

National Citizen Survey 2026

Priorities vs. Expectations

What Citizens Need, What They Expect
and Where Public Resources Go

Findings from a National Public Opinion Study by IPOR

Data Collection Period
23rd Aug – 5th Sept 2026



About IPOR

Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) is an independent research institution with ability to gauge public opinion at its best on social issues, democracy and service delivery throughout Pakistan. IPOR is registered under section 32 of companies act, 1984 (XLVII of 1984) with the Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). IPOR's Executive Director is also a member of European Society for Opinion and Market Research (ESOMAR). It is globally recognized mark of excellence within and beyond the industry.



The results in this Report do not represent views held by IPOR. The results only represent public opinion, computed on the basis of views expressed by respondents selected through the procedure outlined in the methodology section of this Report. IPOR cannot be held liable to the users of this data. Any part of this publication can be used or cited with a clear reference to IPOR.



Sampling Methodology

Period :	23 rd Aug- 5 th Sep 2026
Survey Type :	In-person, in-home Face-to-Face interviews.
Eligibility :	Age 18+. The survey is a national representative sample of voting-age residents of Pakistan.
Total Respondents :	n = 5155
Response Rate :	Approximately 66% (Based on RR Formula developed by American Research Association)
Overall Margin of Error :	The Margin of Error is ±1.55% at the mid-range with a confidence level of 95%.

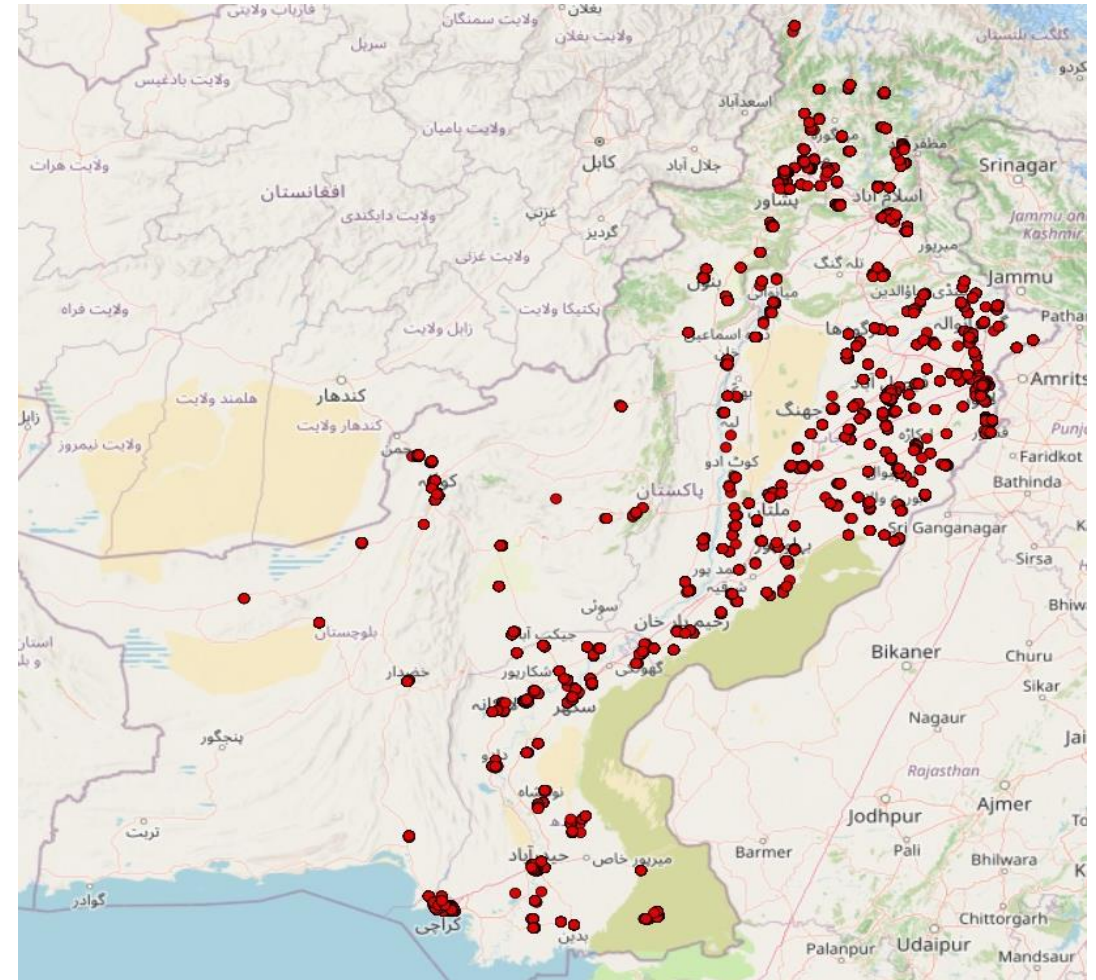
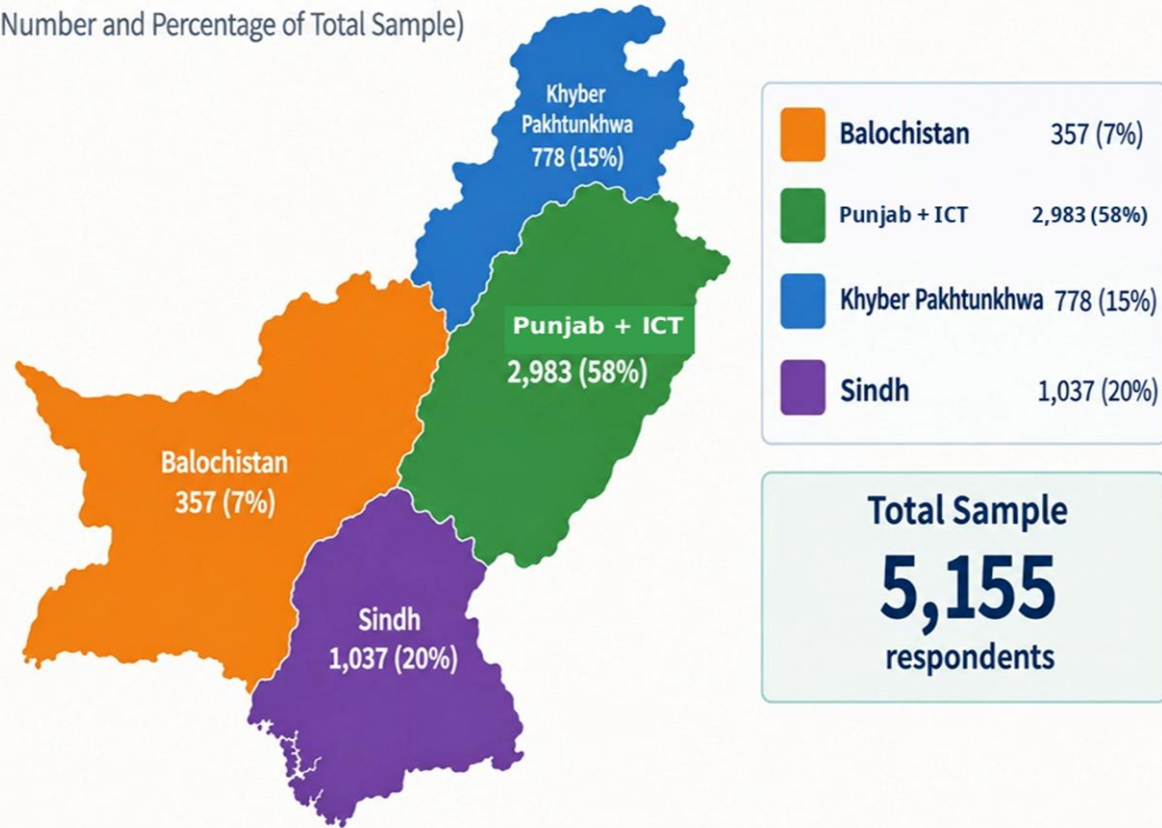


- **A four-stage** sampling design was employed. In the First stage, the country has been stratified into four provinces i.e. Punjab (+ICT), Sindh, KPK, Balochistan with urban and rural areas, which has been further stratified into administrative divisions (i.e. Districts). At least one district from each administrative unit has been selected to cover all regions of the country.
- In the Second Stage, a predetermined number of Enumeration Areas (EAs), (villages in rural areas & Union Council/Blocks in urban area) within each district are selected by using the Probability Proportion to Size (PPS) method using number of households in each EA as Measure of Size (MoS).
- In the Third stage of the sampling, 16 households from each sampled EA will be selected using “Random Walk” method with the right-hand rule.
- In the Fourth stage, the Kish Grid selection method will be used to select the respondent from the household, alternating between males and females to ensure gender balance.
- Household data from the census 2023 used as primary sampling framework.
- The data was collected by using **CAPI** (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) technique.
- Interview teams were comprised of both males and females; the female respondents were interviewed by female interviewers and male respondents by male interviewers.
- The information in this report has been compiled in accordance with international standards for market and social research methodologies. Figures in charts and tables may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding error.

