

Citizens and Official Government Processes in Zimbabwe

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Contents

List of Figures	i
List of Tables	i
Introduction and Background	1
Literature Review	2
Research Methods	5
Research Questions	5
Sampling	5
Field Data Collection Methods	6
Findings	7
Citizens' Knowledge of Officeholders	7
Citizens' Perceptions and the Role of Ward Councillors	8
Citizens' Perceptions on Role of Chiefs	9
Citizens' Perceptions on Role of Members of Parliament	9
Citizens' Perception on Role of Senators	10
Citizens' Perceptions on the Role of the Judiciary	11
Citizens' Perceptions of the Role of Parliament	11
Citizens and Elections	12
Citizens' Participation in Policy Formulation	14
Scope for making an input towards public policy processes	15
Participation at Different Levels of Government	16
Perceptions of Scope to Influence Decisions	16
Levels of Satisfaction with Public Service Delivery	17
Conclusion	18
References	20

List of Figures

Figure 1: Turner’s “Sociological model of citizenship”	2
Figure 2: Citizens' knowledge of officeholders	7
Figure 3: Knowledge of Chief by respondents in the rural areas	8
Figure 4: Perceptions towards Ward Councillors responsibilities/ duties	8
Figure 5: Citizens' perception towards the role of the Chiefs	9
Figure 6: Citizens' perception towards the role of the Member of Parliament	10
Figure 7: Citizens' perception towards the role of the Senators	10
Figure 8: Citizens' perception towards the role of the Judiciary	11
Figure 9: Citizens' perception towards the role of Parliament	12
Figure 10a: Participation in 2018 elections	12
Figure 10b: Voting by Age	13
Figure 10c: Voting by Gender	13
Figure 10d: Voters by area of residency	14
Figure 11a: Citizen participation in policy formulation processes	14
Figure 11b: Policy Formulation Areas	15
Figure 12: Citizens’ perception on input towards Public Policies	15
Figure 13: Levels of citizen participation across different tier of decision-making	16
Figure 14: Levels of citizen participation across various governance frameworks	17
Figure 15: Levels of satisfaction with service delivery	17
Figure 16: Knowledge of the role of the office holders in providing welfare.	18

List of Tables

Table 1: Citizen engagement, processes and mechanisms	3
Table 2: Size of Population by Province	5
Table 3: Sampling Areas	6

Introduction and Background

Governments' traditional mandate and purpose is to serve the needs of citizens by way of designing and implementing programmes and policies that address the latter's needs. In this light, we sought to understand the extent to which citizens understand the roles and functions of different tiers of government. We also sought to find out the extent to which citizens have played a role in shaping government programmes by participating in official processes and platforms established by both central and local governments. The Zimbabwean Constitution affirms broad-based participation in national processes as an indivisible right. Section 13(2) of the constitution obligates the Government to "... involve the people in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes that affect them".

In the survey questionnaire we sought to determine if citizens have a clear understanding of the different roles of officeholders and critical institutions. The survey also sought to determine the levels and ways in which citizens participate in official processes of central and local government. We sought to answer the question, 'are citizens actively engaged in public processes?' We are also cautious of the fact that being

part of a government-led consultative process is not synonymous with achieving the goal of participation. We asked if citizens had voted in the recent elections, if they had been a part of local and national processes of consultation on policy decisions. The final part of the questions were focused on assessing citizens' perceptions with regards to the extent to which different tiers and functions of government are open to broader participation.

Citizens' perceptions are shaped by their own objective knowledge, experiences in interacting with officials and institutions at different levels and is also based on conjecture. In many surveys we have noted that in the absence of clarity on the question being asked and where there are predetermined responses, respondents revert to guessing. It is difficult however, to clarify the extent to which responses are influenced by actual knowledge or just guessing. These nuances serve to provide a comprehensive picture of citizen perceptions. By its very nature, perception analysis is based on subjective responses and does not need to be informed by scientific knowledge- it is what the citizen perceives on the issue at that time.

Literature Review

Citizenship is the bedrock against which individuals can claim services from their government or seek to participate in national processes, including for or being voted into office (Masunungure and Koga, 2013), and citizenship is viewed as relating to belonging to a state, enjoying its rights while simultaneously fulfilling obligations required by that state (Turner, 1997; Masunungure and Koga, 2013). The Zimbabwean Constitution affirms broad-based participation in national processes as an indivisible right. Section 13 (2) of the constitution obligates the Government to "...involve the people in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes that affect them". Citizens acknowledge the need for their engagement with office

holders but indicate facing multi-layered challenges in seeking that engagement (International Republican Institute 2015, Ndoma and Kokera, 2016).

However, defining citizenship and its attendant rights is a negotiated and contested process involving "the repertoire of juridical exclusion and discrimination that is widespread throughout the continent" (of Africa) (Masunungure and Koga, 2013:1). There are multiple factors that shape the understanding of citizenship, the rights that can be claimed thereafter and how those rights, including participation in government, can be practised.

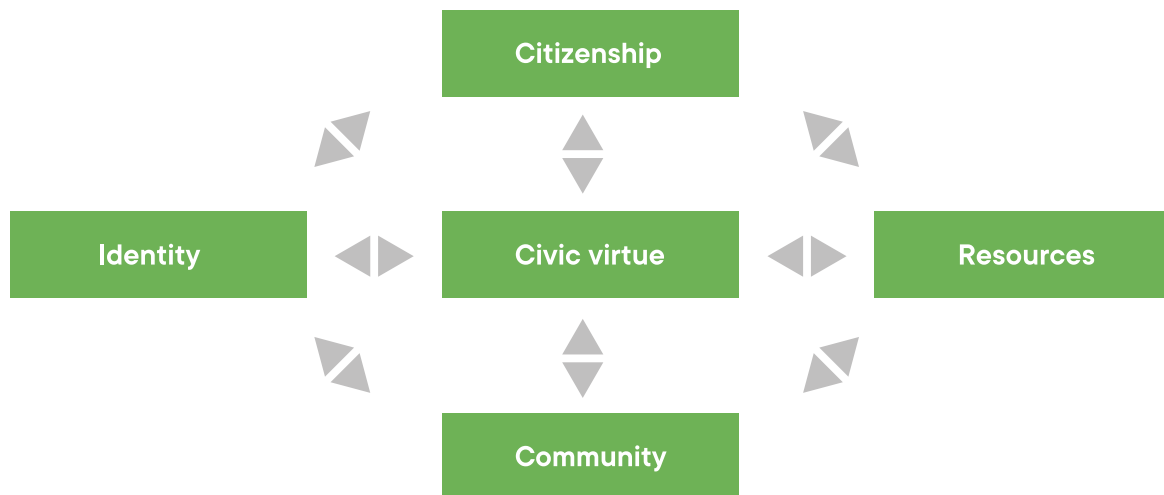


Figure 1: Turner's "Sociological model of citizenship"

Source: Turner, B.S. 1997 *Citizenship studies: A general theory*

Following on Turner's model, participation is an expression of "civic virtues" and is shaped by factors such as access to resources and the identity that is ascribed or negotiated for by individuals and groups. Citizen participation and engagement with office holders is also shaped by their own objective knowledge, experiences in interacting with officials and institutions at different levels and is also based on conjecture.

Zimbabwe has normative frameworks for citizen participation for the individual to influence practices and policies in the Zimbabwean local government system.

These include local government elections, participatory budgeting, consultative forums, public hearings, councils' open meetings, the Village Development Committee (VIDCO), Ward Development Committee (WADCO), Rural District Development Committee (RDDC) and Provincial Development Committee (PDC) (Chikereima, 2013:88-89). Munyede and Machengete (2020) state that citizen participation in decision making has traditionally been achieved mainly through the space provided at public gatherings in city halls, council chambers, open spaces, school halls, water points and other available spaces where people could congregate.

Table 1: Citizen engagement, processes and mechanisms

Local Authority	Engagement Process	Engagement Mechanisms
Mutoko Rural	Participatory Budgeting, Gender Budgeting	Councillor Ward Meetings, Development planning structures
Bindura Urban	Budgeting	Councillor Ward Meetings, Residents Associations, Complaints register, Toll free & SMS Platforms
Makoni Rural	Budgeting, Development Planning	Development planning structures, Ward plough backs, Women Revolving Fund
Nyanga Rural	Budgeting, Development Planning	Councillor Ward Meetings, Development planning structures
Masvingo Urban	Budgeting	Residents Associations, Councillor Ward Meetings,
Bulawayo Urban	Budgeting	Call Centre, Councillor Ward Meetings, Residents Associations
Harare Urban	Budgeting, Slum Upgrading, Participatory Urban Planning	Residents Associations, Councillor Ward Meetings, Homeless Federations

Source: Muchadenyika, 2017

Actual citizen participation in these mechanisms and processes is circumscribed by citizen assessments of the effectiveness of these platforms in addressing the goals of that participation including responsiveness (Shotton and Winter, 2006; Levi and Sacks, 2009), the room provided for citizen input by the duality of customary structures and formalised governmental structures that exist in many countries south of the Sahara (Kwarkye, 2021). The relationships, interactions and partnerships between traditional and modern relationships need to be explored to establish a nuanced understanding of citizen perceptions of participation, and engagement with office holders. When citizens lack civic space for giving their assessments and feedback on public services and public policies due to constriction of space in settings such as Zimbabwe they are likely to withdraw their participation due to fear or they can seek to express themselves through protests and demonstra-

tions (Oosterom, 2019:8). Such protests have increasingly come to take place online in “digital activism” (Mutsvairo in Mutsvairo et al 2016) where citizens have access to previously inaccessible information and can participate in an unmediated public deliberation space (Kamau, in Mutsvairo, 2016).

Makumbe (1996) posits that active citizen engagement and participation in governance processes demands time investment from citizens—time for attending meetings, voting and seeking out information about processes and events. Thus, the scope of active citizen participation transcends choosing between a set of pre-determined choices. Accordingly, if people experience repeated imposition of programs and policies from the government, they withdraw their participation and are continuously expected to be passive recipients of government programs, policies, and projects, they tend to

shun participation. Cross (2014) argues that where citizens have alternative narratives to choose from such as in multi-party systems, where there is increased political competition, citizens can challenge the idea that they must provide resources for development initiatives in which they are not consulted.

The public perception of competency of the government (Muchadenyika, 2017) and legitimacy of a government (Levi and Sacks, 2009) are central in determining the spaces, platforms, and tiers of government which citizens seek to engage with, and participate in. Leaders and public institutions that are viewed as pursuing effective, fair and improved institutional performance in the delivery of economic and political goods (Levi and Sacks, 2009) are assessed positively and are likely to be more sought and engaged by the citizens. When citizens are reeling from non-functional education and health systems, poverty, unemployment, patriarchy, starvation, and violence (Hoffman, 2012) corruption and nepotism (Mbandlwa and Mishi, 2020) they must assess their options and potential benefits from engaging public duty bearers. According to Mbandlwa and Mishi (2020) leadership characteristics of local government officials, specifically, ward councillors, has a direct bearing on public service delivery and they went on to assert that ward councillors need to be trained in leadership when they are voted into the office of councillor.

A survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in 2015 in Zimbabwe highlighted that most Zimbabweans were civic-minded and they agreed that citizens had a duty to seek to be informed about important issues (96%), to register as voters (88%), to vote (92%) and to influence the government's decisions (88%) among other civic duties. Twenty seven per cent (27%) of respondents never attended or participated in community discussions and decision-making forums.

The survey also highlighted that location was a variable affecting such participation with 86% of survey participants in rural areas indicating they attended community meetings, and only 44% of the urban sample attending these meetings at all.

In the survey questionnaire we sought to determine if citizens have a clear understanding of the different roles of officeholders and critical institutions. The survey also sought to determine the levels and ways in which citizens participate in official processes of central and local government. We sought to answer the question, 'are citizens actively engaged in public processes?' We are also cautious of the fact that being part of a government-led consultative process is not synonymous with achieving the goal of participation. We asked if citizens had voted in the recent elections, if they had been a part of local and national processes of consultation on policy decisions. The final part of the questions in this section were focused on assessing citizens' perceptions with regards to the extent to which different tiers and functions of government are open to broader participation.

Citizens' perceptions are shaped by their own objective knowledge, experiences in interacting with officials and institutions at different levels and is also based on conjecture. In many surveys, we have noted that in the absence of clarity on the question being asked and where there are predetermined responses respondents revert to guessing. It is difficult however, to clarify the extent to which responses are influenced by actual knowledge or just guessing. These nuances serve to provide a comprehensive picture of citizen perceptions. By its very nature, perception analysis is based on subjective responses and does not need to be informed by scientific knowledge- it is what the citizen perceives on the issue at that time.

Research Methods

We carried out a nationwide survey to assess citizen perceptions of governance, in this instance understood as the extent to which local and central government

are effectively delivering on their mandate, the ways in which these authorities engage with citizens’.

Research Questions

The nationwide questionnaire survey sought to find out the following:

- How citizens come together?
- How citizens relate with the state: perceptions of citizens on government’s (local and national) performance around service delivery
- Levels of trust/confidence with government

- Citizens’ relationship with traditional authority
- Extent to which citizens feel/perceive their role in shaping traditional, local and central government.
- Emerging governance frameworks within citizen-based initiatives
- Extent to which citizens perceive of their obligations regarding public order, environment and economic development.

Sampling

Our intention was to collect quantitative data that is representative of trends across the country through random sampling. According to ZimStats the population of Zimbabwe at the end of 2017 was 13.6million,

made up of 7.1 million females (52.2%) and 6.5 million males (47.8%). In order to determine representativity, we focused on the adult population which is currently 56.9% (7.4 million) of the total population.

Table 2: Size of Population by Province

Province	Total Population	Males	Females
Manicaland	1,752,698	830,697	922,001
Mashonaland East	1,344,955	651,781	693,174
Mashonaland Central	1,152,520	567,140	585,380
Mashonaland West	1,501,656	747,475	754,181
Masvingo	1,485,090	690,749	794,341
Midlands	1,614,941	776,012	838,929
Matabeleland North	749,017	360,776	388,241
Matabeleland South	683,893	326,967	356,926
Bulawayo	653,337	303,346	349,991
Harare	2,123,132	567,140	585,380
Total	13,061,239	6,280,539	6,780,700

The Table below provides a snapshot of the areas where the survey instrument was implemented. We made sure to cover all the 10 Provinces of Zimbabwe,

sampling the adult population in and around urban, peri-urban and rural areas within the following areas.

Table 3: Sampling areas

Province	Town/ City	Urban	Peri-urban	Rural
Harare	Harare	Harare CBD, high, low, medium density suburbs	Epworth	
Mashonaland East	Marondera	Marondera CBD, high, low, medium density suburbs	Domboshava	Mutoko, Goromonzi, Beatrice
Mashonaland Central	Bindura	Bindura CBD, high, low, medium density suburbs	Glendale	Mvurwi
Mashonaland West	Chinhoyi	Chinhoyi, Norton CBD, high, low, medium density suburbs	Banket	Murombedzi, Zvimba
Masvingo	Masvingo	Masvingo CBD	Bikita	Jerera
Midlands	Gweru	Gweru CBD, high, low, medium density suburbs	Lower Gweru	Shurugwi
Bulawayo	Bulawayo	Bulawayo CBD, high, low, medium density suburbs		
Matabeleland North	Lupane	Lupane	St Lukes	Inyathi
Matabeleland South	Gwanda	Gwanda town		Gwanda Rural
Manicaland	Mutare	Mutare CBD, high, low, medium density suburbs	Penalonga	

Field Data Collection Methods

We carried out random sampling. The method was developed by Glasser and Strauss (1967). Quantitative design allows for greater objectivity, greater numbers of respondents and enhances the generalisation of results. For the questionnaire, most of the responses were pre-coded to allow for ease of input and eventual analysis. The questionnaire was subjected to several tests including (i) flow of the questions, (ii) relatability to terms used in the questionnaire (avoidance of jargon), (iii) ease of translation into local languages and

(iv) duration of questionnaire- different studies have raised the need to ensure that the whole questionnaire can be answered within eighteen minutes. The questionnaire was uploaded on a digital survey platform (SurveyMonkey) as part of our commitment to reducing the actual paper used in the course of this report. Enumerators used either smartphones or tablets to administer the questionnaire. Responses were collected in real-time and this enabled us to carry out quality checks/control on an ongoing basis.

Findings

Citizens' Knowledge of Officeholders

We sought to understand if citizens know elected and non-elected officials that represent them at the local and national level. We identified six offices which we thought were critical to citizens in their daily lives as per the figure below, the office of ward councillor is, at least according to the constitution, the most local position and representing the smallest number of households compared to any other elected position in the country. The ward councillor is elected into office directly by registered voters after the usual campaigning processes. When asked if respondents know their ward councillor, 66% confirmed that they know their ward councillor whilst 34% did not know their ward councillor (Figure 1). In the recent elections members of parliament have

been elected at the same time with ward councillors and the president through harmonized elections. The number of people who know their Member of Parliament (60%) is slightly lower than those who know their ward councillor. Only 24% of the respondents know their Senator. The senator scores lower than the Cabinet Ministers (37%) and the Officer in Charge at the nearest police station (39%), refer to Figure 1. However, when it comes to chiefs (traditional authority) we noted an almost even distribution between those who know who their chief is (51%) and those who do not know (49%). The responses include those in urban areas where the role of traditional authority is not visible (Figure 1).

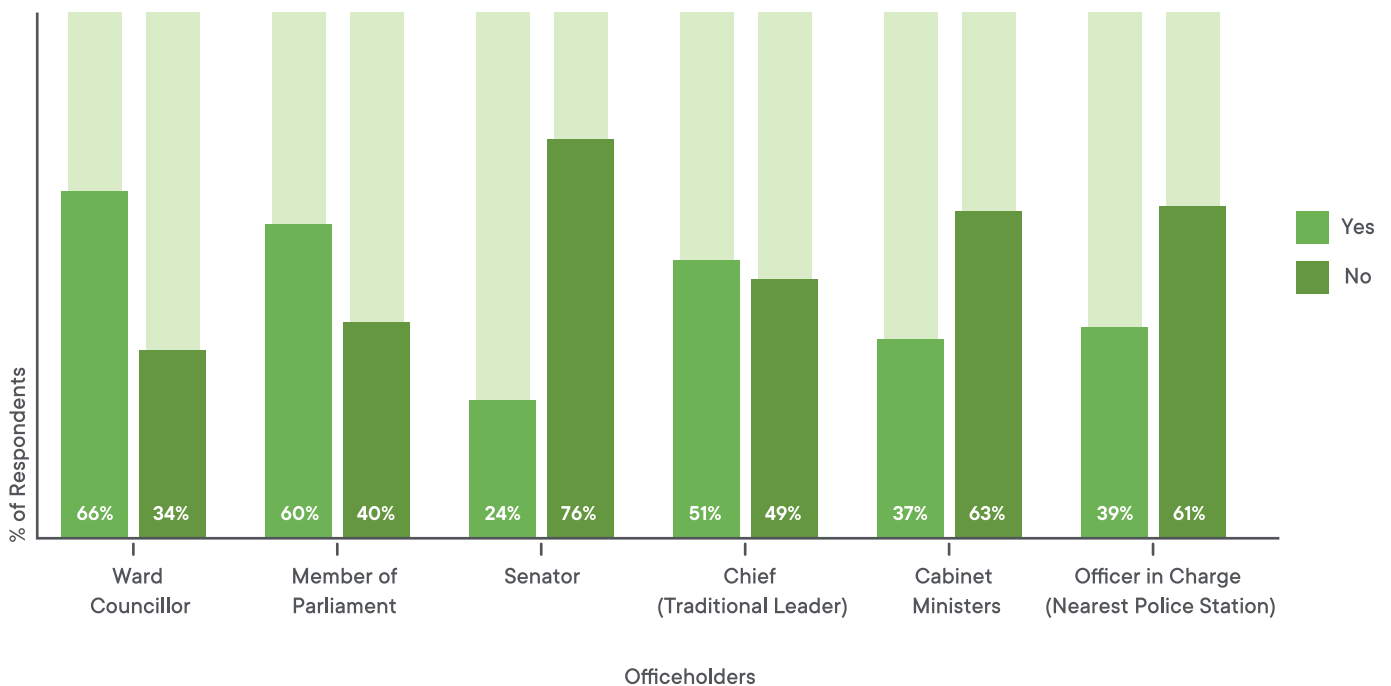


Figure 2: Citizens knowledge of officeholders

However, when responses are isolated for only those based in rural areas the number of those who know who their chief (75%) is larger than those who do not

know (25%). It is also important to note that the chief is the third most known officeholder (Figure 2).

