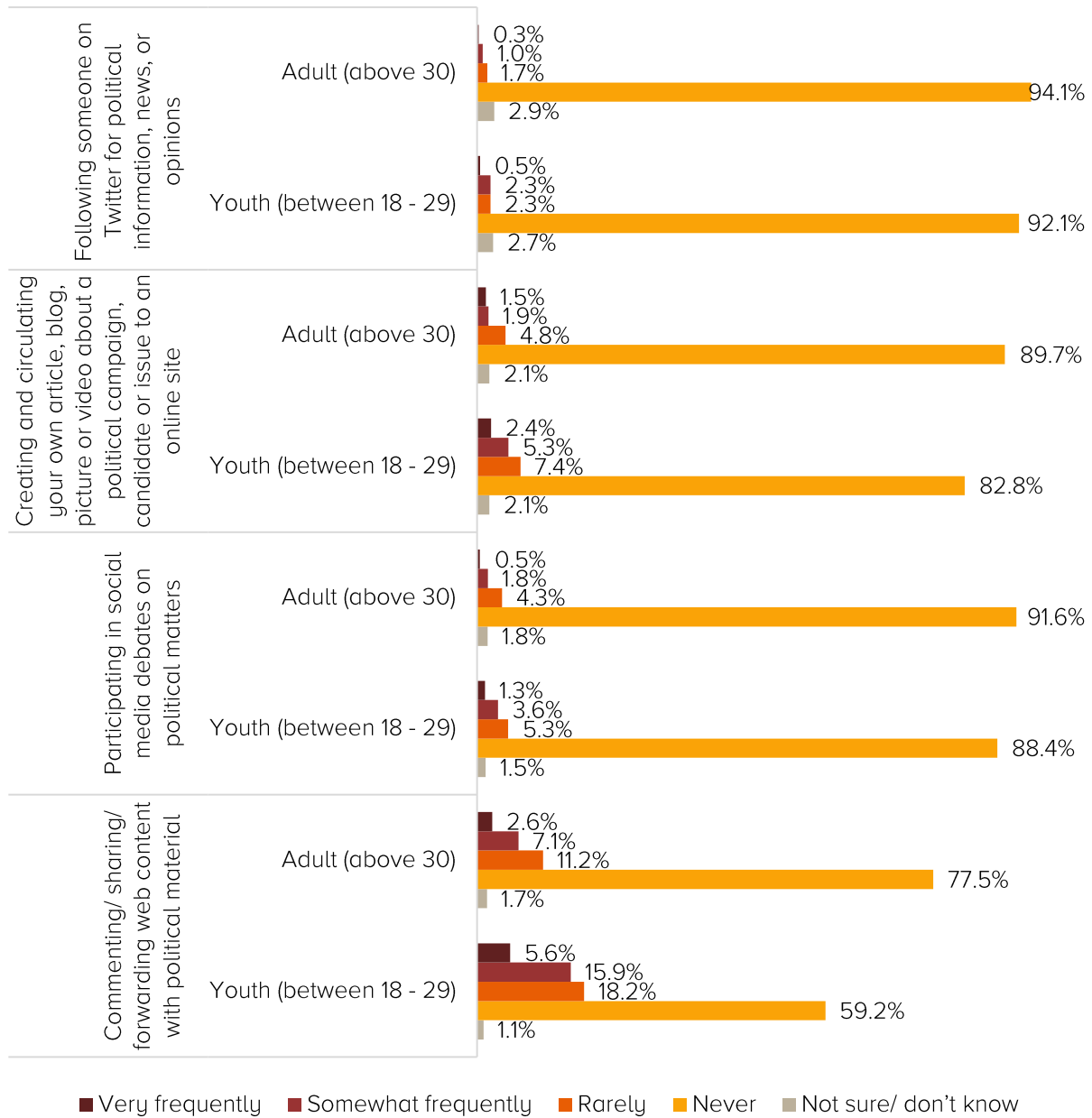


Figure 34: Participation on social media, by Age

As per Figure 35 below,

- A lesser percentage of youth were of the opinion that they read (in print and on the web) political content [50.1% reporting very frequently (15.7%) and somewhat frequently (34.4%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [54.4% reporting very frequently (20.5%) and somewhat frequently (33.9%)].
- A slightly higher percentage of youth indicated that that they write articles on political matters to print and web outlets [4.4% reporting very frequently (1.1%) and somewhat frequently (3.3%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [3.6% reporting very frequently (1.1%) and somewhat frequently (2.5%)].
- A lesser percentage of youth claim to watch/ listen to political debates over TV/ radio/ internet [47.9% reporting very frequently (12.5%) and somewhat frequently (35.4%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [61.2% reporting very frequently (26.5%) and somewhat frequently (34.7%)].
- There is no noticeable age-wise difference between youth who indicated that they ask questions in political debates over TV/ radio/ internet [3.3% reporting very frequently (0.9%) and somewhat frequently (2.4%)] and adults who had the same view [3.4% reporting very frequently (1.0%) and somewhat frequently (2.4%)].