Sample Distribution

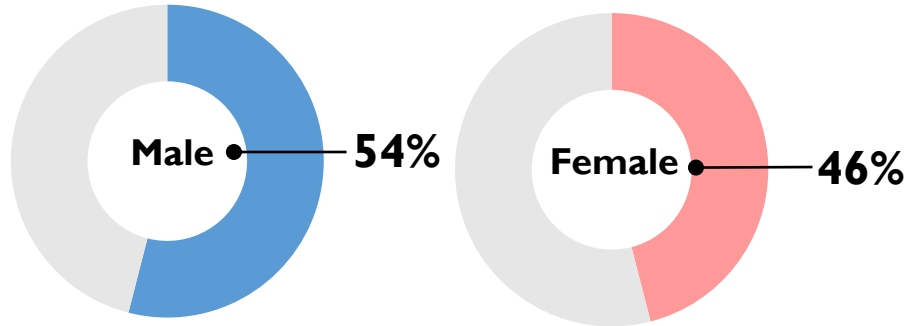
Sample Distribution by Province

(Number and Percentage of Total Sample)

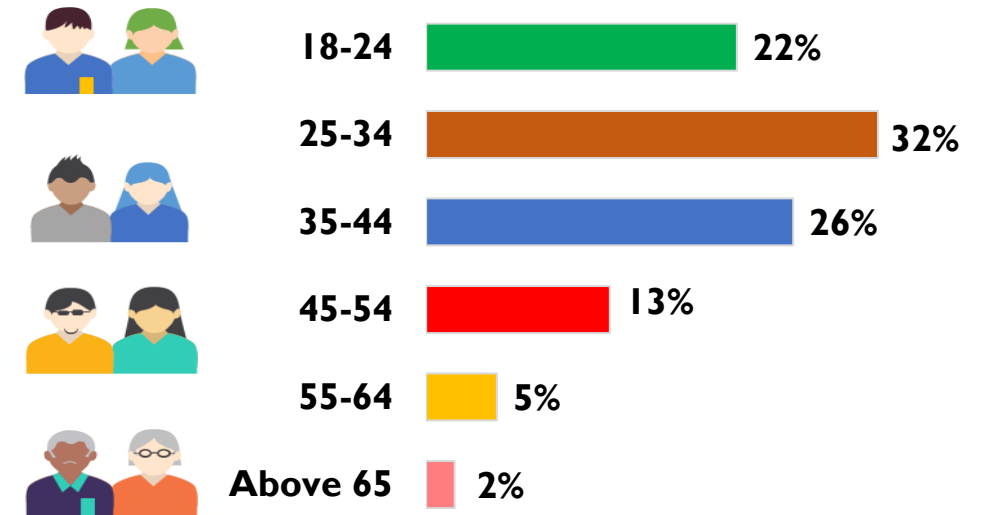


Survey Demographics

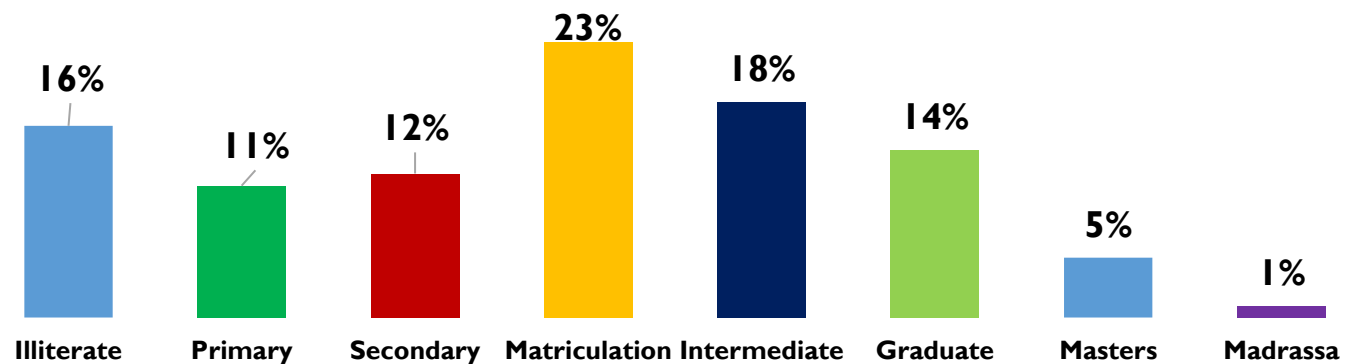
Gender



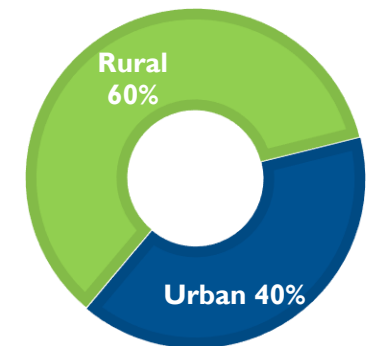
Age Group



Education

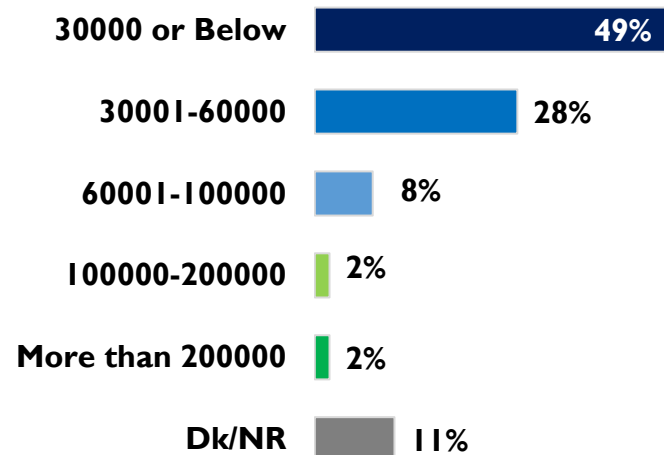


Urban/Rural

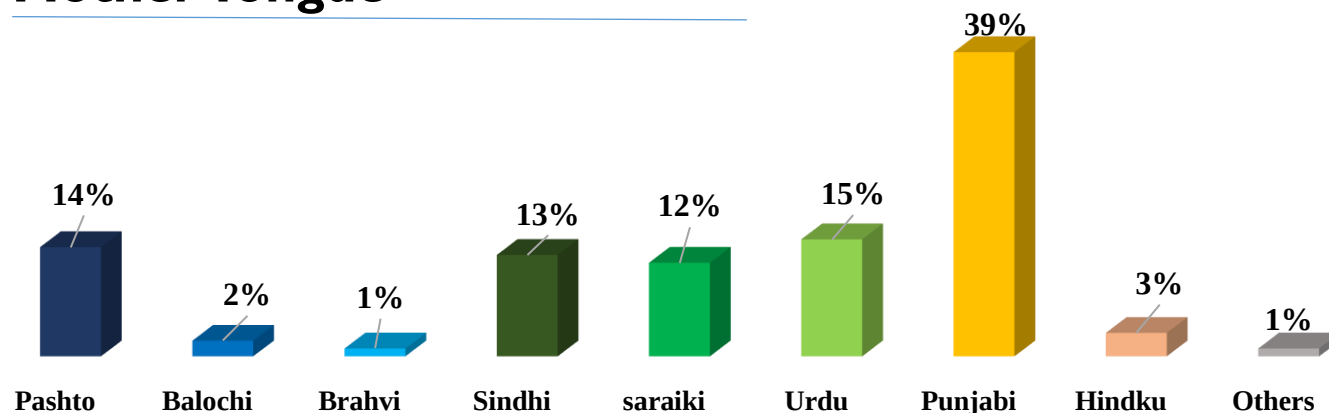


Survey Demographics

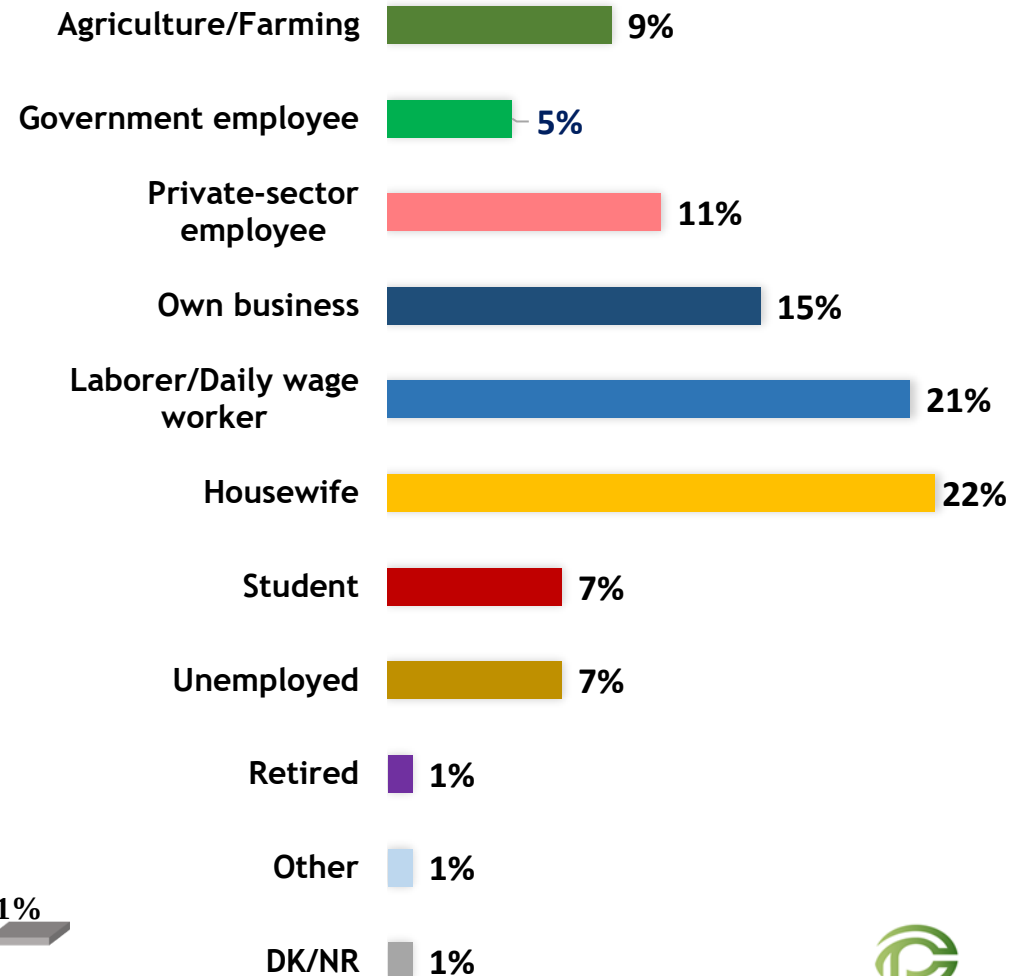
Income Level



Mother Tongue



Occupation



SECTION 01

THE CITIZEN'S VOICE

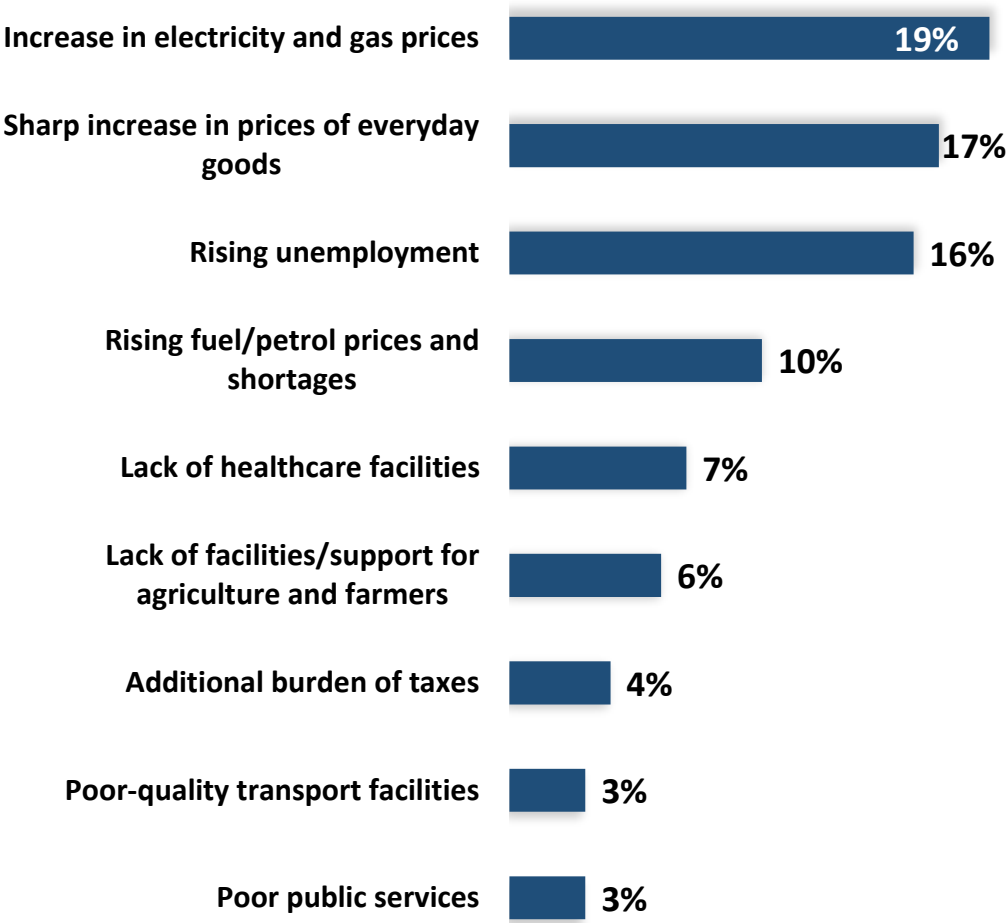
Public Mood, Priorities, Problems & Expectations



In your opinion, what are the five major problems currently facing Pakistani society?

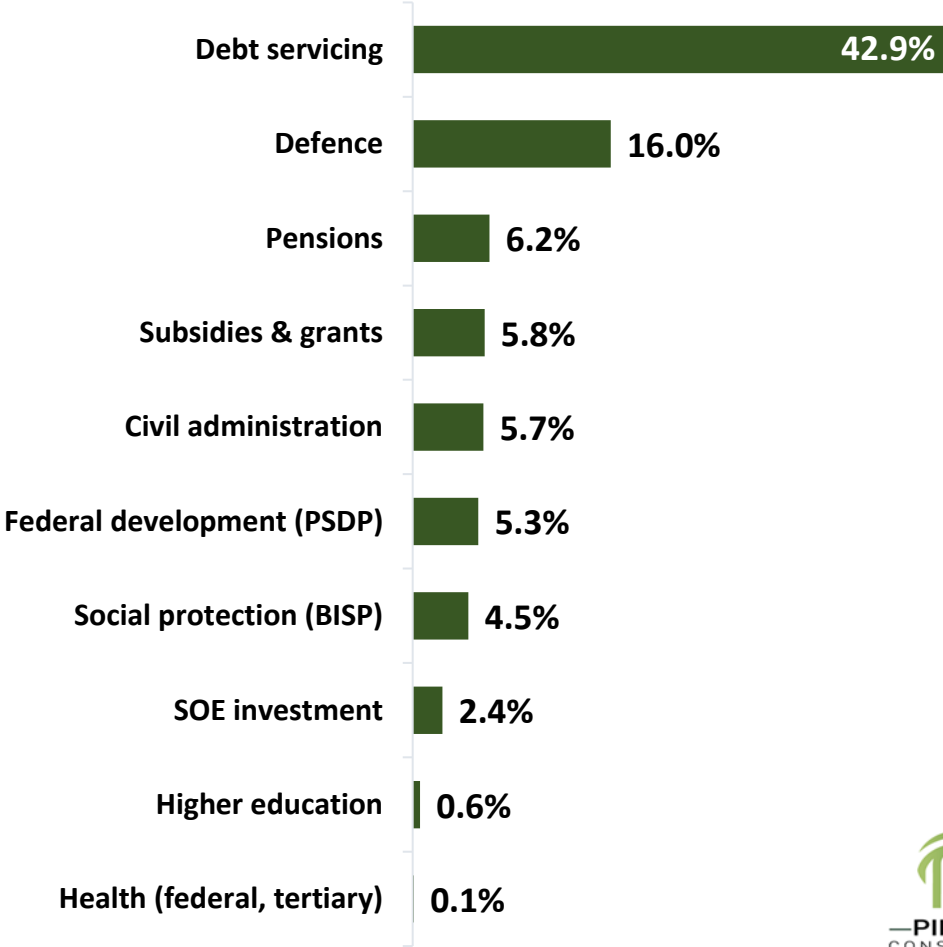
What Pakistanis Say They Need

Share of respondents naming each issue among their top 5 problems facing Pakistan today (multi-select)



Where Pakistan Spends

Major allocations as a share of the Rs 18.771 trillion federal budget, FY2026-27



The #1 Citizen Concern, a Circular Debt Problem



CITIZEN VOICE

19%

cite rising electricity & gas prices

Pakistan's single most-cited problem nationwide. Another 10% separately name fuel price hikes and shortages — together touching nearly every household.



GOVERNMENT SPEND

Rs 1.09tn

subsidies & grants (energy-inclusive)

Energy remains locked in circular debt despite large subsidy outlays — funds flow to cover losses in the power sector rather than lowering the price citizens pay.

INSIGHT

The mismatch here isn't a lack of funding — it's that subsidy spending plugs sector losses rather than reaching household bills, so the price pain citizens feel doesn't ease even as billions are spent.

Everyday Goods: The Second Cost-of-Living Front



CITIZEN VOICE

17%

cite sharp increases in prices of everyday goods

The second-most cited problem nationwide, after energy prices. Household budgets are being squeezed from two directions at once: utilities and the weekly grocery bill.



GOVERNMENT SPEND

Rs 1.09tn

subsidies & grants (5.8% of budget)

The same subsidy envelope that covers energy losses is the only budget line that could plausibly touch consumer prices. There is no separate food-price relief allocation.