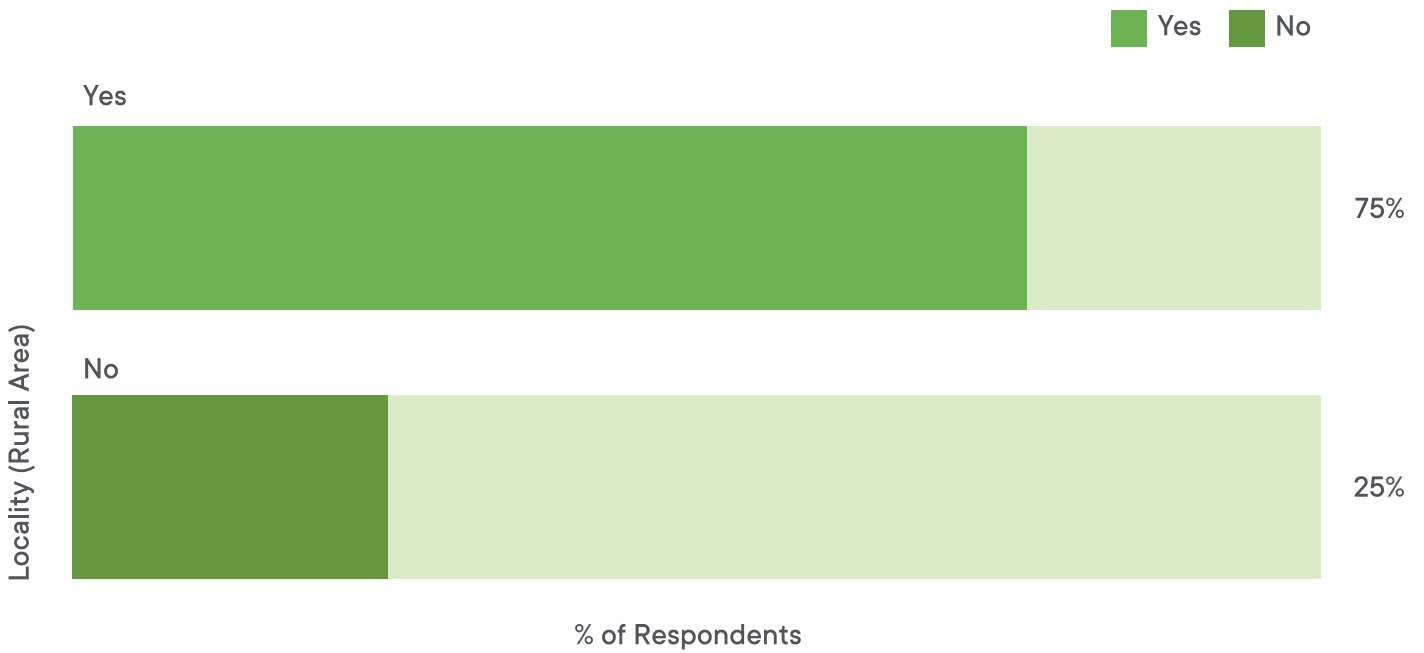


Figure 3: Knowledge of Chief by respondents in the rural areas

Citizens’ Perceptions and the Role of Ward Councillors

We sought to understand citizens’ perceptions of the official role of councillors. The question allowed for multiple responses. The largest cohort (81%) believe that the ward councillor’s duty must include mobilizing citizens for collective action, followed by resolving disputes (76%) within the community. Other responsi-

bilities by order rank include allocating resources (73%) and providing welfare (66%). Less than 50% of the respondents think that ward councillors are responsible for making laws (40%) and implementing laws (41%). Figure 4 below provides a ranking of responsibilities of ward councillors based on citizens’ perceptions.

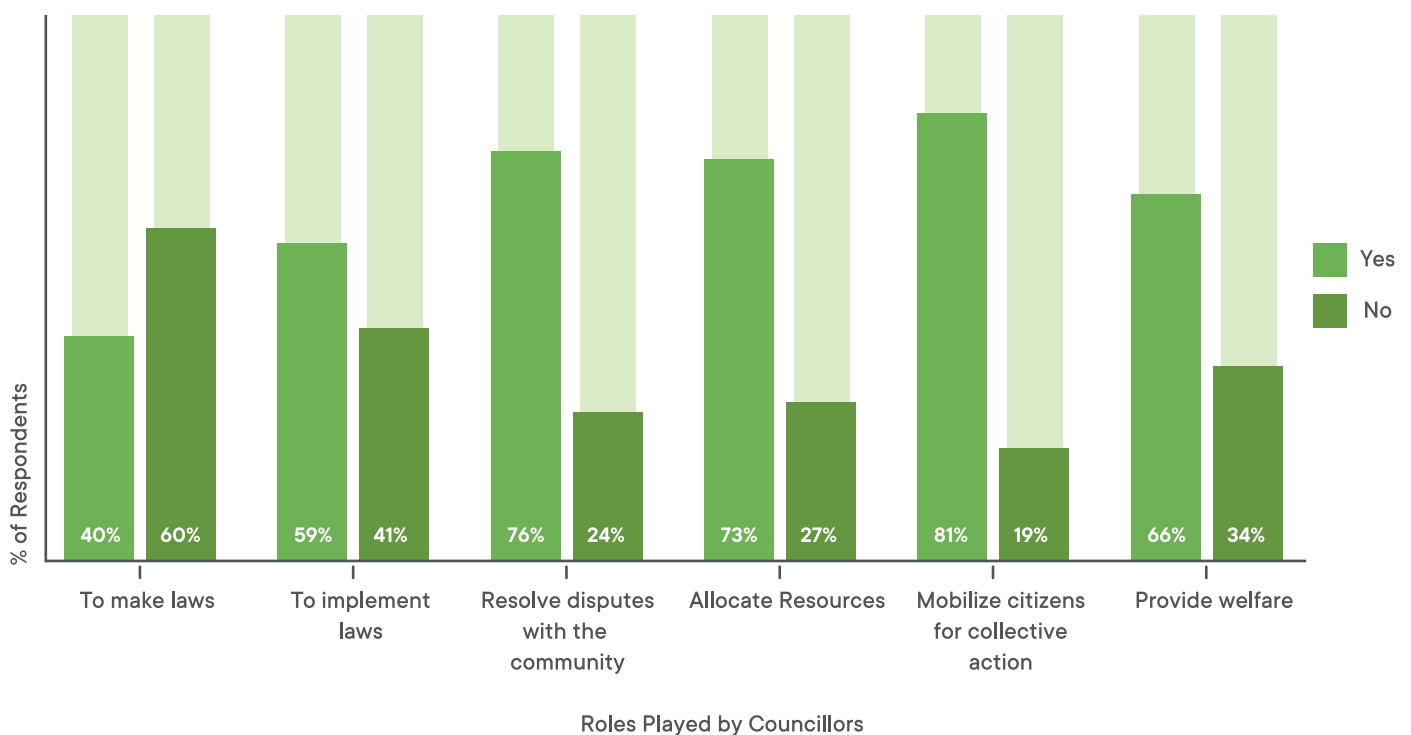


Figure 4: Perceptions towards Ward Councillors responsibilities/ duties

Citizens' Perceptions on Role of Chiefs

When asked what the role of the chief is using a question that allows for multiple responses; the largest cohort (92%) identified the resolution of disputes as one of the main responsibilities of the chief followed by implementation of laws (75%) and then mobilizing cit-

izens for collective action (72%). According to citizens other responsibilities of the chief include allocating resources (71%), providing welfare (64%) and making laws (55%). Figure 5 below provides a detailed ranking of what citizens think is the role of the chiefs.

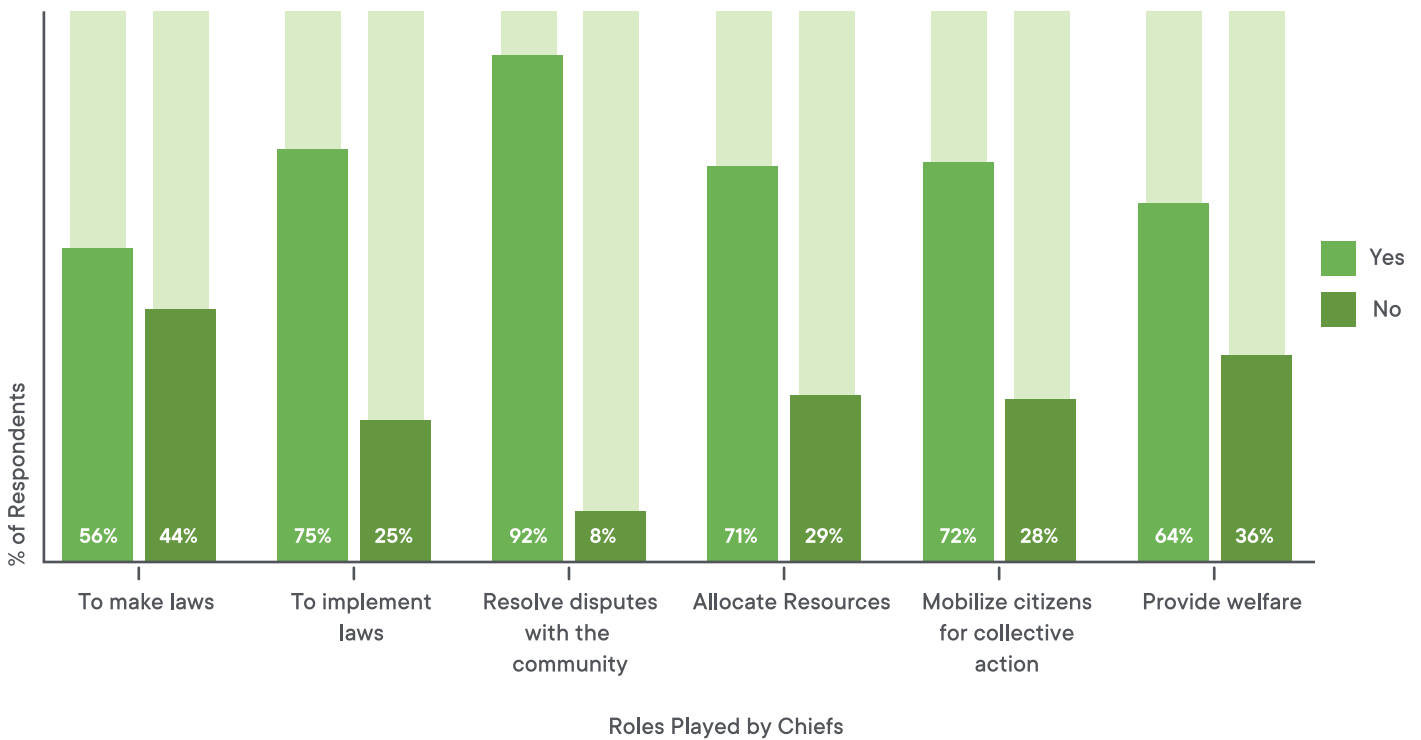


Figure 5: Citizens' perception towards the role of the Chiefs

Citizens' Perceptions on Role of Members of Parliament

Citizens believe that the role of the member of parliament entails, mobilizing citizens for collective action (71%), making laws (70%), allocating resources (68%) and implementing laws (68%). Other responsibilities that citizens think the member of parliament should

prioritize include providing welfare (64%) and resolving disputes within the community (52%). Figure 6 below) provides a detailed breakdown of what citizens see as the responsibilities of Members of Parliament.