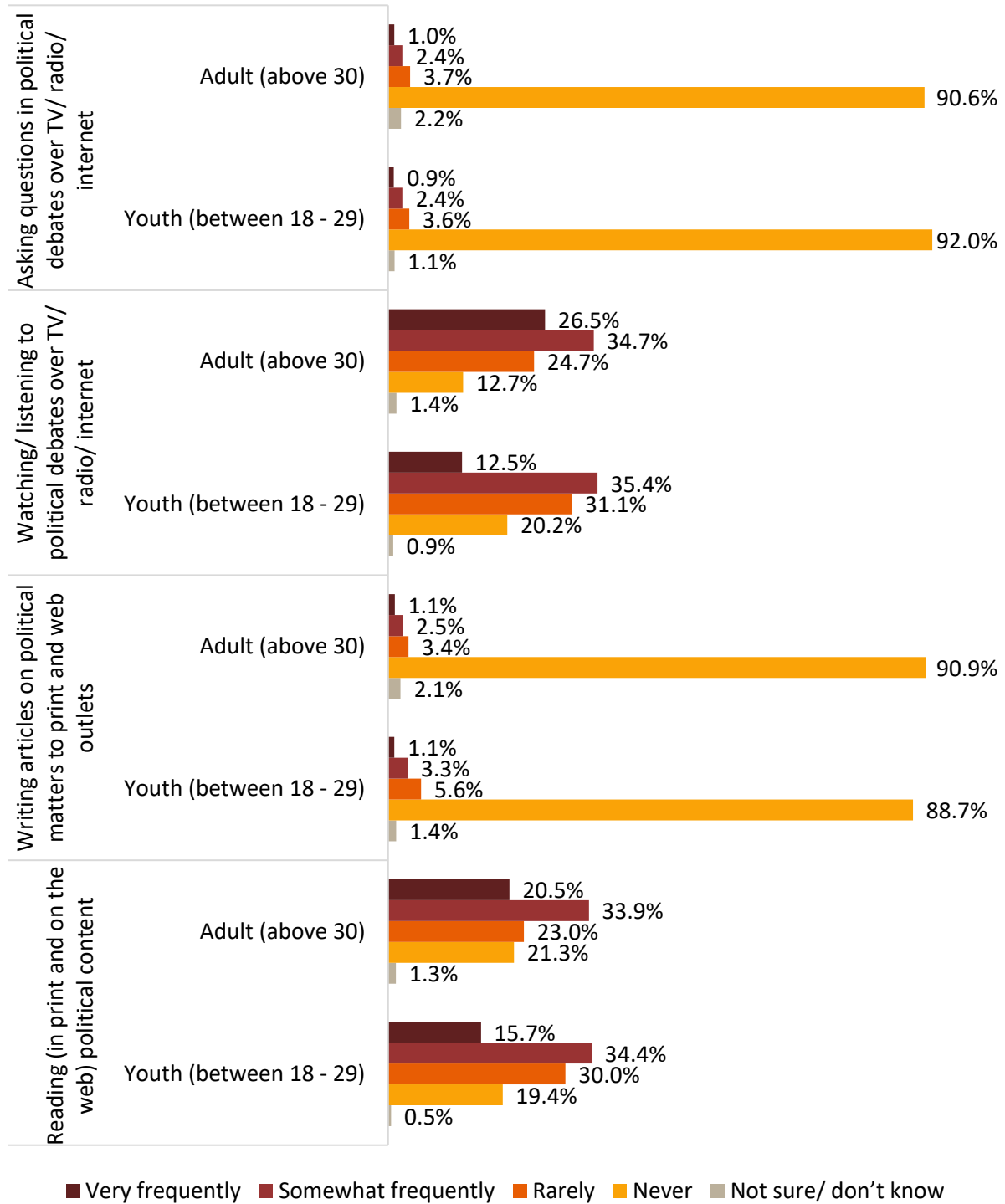


Figure 35: Participation in broadcast media, by Age

As per Figure 36 below,

- There was a slightly higher percentage of youth who claimed that they have signed up to receive information from candidates or campaigns via email or text [1.7% reporting very frequently (0.4%) and somewhat frequently (1.3%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [0.9% reporting very frequently (0.5%) and somewhat frequently (0.4%)].
- A lesser percentage of youth claim to have taken part in a protest, demonstration, or at a sit-in [7.8% reporting very frequently (1.2%) and somewhat frequently (6.6%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [12.5% reporting very frequently (2.0%) and somewhat frequently (10.5%)].
- A slightly lower percentage of youth claim to have participated in a boycott [6.1% reporting very frequently (0.9%) and somewhat frequently (5.2%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [7.6% reporting very frequently (0.7%) and somewhat frequently (6.9%)].
- A slightly lower percentage of youth claim that they have signed a petition (online or on paper) [5.2% reporting very frequently (0.9%) and somewhat frequently (4.3%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [6.4% reporting very frequently (0.8%) and somewhat frequently (5.6%)].
- A lesser percentage of youth claim that they are active in or have joined a group that meets face to face to address social or political issues [3.4% reporting very frequently (1.0%) and somewhat frequently (2.4%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [7.8% reporting very frequently (1.7%) and somewhat frequently (6.1%)].