INSIGHT Subsidy spending is overwhelmingly absorbed by power-sector circular debt, not consumer goods. A larger subsidy line doesn't translate into cheaper groceries for citizens.

Unemployment vs. a Shrinking Growth Budget



CITIZEN VOICE

16%

cite rising unemployment

The third-highest concern nationally. Job creation depends on growth and investment spending, the parts of the budget most exposed to fiscal squeeze.



GOVERNMENT SPEND

Rs 1.45tn

PSDP + SOE investment (7.7% of budget)

Federal development spending (5.3%) and SOE investment (2.4%) are the two lines most tied to job creation — combined, still under a fifth the size of debt servicing.



INSIGHT With debt servicing claiming first call on revenue, growth-oriented spending is structurally squeezed — leaving little room for the investment that drives employment.

Fuel Prices: A Tax Line, Not a Relief Line



CITIZEN VOICE

10%

cite rising fuel/petrol prices and shortages

Named separately from electricity and gas, this concern tracks pump prices and supply shortages — shaped largely by global oil markets and domestic levies.



GOVERNMENT SPEND

Rs 8.05tn

debt servicing draws on levy revenue (42.9%)

The petroleum levy is a per-litre tax collected at the pump — revenue that flows toward general and debt financing, not back out as price relief.



INSIGHT There is no budget lever cushioning pump prices: fuel costs pass through global prices plus a revenue-raising levy, while the levy itself helps fund debt — the opposite of relief.

Healthcare Spending: Still Far Below What the Need Demands



CITIZEN VOICE

7%

cite lack of healthcare facilities

Nearly 1 in 14 respondents name healthcare access among their top-5 problems — a substantial share for a single service-delivery issue.



GOVERNMENT SPEND

Rs 0.019tn

health — federal + all 4 provinces (0.8% of GDP, FY2024-25)

Health is largely a provincial subject post-18th Amendment. Combining federal and all four provincial health budgets gives the true picture of national health spend.



INSIGHT Combined federal and provincial health spending is just 0.8% of GDP — far below the ~5% of GDP the WHO says is needed for adequate universal health coverage.