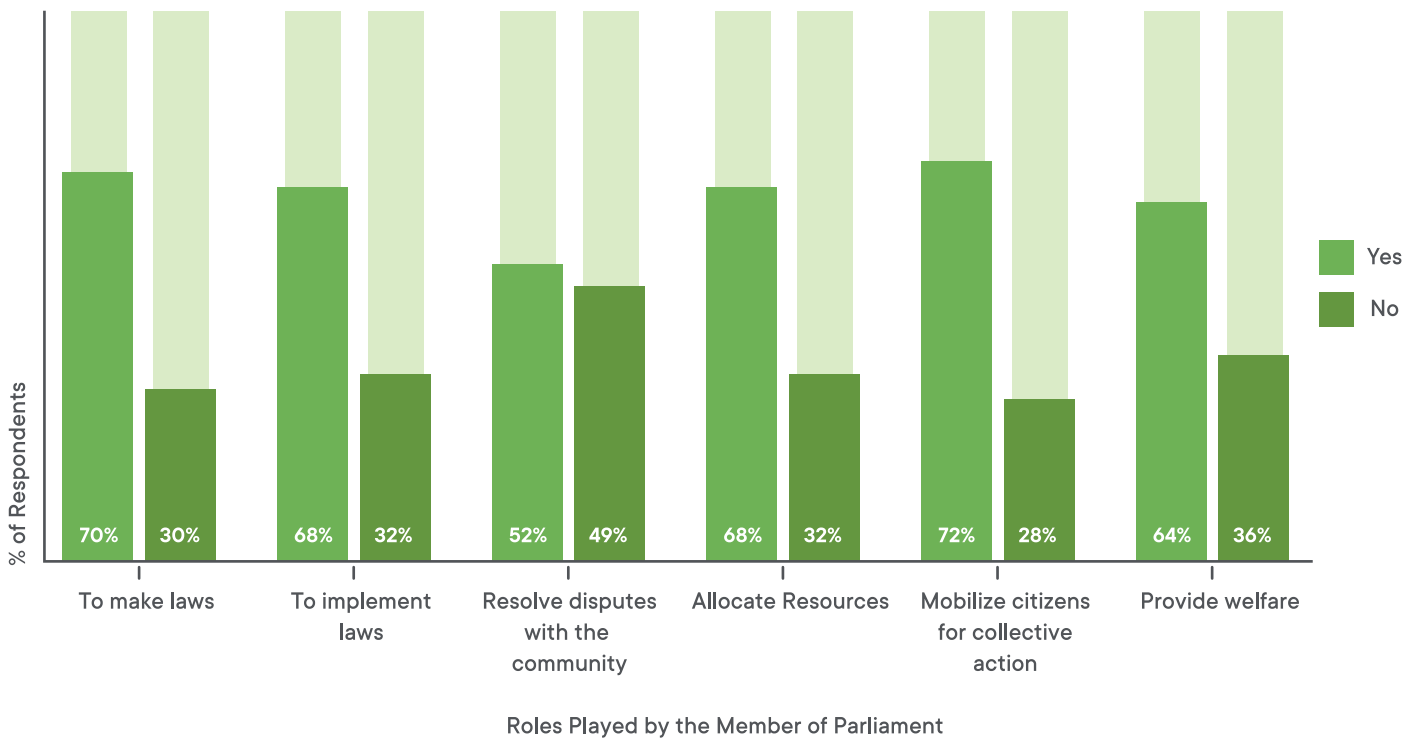


Figure 6: Citizens' perception towards the role of Member of Parliament

Citizens' Perception on Role of Senators

Most of the respondents had an opinion on the role of senators even though there are very few who know the actual identity of their own senators. They ranked the responsibility of senators as entailing the follow-

ing, implementing laws (62%), making laws (59%) and providing welfare (52%). Figure 7 below provides a detailed breakdown of what citizens perceive of the role of the senator.

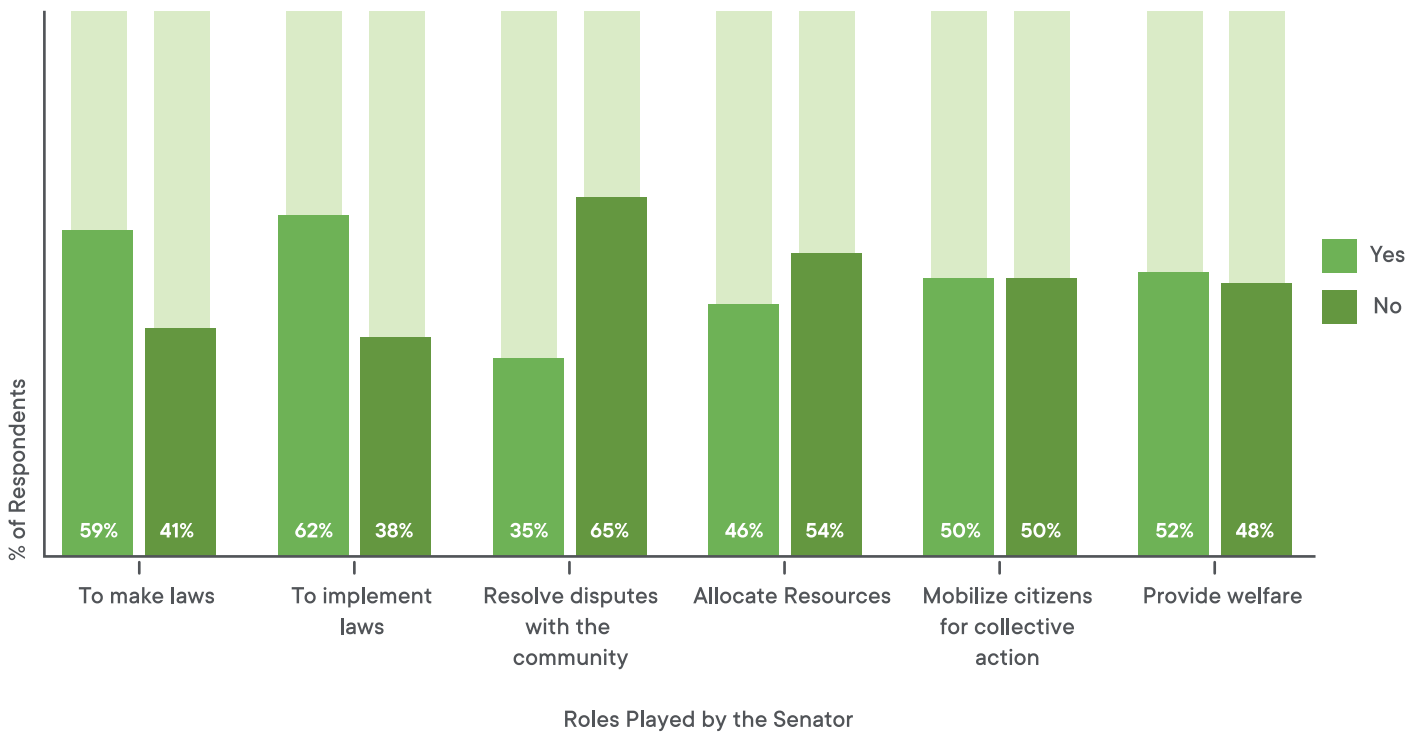


Figure 7: Citizens' perception towards the role of the Senators

Citizens' Perceptions on the Role of the Judiciary

We asked citizens to identify what they think is the role of the judiciary. According to respondents, the judiciary is responsible for implementing laws (82%), making laws (74%) and resolving disputes within the community (51%). There were very few who felt that the judi-

ciary needs to be involved in providing welfare (32%), mobilizing citizens for collective action (25%) and the allocation of resources (24%). Figure 8 below provides a detailed breakdown of what citizens think is the role of the judiciary.

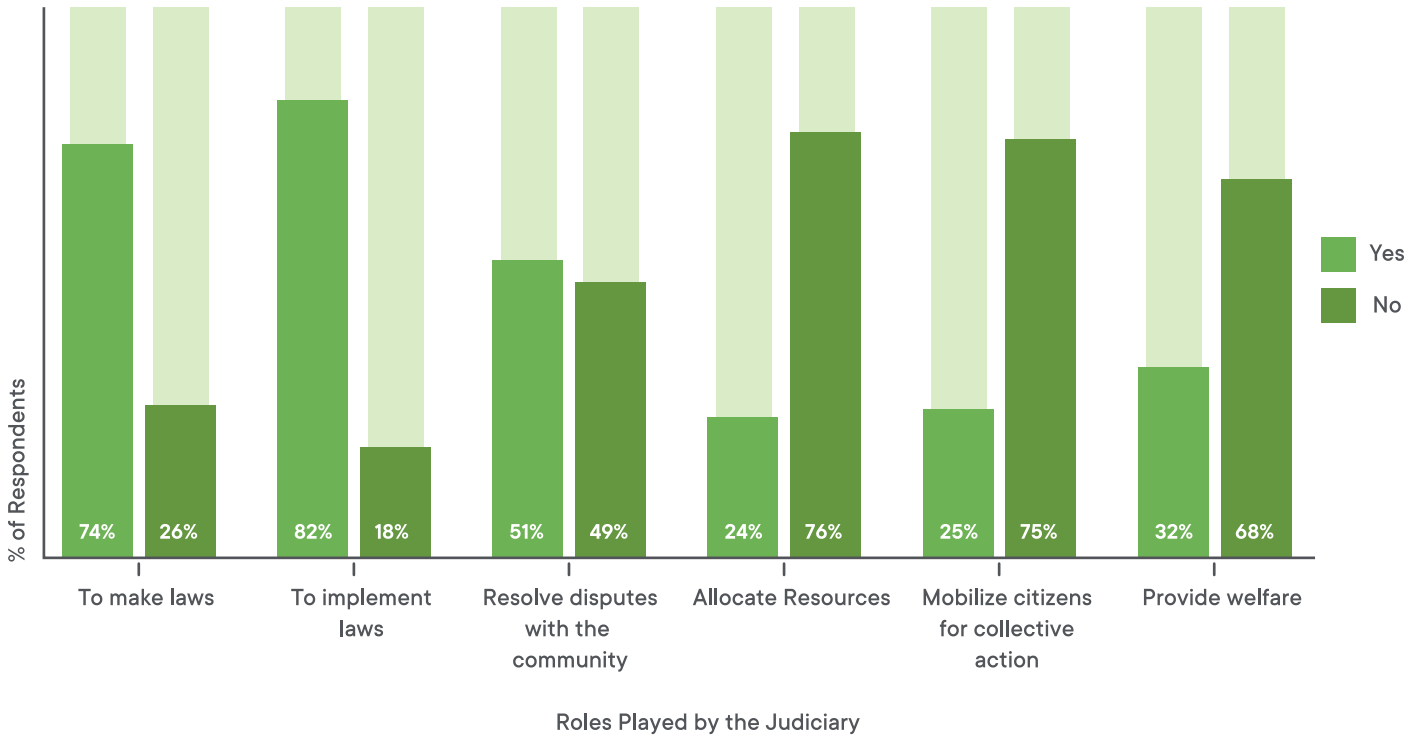


Figure 8: Citizens' perception towards the role of the Judiciary

Citizens' Perceptions of the Role of Parliament

The largest cohort of citizens believes that parliament's role is to make laws (89%) followed by implementing laws (74%) and providing welfare (56%). Other roles include allocating resources (50%) and mobilizing cit-

izens for collective action (43%). Figure 9 provides a detailed ranking of what citizens think should be the priorities of parliament.