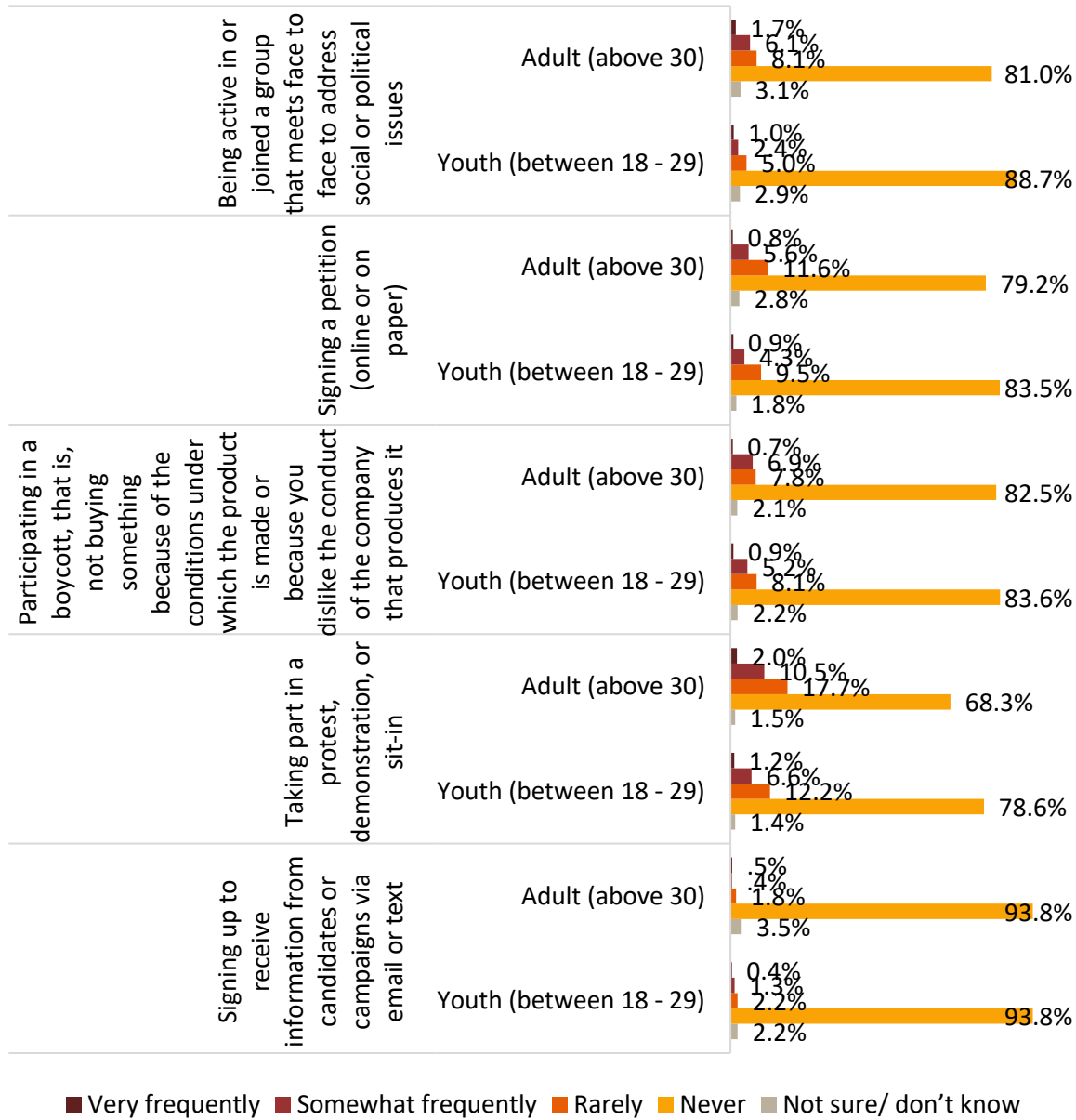


Figure 36: Other forms of participation, by Age

According to Figure 37 below,

- A lesser percentage of youth claim to have attended a political meeting, rally, speech or function [14.9% reporting very frequently (3.2%) and somewhat frequently (11.7%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [31.8% reporting very frequently (8.7%) and somewhat frequently (23.1%)].

- A lesser percentage of youth claim that they have worn a campaign button, stick a campaign sticker on the car, or place a sign in the window or in front of one's home [7.2% reporting very frequently (2.0%) and somewhat frequently (5.2%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [13.2% reporting very frequently (3.2%) and somewhat frequently (10.0%)].
- A higher percentage of youth claim that they express support via social network sites such as Facebook, IM or Twitter (for example by "liking" or becoming a fan) [18.7% reporting very frequently (4.5%) and somewhat frequently (14.2%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [10.5% reporting very frequently (3.2%) and somewhat frequently (7.3%)].
- A lesser percentage of youth claim to have donated money to a candidate, party, or political organization [0.5% reporting very frequently (0.2%) and somewhat frequently (0.3%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [3.1% reporting very frequently (1.1%) and somewhat frequently (2.0%)].
- A lesser percentage of youth claim to have raised money from friends and network for a candidate, party, or political organization [1.4% reporting very frequently (0.4%) and somewhat frequently (1.0%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [3.0% reporting very frequently (1.0%) and somewhat frequently (2.0%)].
- More youth claim to have either started or joined a political (or similar) group on a social network site (like Facebook) [8.0% reporting very frequently (2.1%) and somewhat frequently (5.9%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [4.6% reporting very frequently (1.7%) and somewhat frequently (2.9%)].
- A lesser percentage of youth claim to have convinced someone of a particular political party or ideology [9.8% reporting very frequently (2.4%) and somewhat frequently (7.4%)] than when compared to their adult counterparts [16.6% reporting very frequently (5.4%) and somewhat frequently (11.2%)].