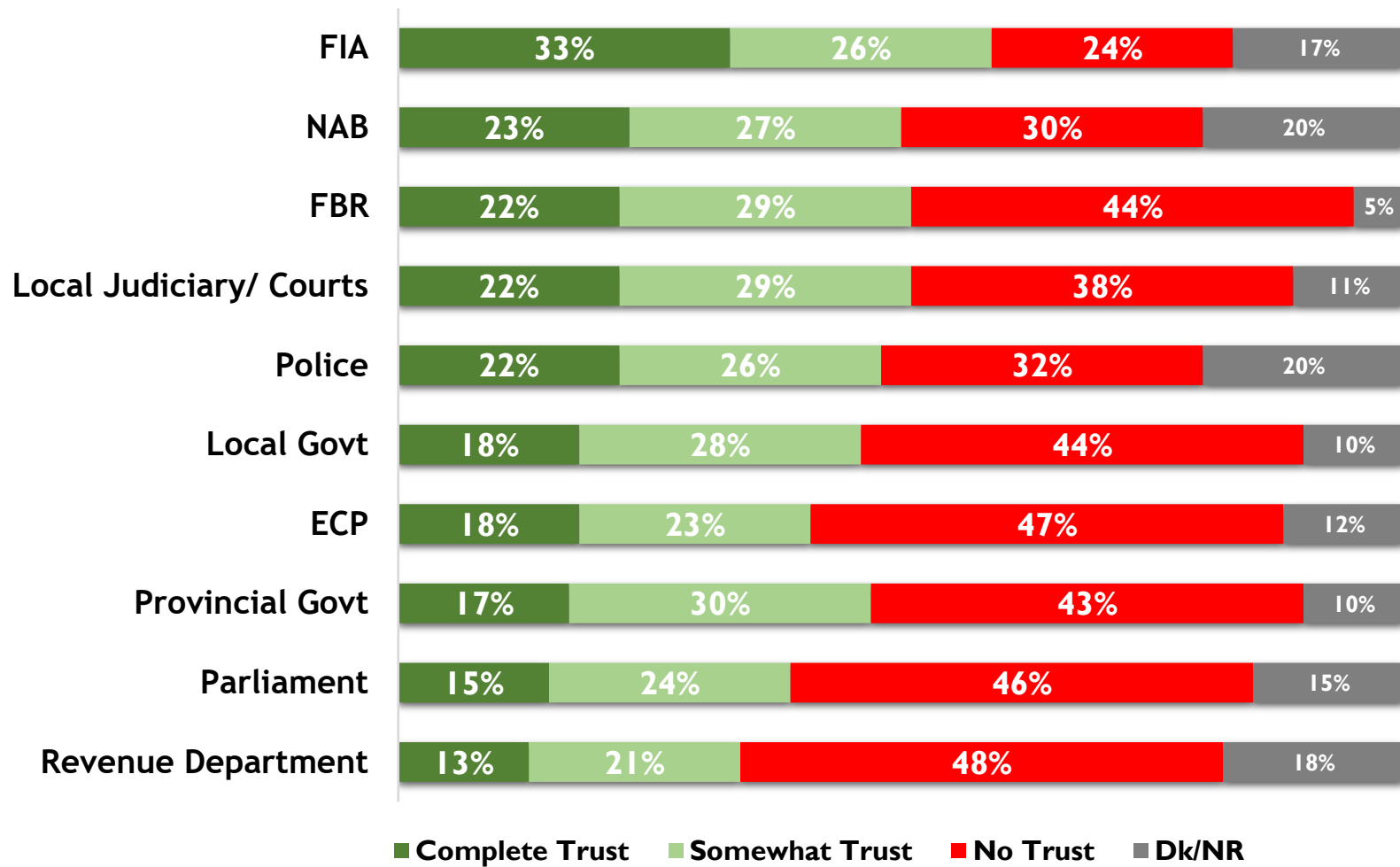
SECTION 02

CORRUPTION & TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

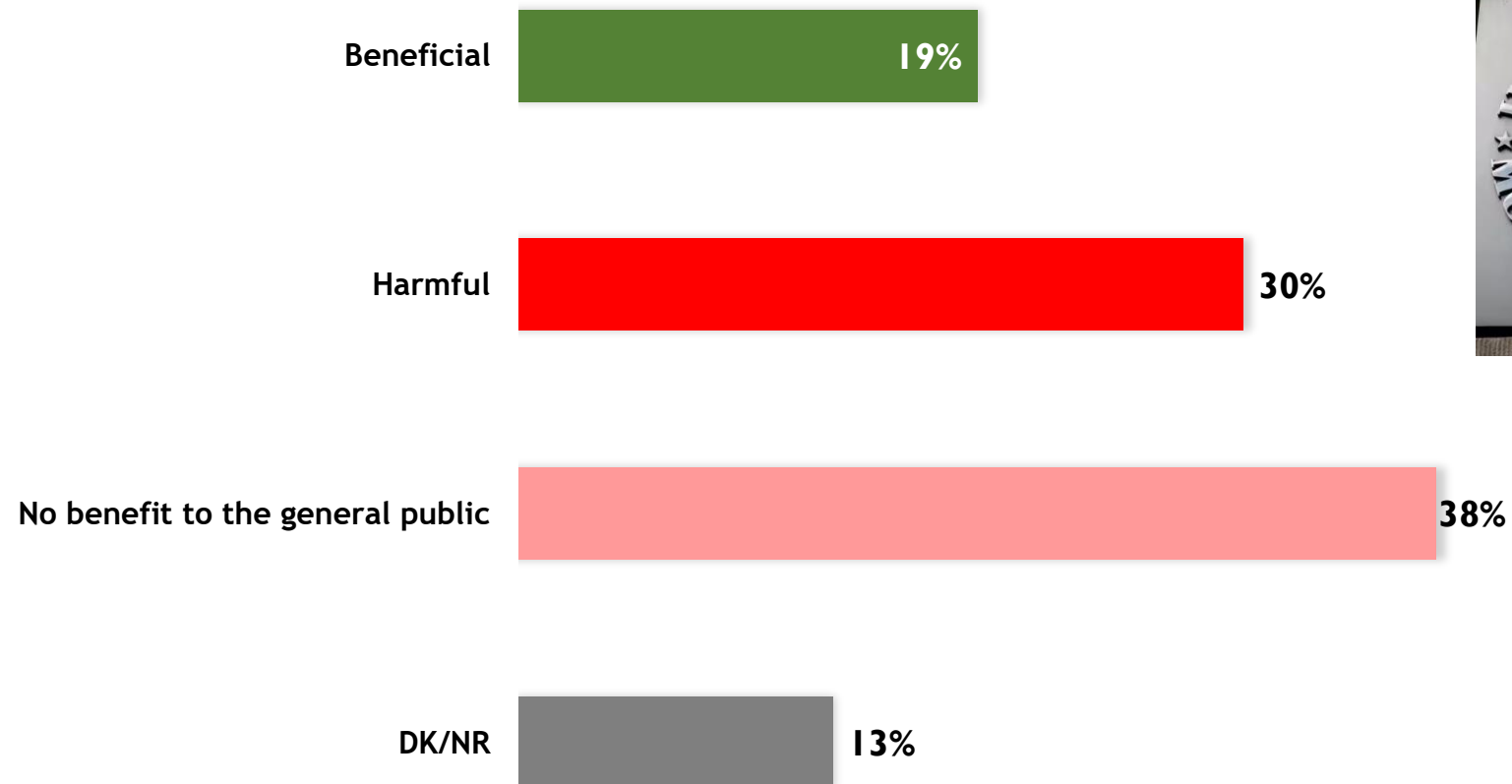
Public Perceptions, Experiences & Expectations



What is your opinion about the performance of the following institutions?



How do you view the IMF program in relation to Pakistan's economic stability?



What is your opinion about Pakistan's increasing debt burden?

Encouraging

5%

A cause for concern

17%

Extremely concerning

49%

No benefit to the general public

24%

DK/NR

5%



GOVERNMENT SPEND

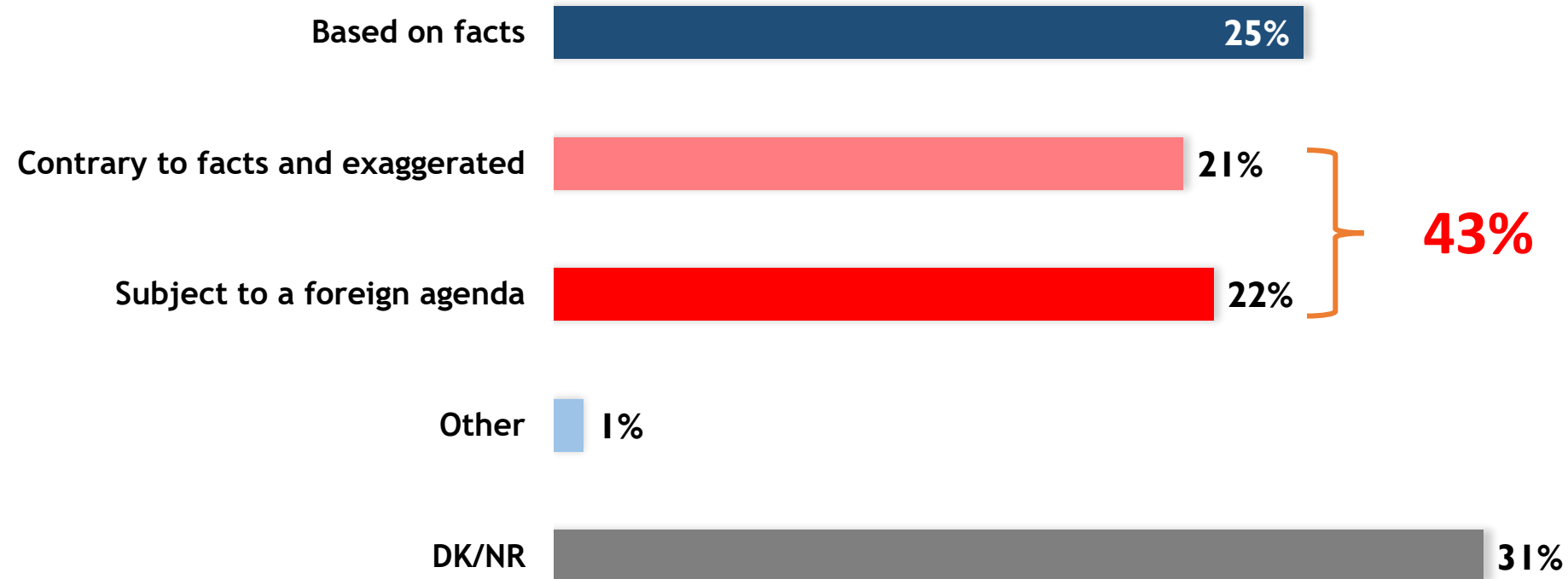
Rs 8.05tn

debt servicing (42.9% of budget)

Debt servicing is the single largest claim on the federal budget — more than double defence and roughly 424 times federal health spending.



How do you view the perspectives and reports on Pakistan produced by foreign-funded NGOs and think tanks?