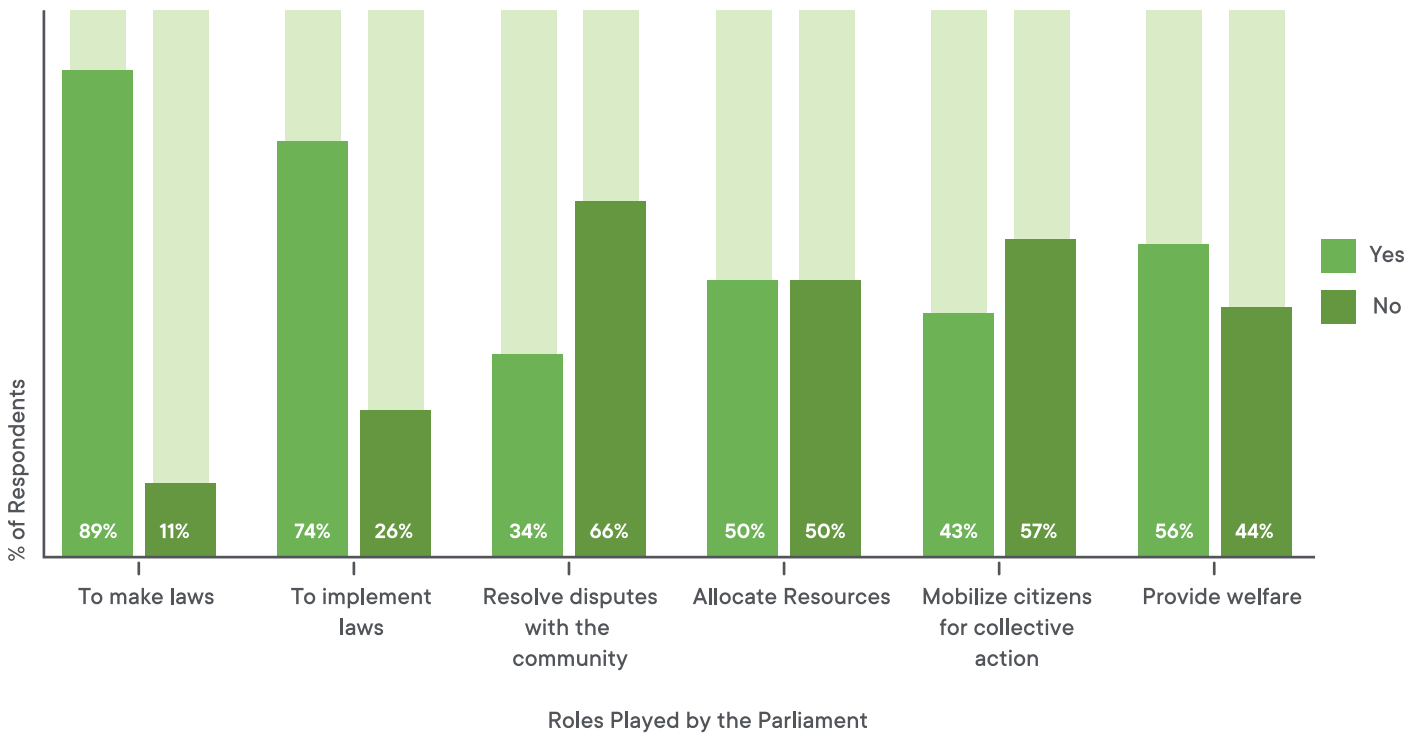


Figure 9: Citizens' perception towards the role of Parliament

Citizens and Elections

The majority (78%) of the respondents confirmed that they had voted in the 2018 elections (see Figure 10a). Those aged between 26-35 are the most active voting group followed by those aged 18-25 (Figure 10b).

There is an even breakdown between male (80%) and female voters (78%). (see Figure 10c). There were more voters in the rural/urban (see Figure 10d)