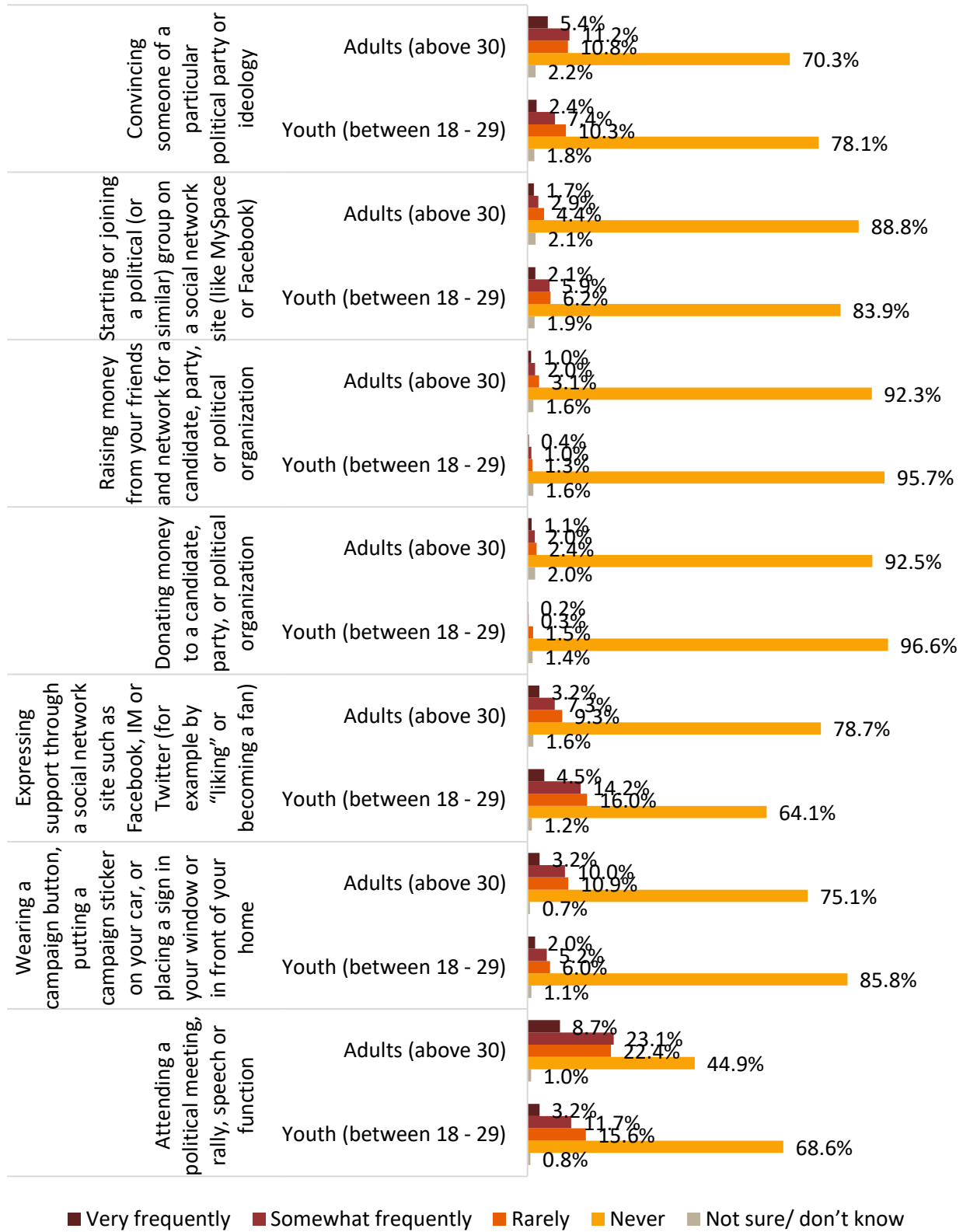


Figure 37: Participation in political activities, by Age

In relation to the above figures on political participation, a crosscutting pattern among youth and adults was that of a relatively more passive form of political participation such as watching political debates and reading political content. A considerable difference was observed along the age axis regarding online and offline modes of engagement. Youth showed a much more marked tendency towards engaging in online modes of participation than when compared to the adults. Inversely, offline modes of engagement such as attending political rallies, participating in protests, and convincing someone of a certain ideology were counts on which adults recorded higher levels of participation than youth.