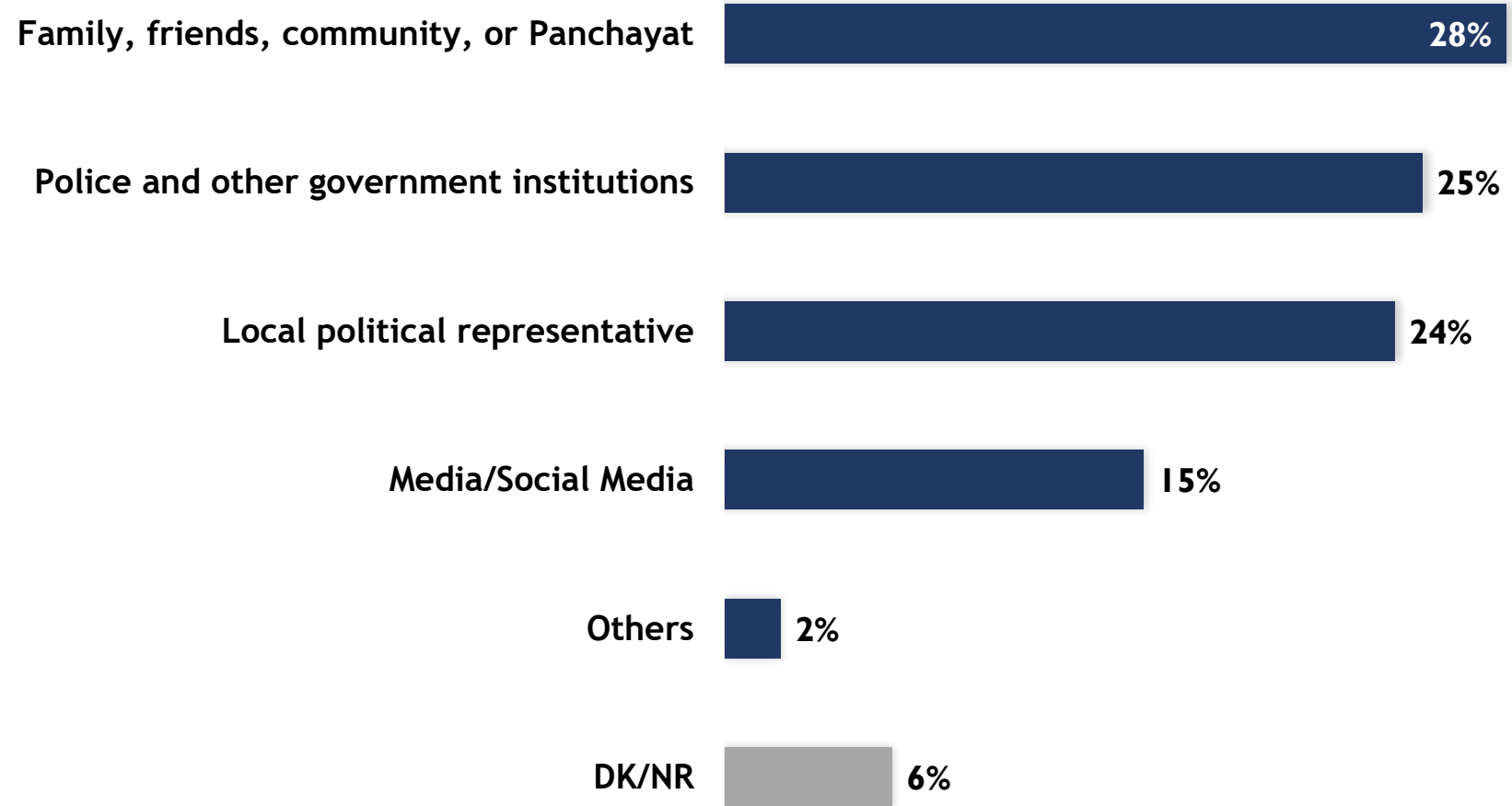
SECTION 03

ACCOUNTABILITY, JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

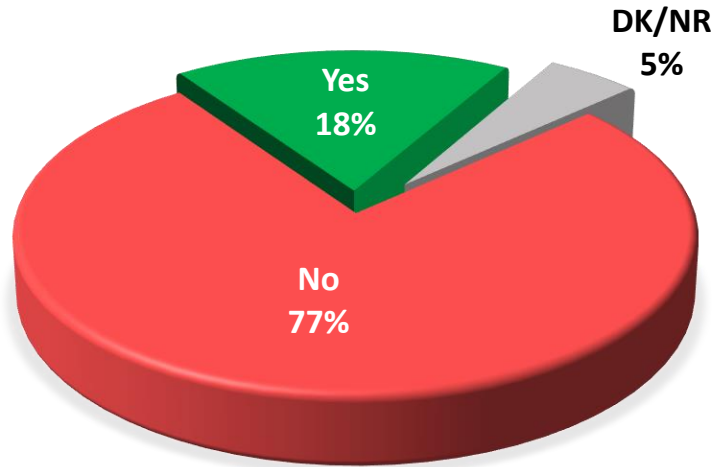
Public Perceptions, Experiences & Expectations



Whom would you approach to resolve the problems you are facing?



During the past year, has any government institution or government official asked you for a bribe?



CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX 2025



INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTION:



Pakistan perceived
as having a **high level
of public-sector
corruption**

(score **28/100**)



PERCEPTION VS. EXPERIENCE



CITIZEN EXPERIENCE:



18%
reported being
asked for a bribe

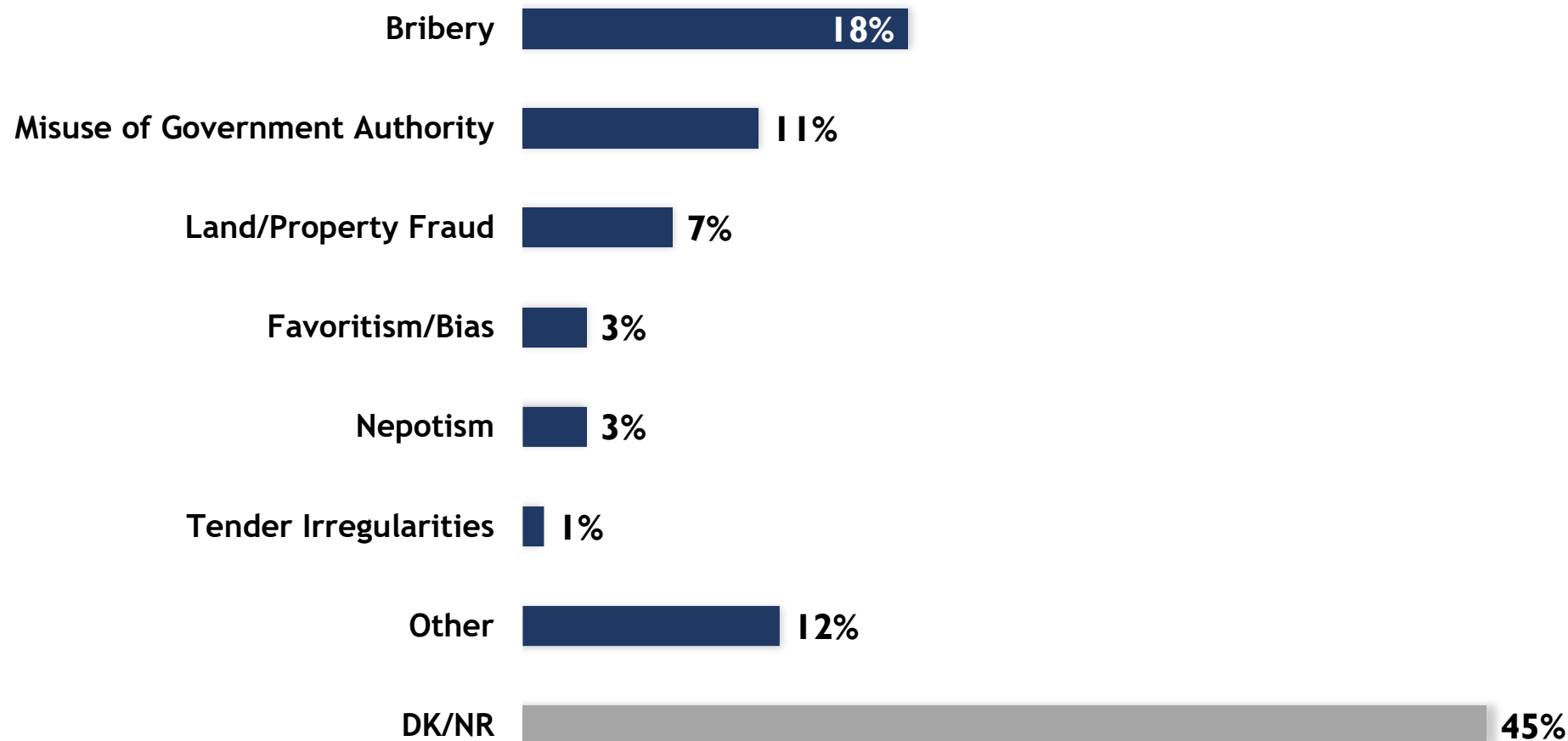
77%
reported no
such experience

Takeaway: Perception should not be treated as a substitute for measuring actual citizen experiences.

Report Link: <https://files.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI-2025-Report-EN.pdf>

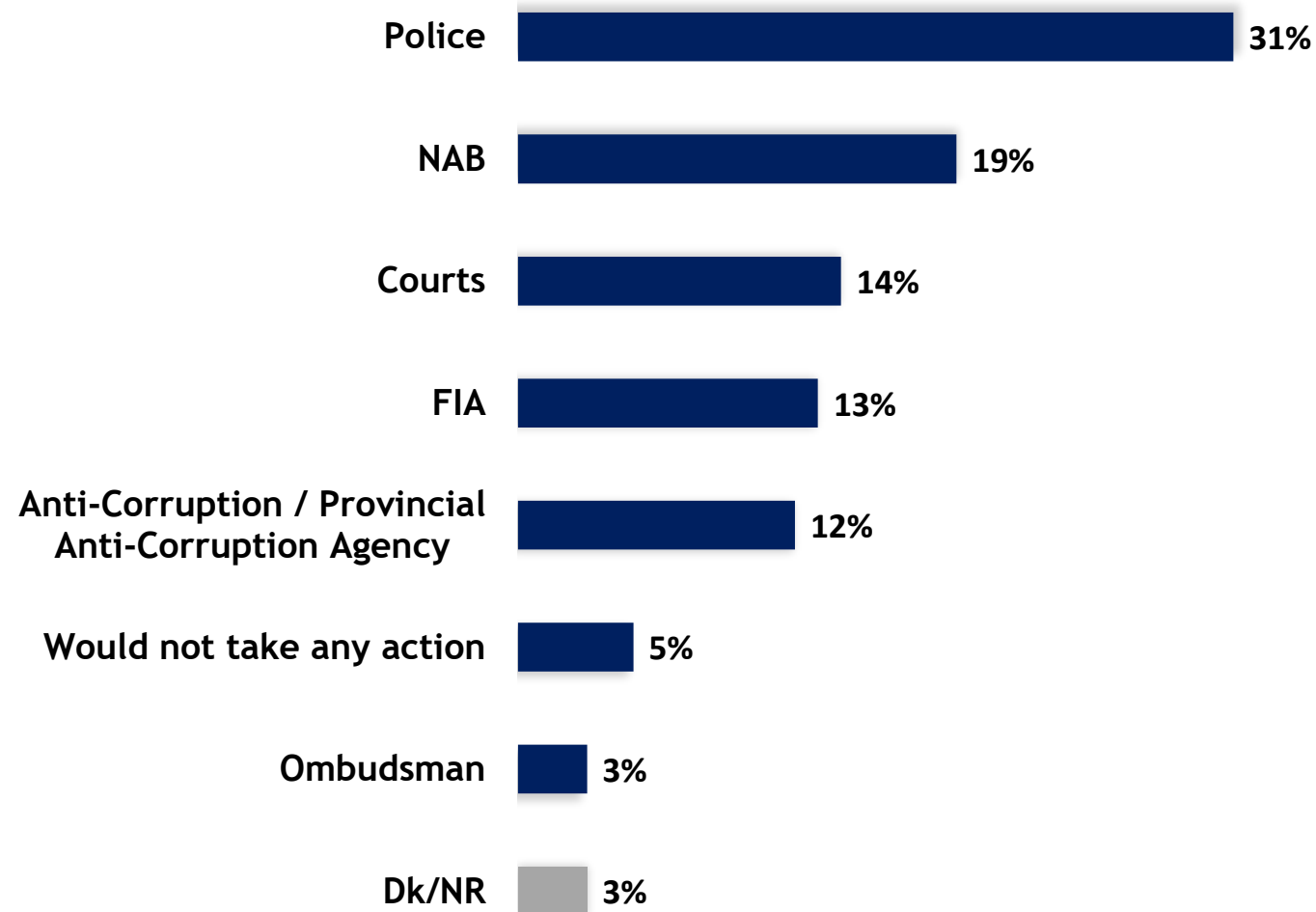


What type of corruption have you experienced in the past year? Of those 18% who said “Yes”