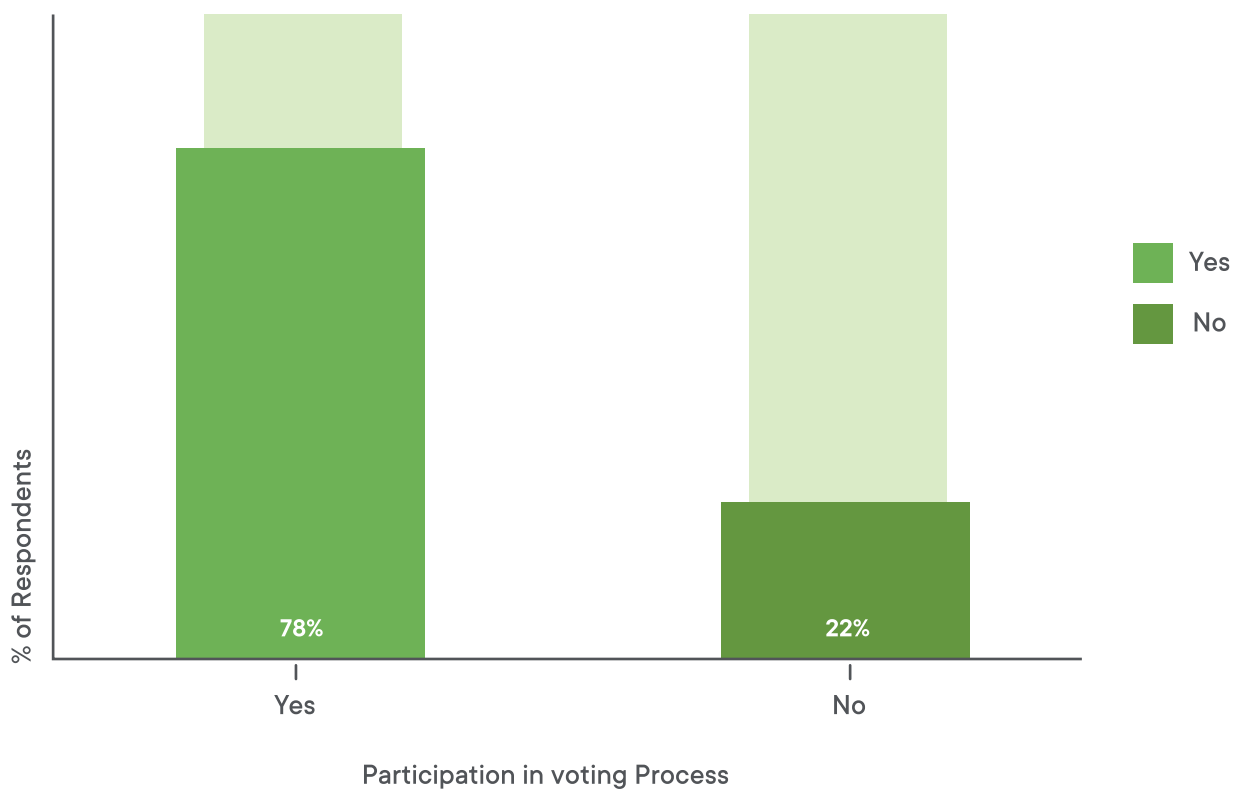


Figure 10a: Participation in 2018 elections

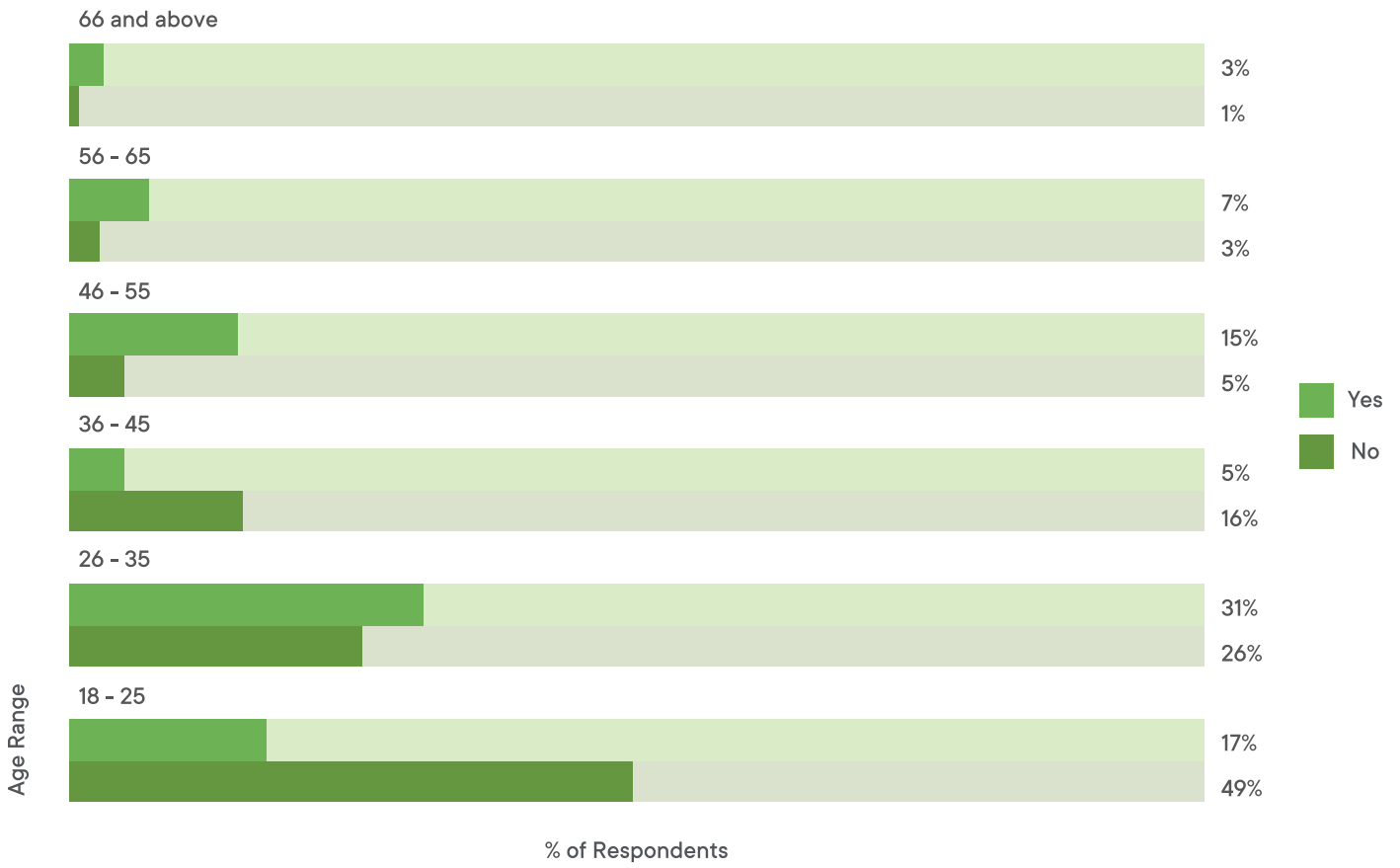


Figure 10b: Voting by Age

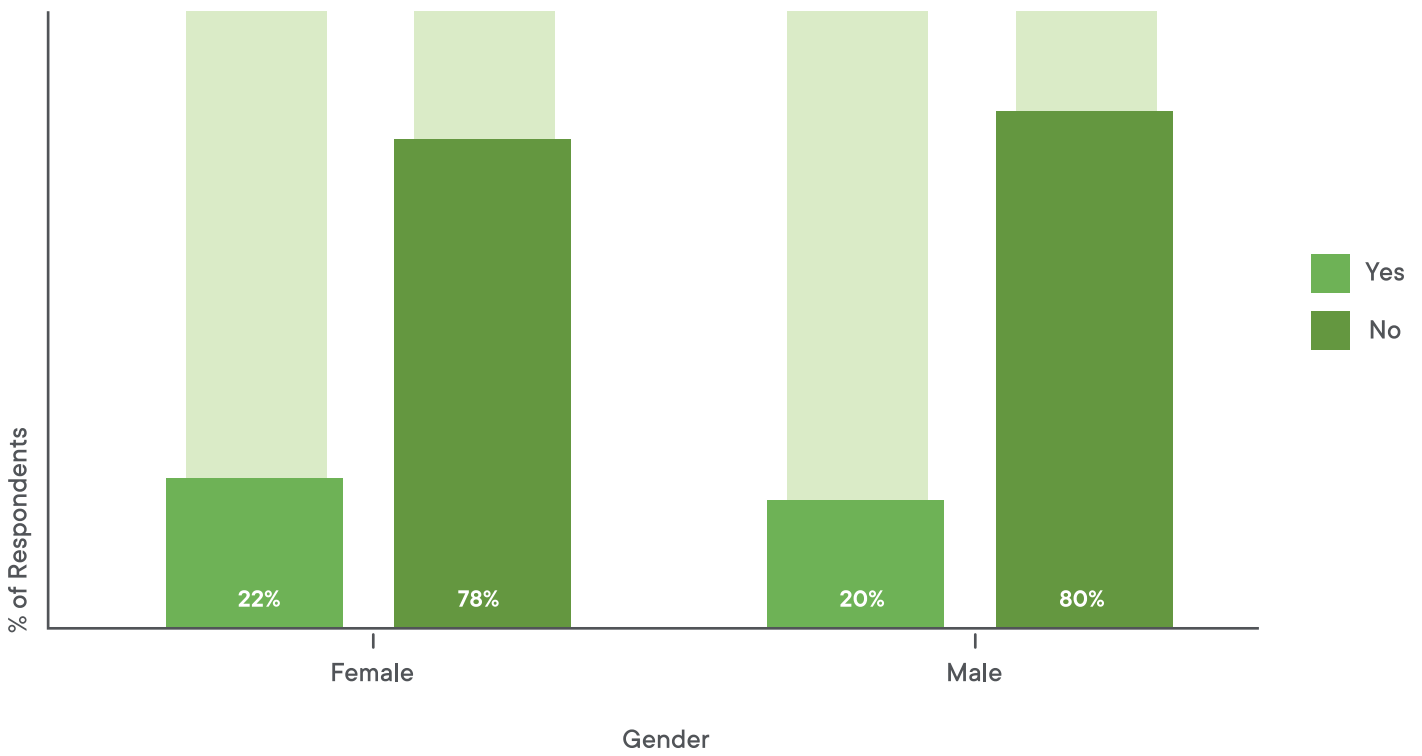


Figure 10c: Voting by Gender

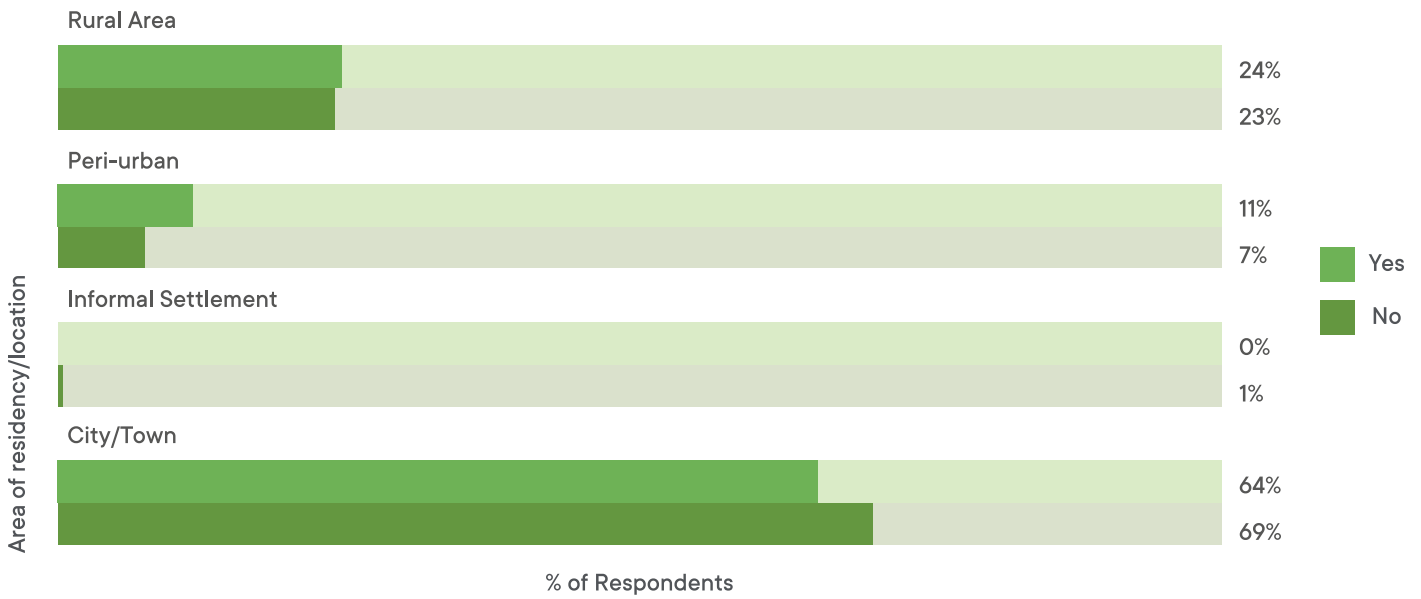


Figure 10d: Voters by area of residency

Citizen’s Participation in Policy Formulation

Less than a third (28% or 685) of the respondents has been a part of government-led consultations on the policy formulation process (see Figure 11a below). Of the 685 that have had the privilege of participating in policy-related consultations, 31% have made inputs into improving service delivery, 28% into the performance of local authorities and 17% into the perfor-

mance of central government (see Figure 11b) below. Furthermore, there is very limited national discussion and consultations on economic policy; out of the 685 respondents who had been a part of government-led policy consultations, only 116 (17%) have been part of the budget consultations and only 61 (9%) have been part of discussions over broader economic policy.