When asked as to how often people discuss politics with individuals they do not know personally, 68.5% of youth claimed that they ‘never’ discuss politics with people they do not know personally – a slightly lower percentage higher (59.4%) of adults hold the same view. When analysing the data, it is evident that overall, the adults appear to discuss politics with individuals they do not personally know than when compared to the youth. (Please refer Figure 38 below)

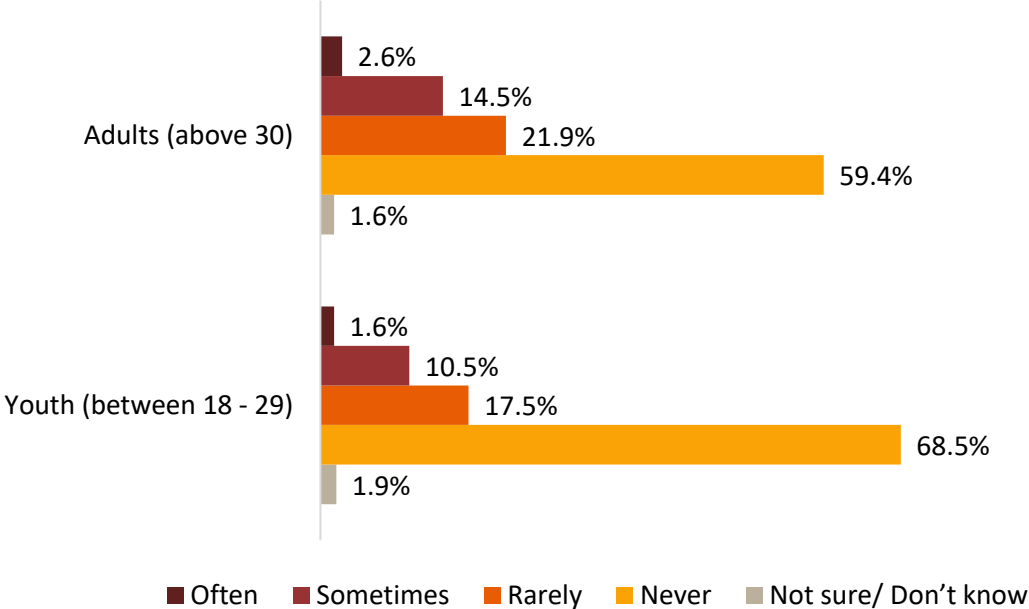


Figure 38: How often do you discuss politics with people you don't know personally, by Age

The Social Scientists' Association (SSA) is an organization working to investigate the way in which social change is contouring the multiple realities faced by communities in Sri Lanka and South Asia. The SSA is deeply committed to promoting a culture of knowledge production that informs and undergirds interventions aimed at achieving social emancipation for marginalized communities.

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