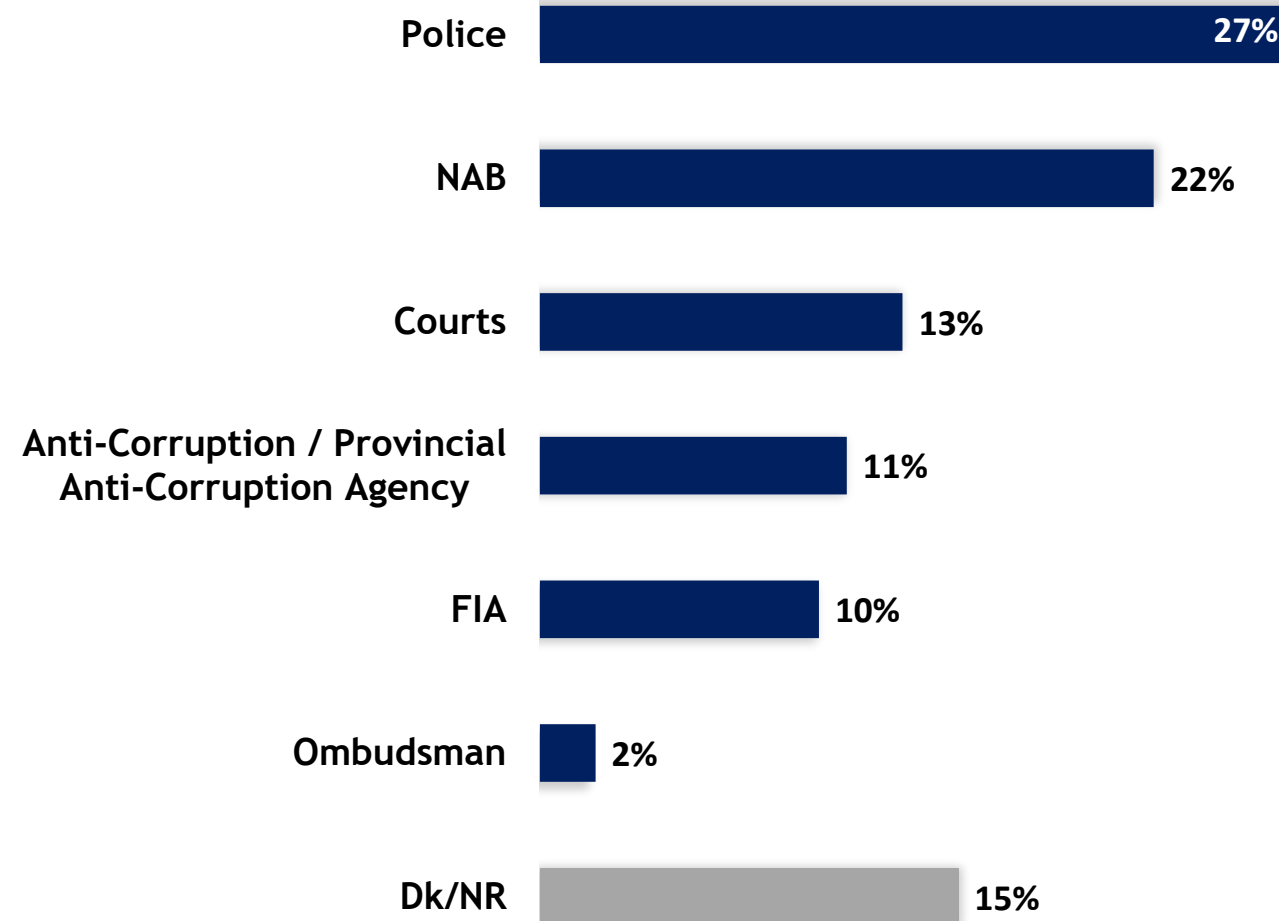


If you face corruption, bribery, fraud, or misuse of authority, which three institutions would you contact first?



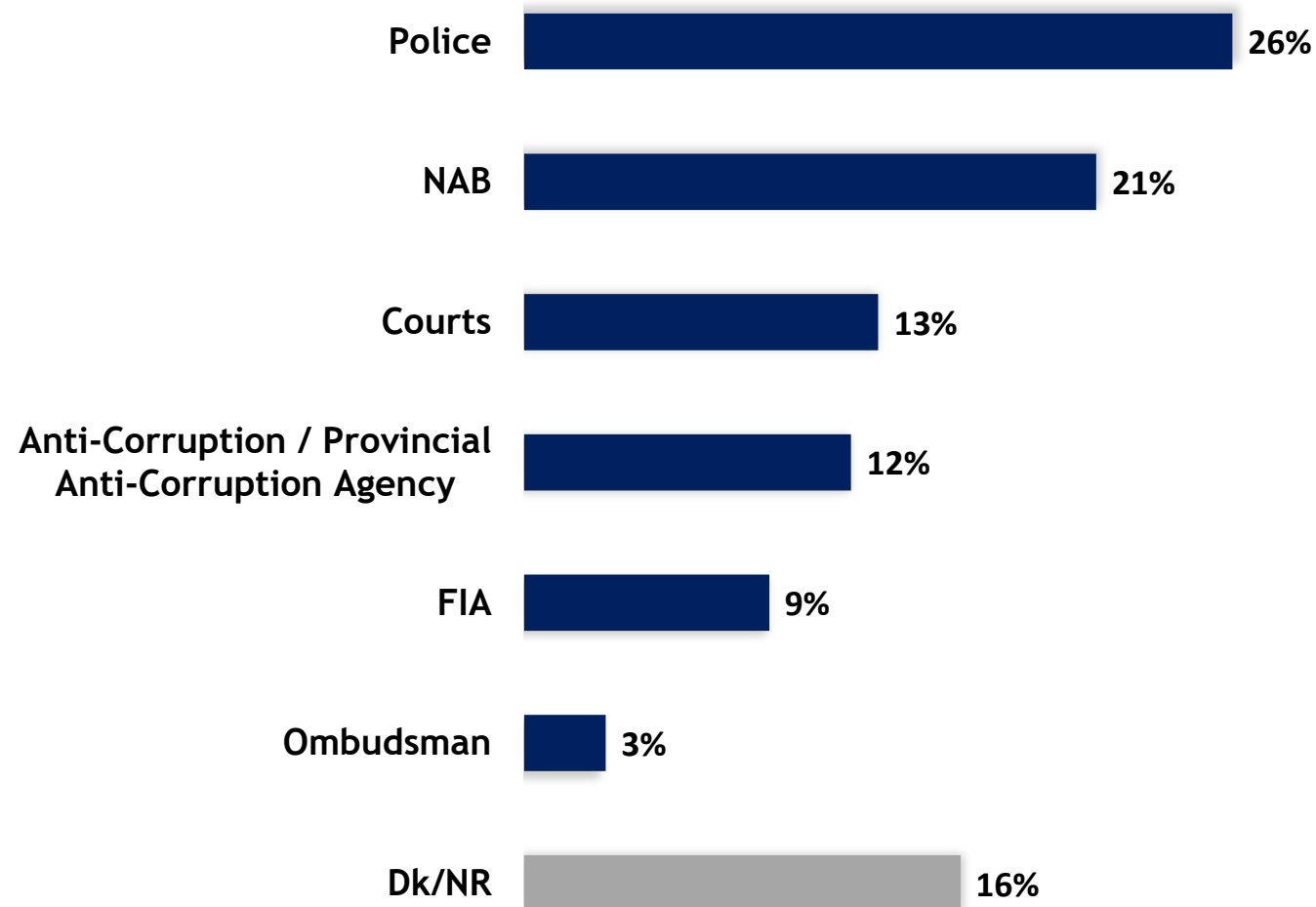


In your view, which institution can take effective action to investigate major financial fraud, including fraud involving housing schemes?





In your opinion, which institution has performed the best in combating corruption?