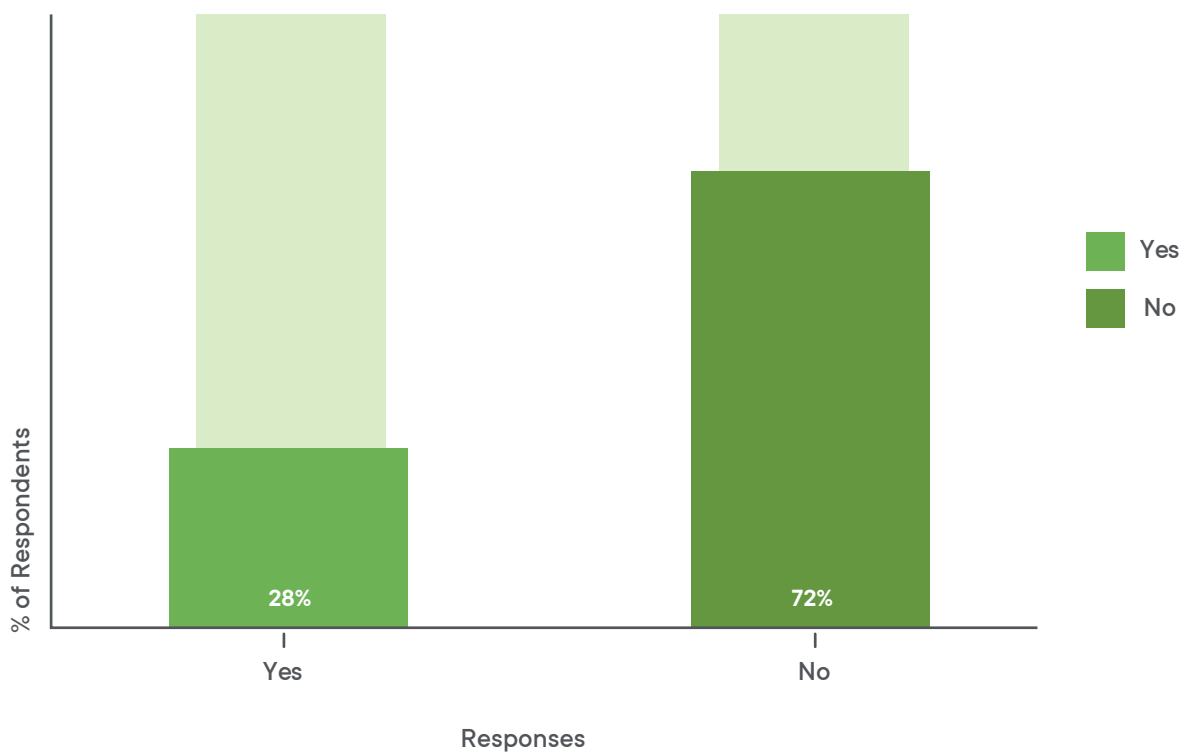


Figure 11a: Citizen participation in policy formulation processes

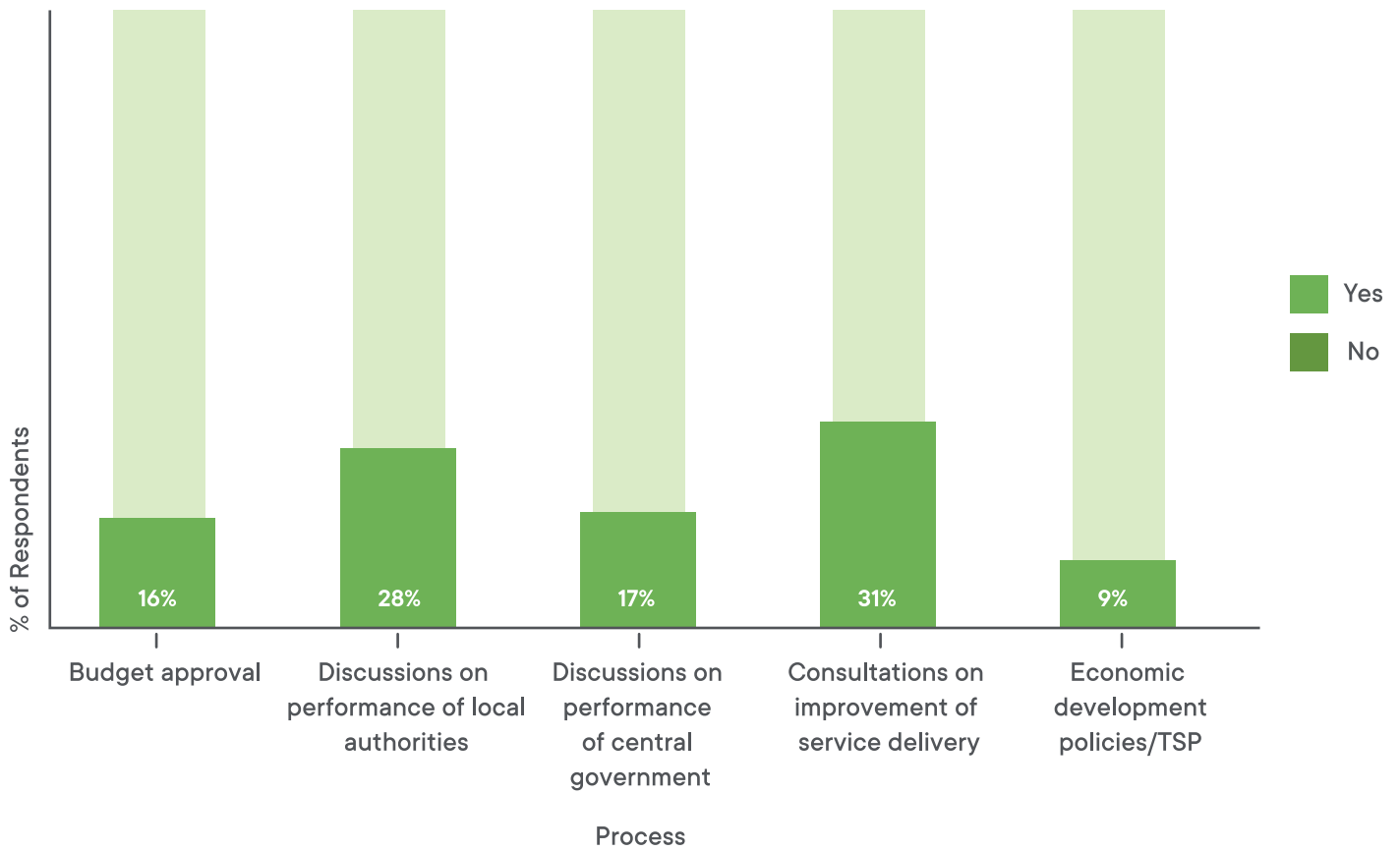


Figure 11b: Policy Formulation Areas

Scope for making an input towards Public Policy Processes

The majority (55%) of the citizens do not believe that the government has created adequate processes that allow for broad participation in the formulation of public policies. Despite the evidence of limited partici-

pation described above, 45% of the respondents have confidence that there is scope for them to make an input towards public policy (see Figure 12).

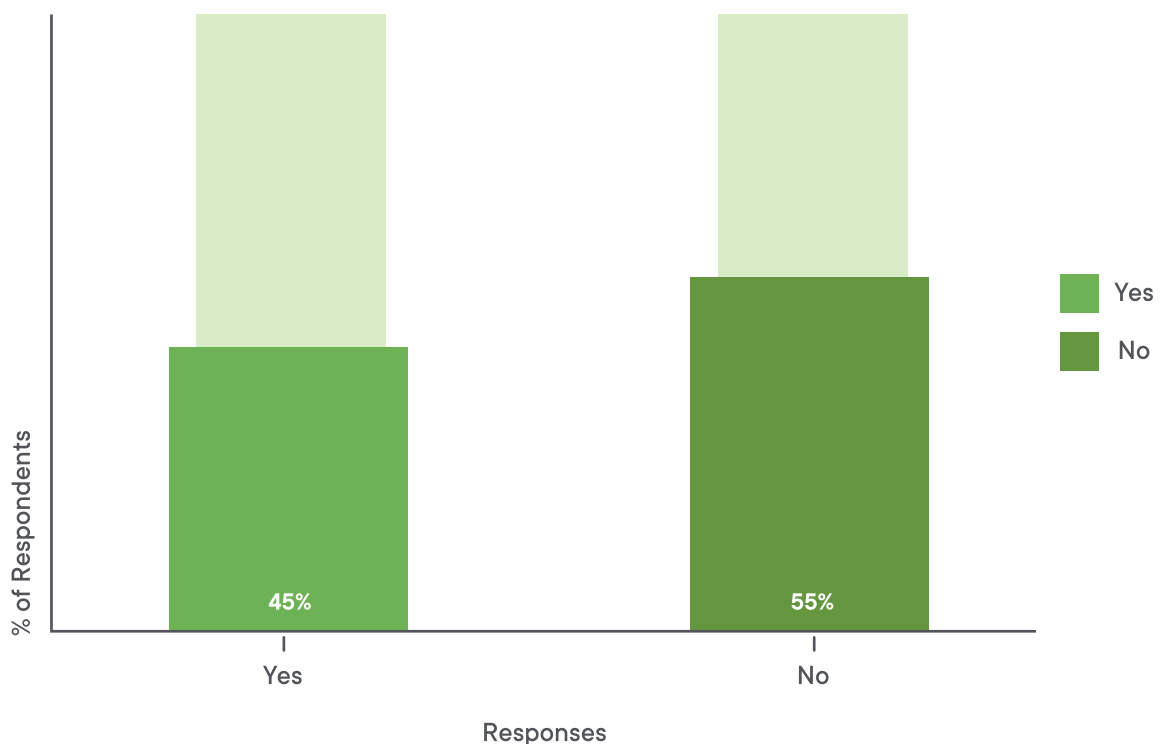


Figure 12: Citizens' perception on input towards Public Policies

Participation at Different Levels of Government

Citizens were asked to rank their perception of opportunities for participation using low, medium and high as indicators. The majority believe that there is more scope for participation at ward level and at the municipality/rural district level compared to the national level. There is some even distribution when it comes to perceptions of participation at traditional authority lev-

el. However, citizens feel that national-level processes are mostly closed off from broader participation. The majority (66%) felt that there is limited scope for participation in national-level processes. There is an even greater majority (73%) that think there is very limited scope to make an input towards the national budget (see Figure 13).

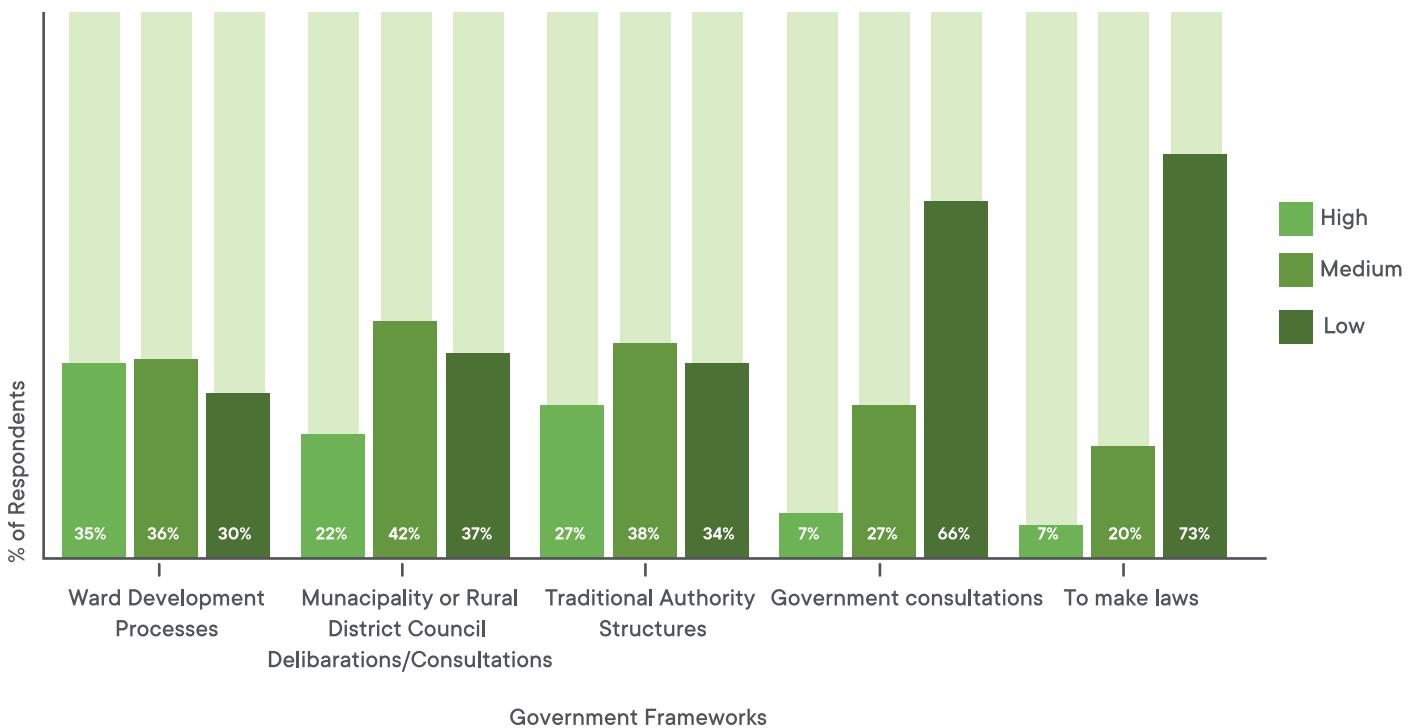


Figure 13: Levels of citizen participation across different tier of decision-making

Perceptions of Scope to Influence Decisions

Citizens were asked to rank, based on their perceptions, if they felt decision making at local and national levels is open, somewhat open or closed from public input. There is a strong perception amongst citizens that ward and rural district/municipality processes are somewhat open compared to the national level process which they feel are most closed and restricted to decisions made by officials (see Figure 14). There is a greater proportion

of respondents (41%) is somewhat open compared to those who think its closed. This pattern continues to the municipality/rural district level and to the *dunhu ra-Mambo/isigaba seNkosi* level of decision making. However, at national level the majority (66%) think that the decision-making process is closed, and only officeholders make decisions.

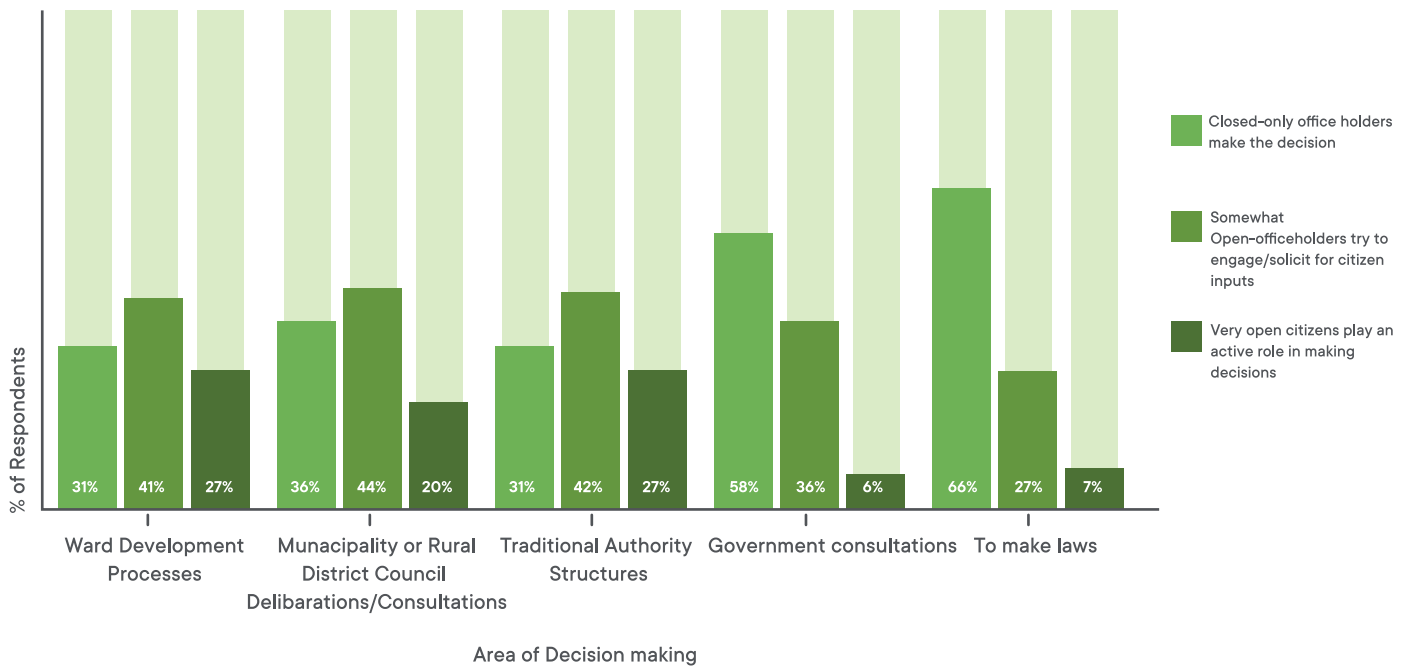


Figure 14: Levels of citizen participation across various governance frameworks

Levels of Satisfaction with Public Service Delivery

Citizens were asked about the extent to which they are satisfied with the performance of the government. The question allowed for multiple pre-coded responses which were (i) not at all satisfied, (ii) slightly satisfied, (iii) moderately satisfied, (iv) satisfied and (v) completely satisfied. There are high levels of dissatisfaction regard-

ing the overall performance of the government, ways in which the government is managing the economy, ongoing policy changes and local police services. The largest cohort of dissatisfaction (84%) is focused on the state of the economy followed by the overall performance of government (75%).

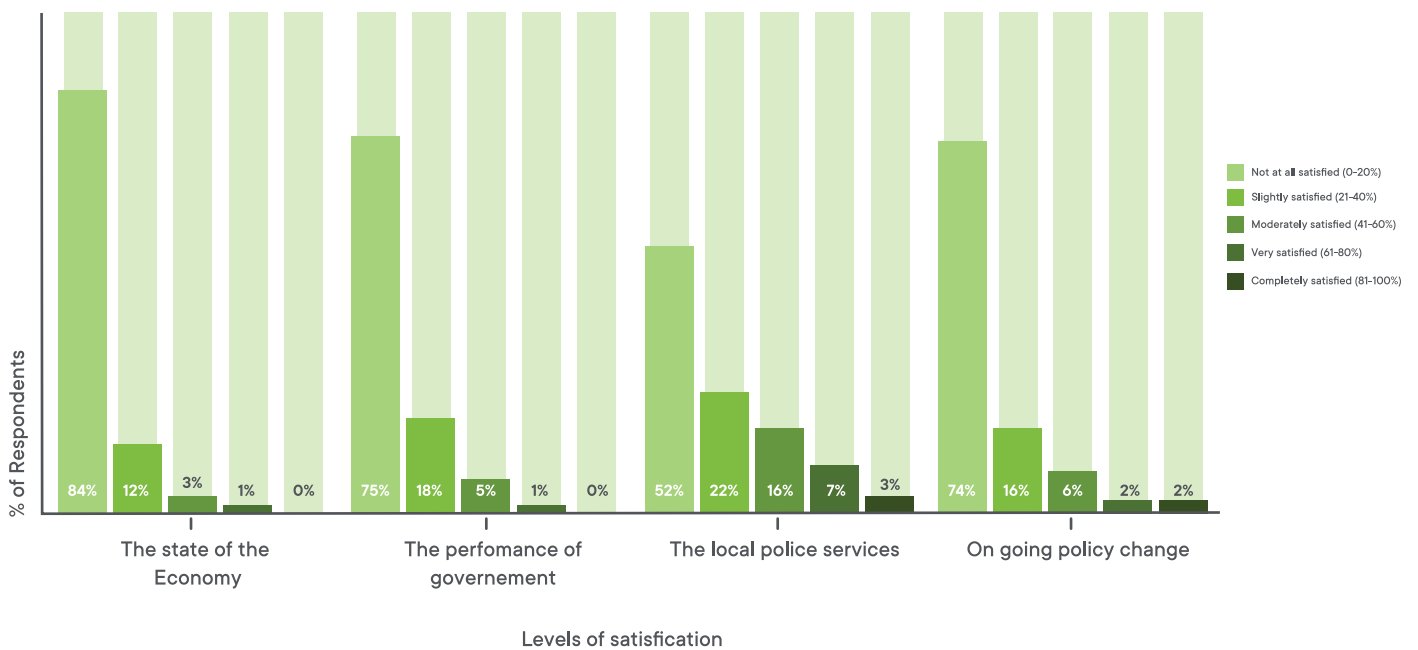


Figure 15: Levels of satisfaction with service delivery

Conclusion

The perceptions discussed above provide important insights in understanding levels of citizens’ knowledge regarding political structures, institutions and officeholders and also their participation. They also provide an opportunity for those in office to reorient their approaches and serve at the level of citizen expectation. Some of the most common expectation amongst citizens of their elected and non-elected officials is to help mobilize collective action within communities and allocation of resources. These are endeavours that usually are not part of the official roles of ward councillors, Member of Parliament and senators- but citizens are expecting them to commit more time in doing that. Could a conversation between citizens and officeholders begin at the level of mapping and agreeing on roles based on what citizens think is best rather than imposing functions as per enabling legislation? It is rare to see a government actually investing time to understand or learn about citizens’ needs neither do they actively engage them to assess whether their programmes

and policies meet the citizens’ expectations. Instead in many cases (beyond Zimbabwe), those in office act as if they know what citizens want and proceed to implement measures and policies that they think will resolve the challenges that citizens face.

Many citizens think officeholders should provide welfare. According to the survey, response an average 53% of the respondents expect officeholders to provide welfare. The welfare expectation creates an enormous burden on officeholders although there is no official budget that is administered by these functionaries to service this need. The only exception is the chief who, through the *zunde raMambo/isiphala seNkosi*, has some form of capacity to directly provide welfare support. The mismatch in terms of actual function and expectation in this instance can lead to tensions and negatively affect levels of trust between communities and officeholders.

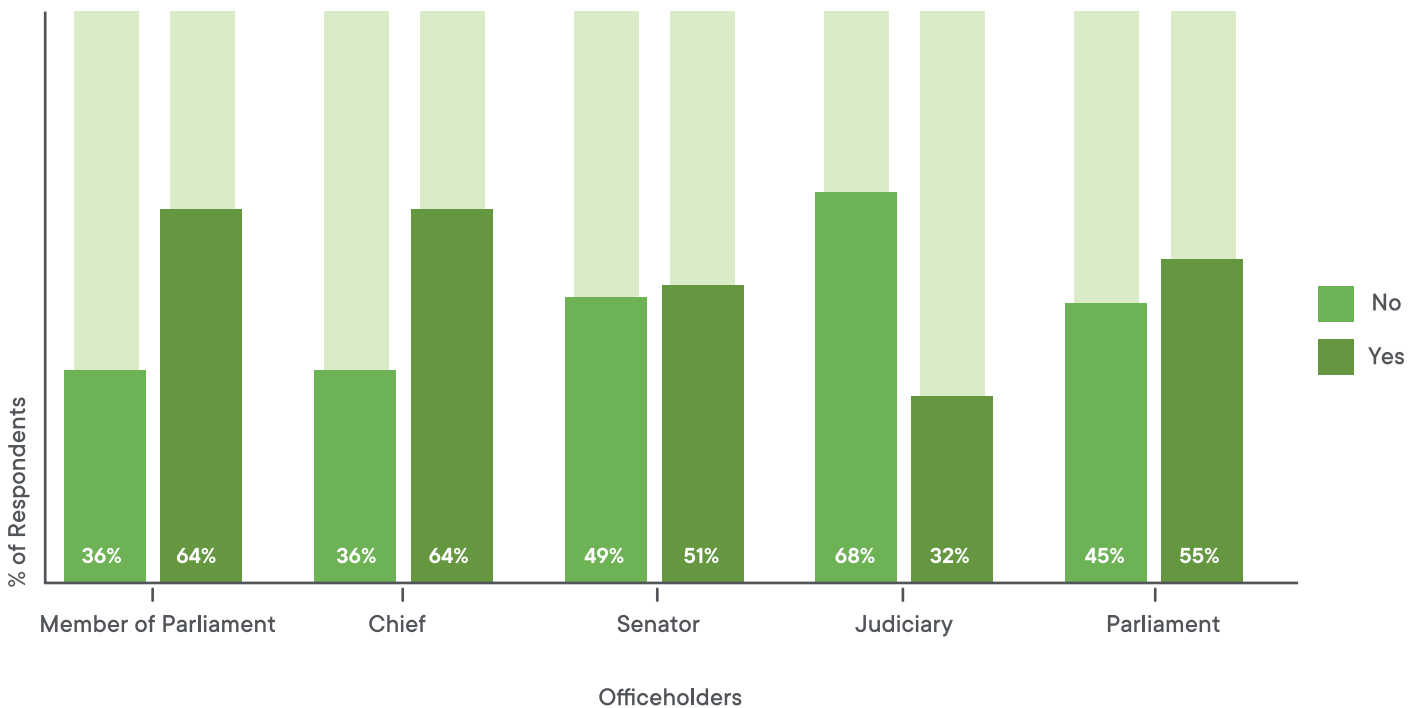


Figure 16: Knowledge of the role of the office holders in providing welfare.

Furthermore, evidence from the field suggests that citizens tend to have more confidence in local government processes than those of central government. They do not think that the government has adequately invested in broadening the scope for participation. Citizens feel that there is a higher probability of influencing local decision making than central government. There is also

a general dissatisfaction with the central government in terms of performance in managing the economy and loss of confidence in the policy changes that are being implemented. It is also important to note that the high levels of dissatisfaction are also evident in local service delivery.

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