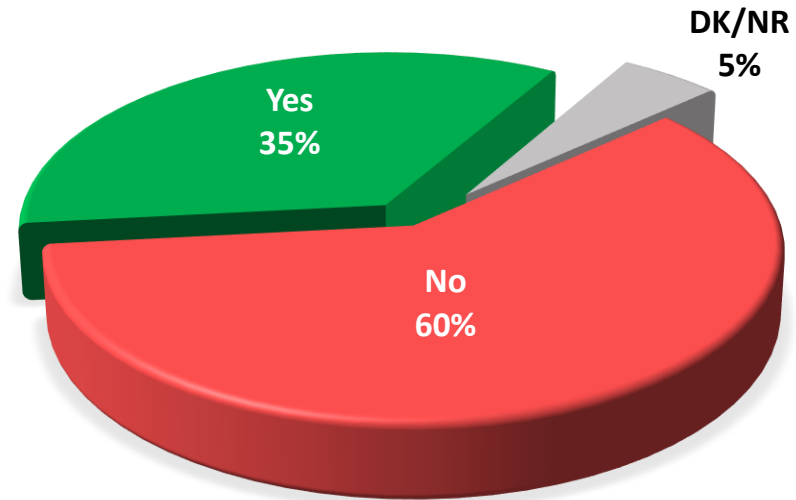
SECTION 04

EDUCATION

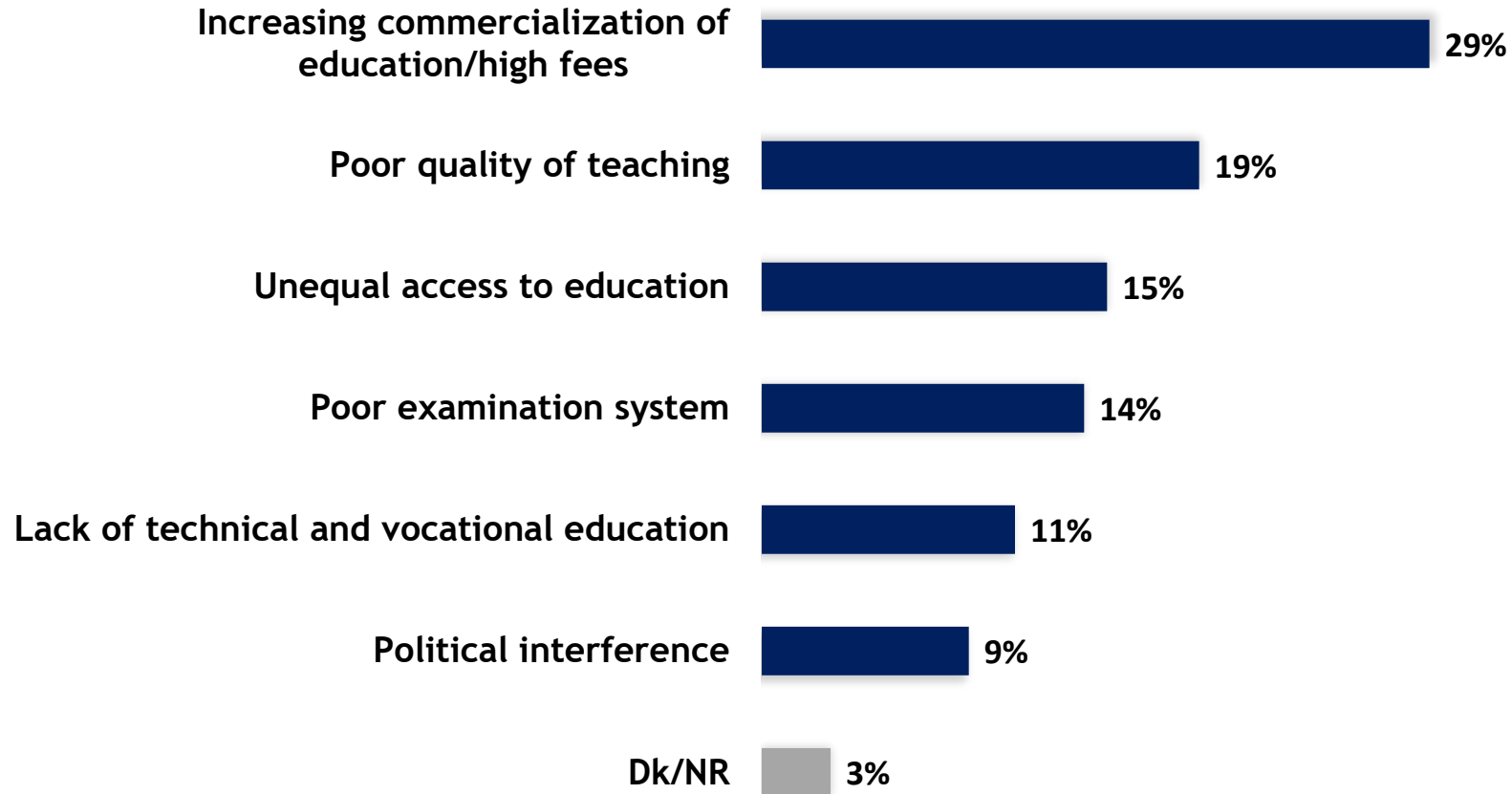
Quality, Access and Citizens' Expectations
from Essential Services



Do you think Pakistan's current education system is aligned with modern needs?

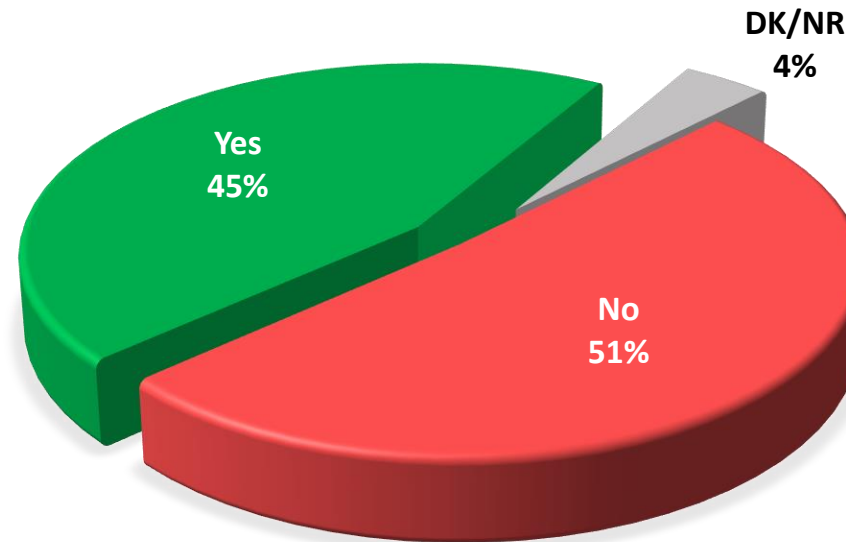


In your opinion, what are the three major problems facing Pakistan's education system?





Do you think Pakistan's education system helps young people become responsible citizens and secure employment?



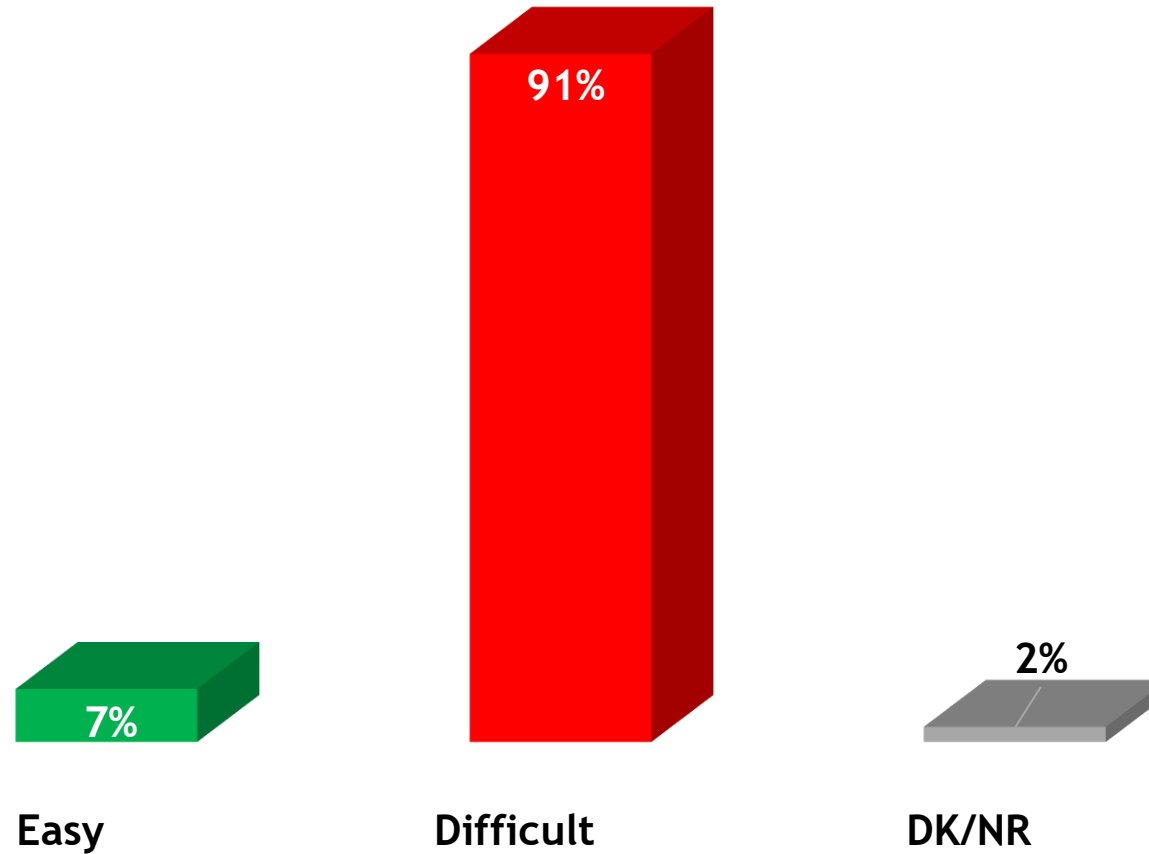
SECTION 05

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

Business Environment, Registration
and Growth Opportunities

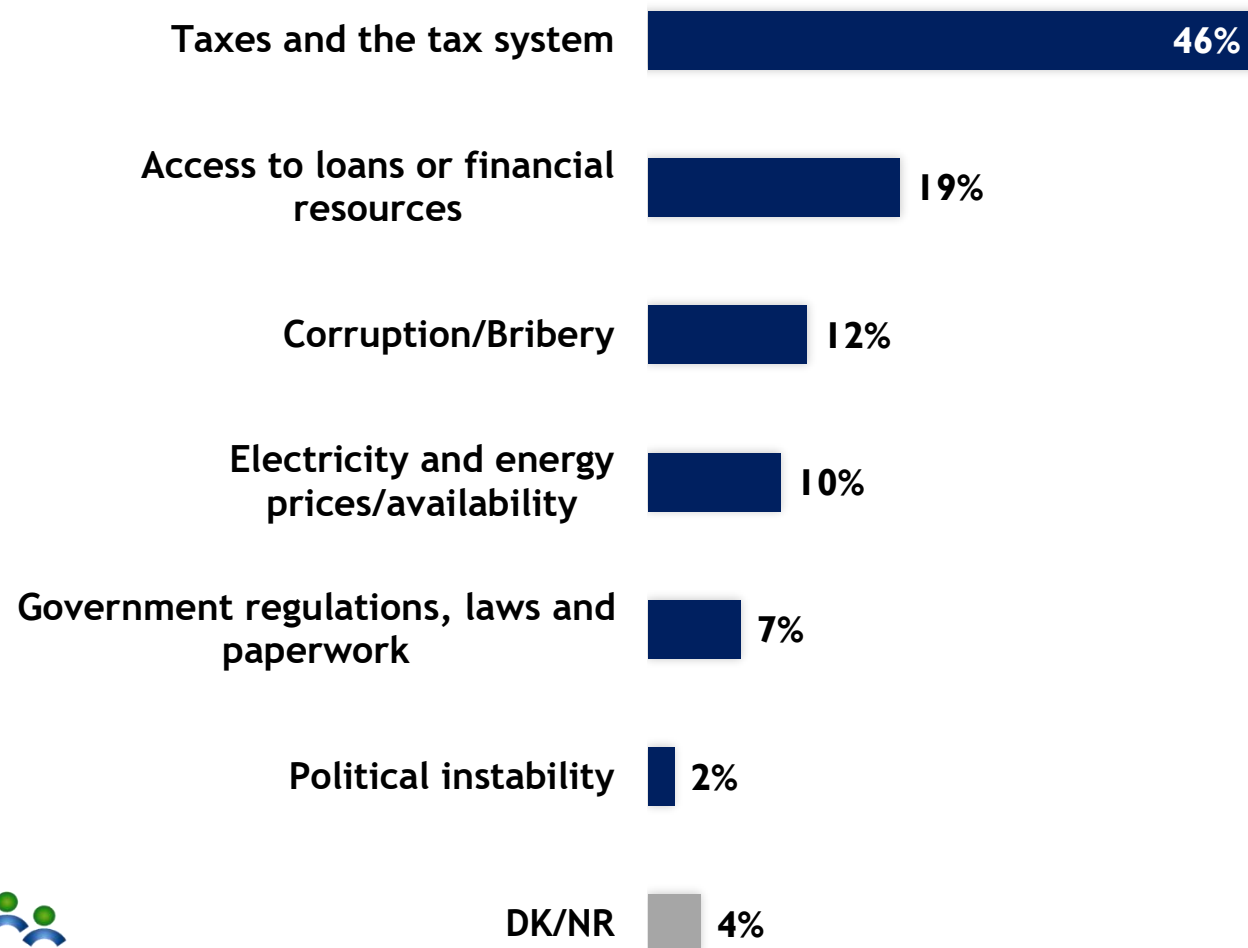


In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it to start and operate a business in Pakistan today?





In your opinion, what is the biggest barrier to doing business in Pakistan today?



TAXATION EMERGES AS THE BIGGEST BUSINESS BARRIER



identify **taxes and the tax system** as the biggest barrier to doing business.

IPOR



World Bank B-READY

Pakistan's **Taxation** score.

World Bank B-READY

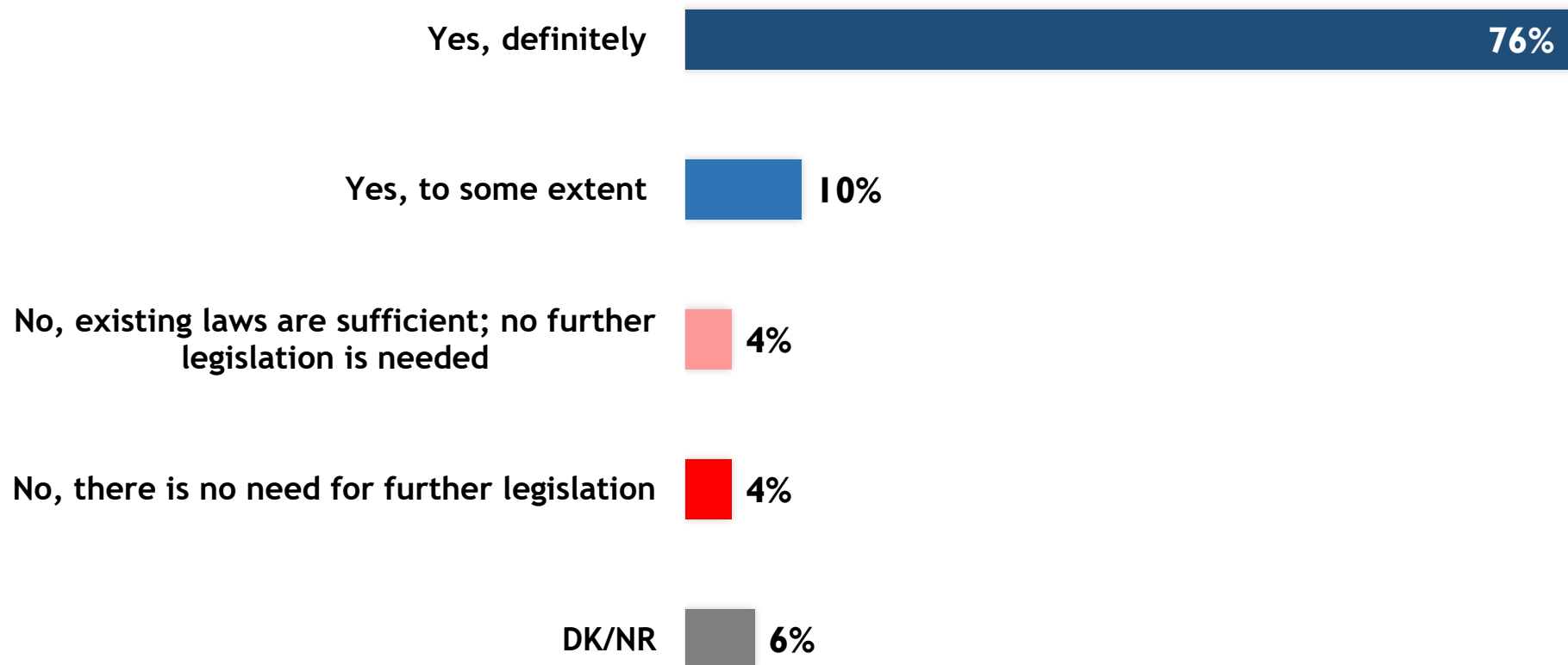


Key takeaway:

"Taxation is the dominant concern among citizens, while the World Bank's B-READY assessment also identifies substantial room for improvement in Pakistan's tax environment."

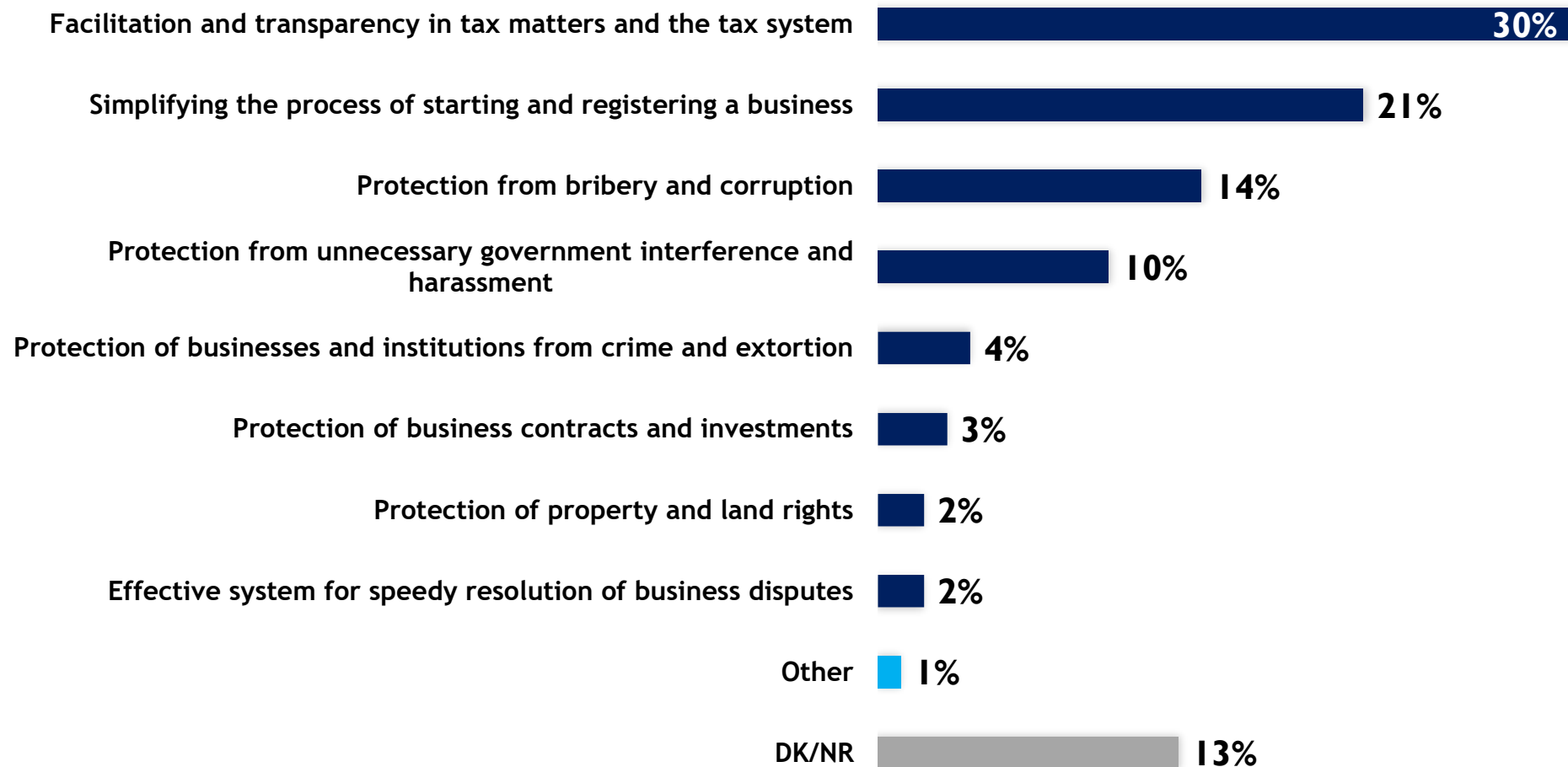


Do you think additional legislation is needed to protect the rights of individuals and businesses engaged in legitimate and lawful business activities?





In your opinion, where is additional legislation most needed to protect the rights of those engaged in lawful business activities?



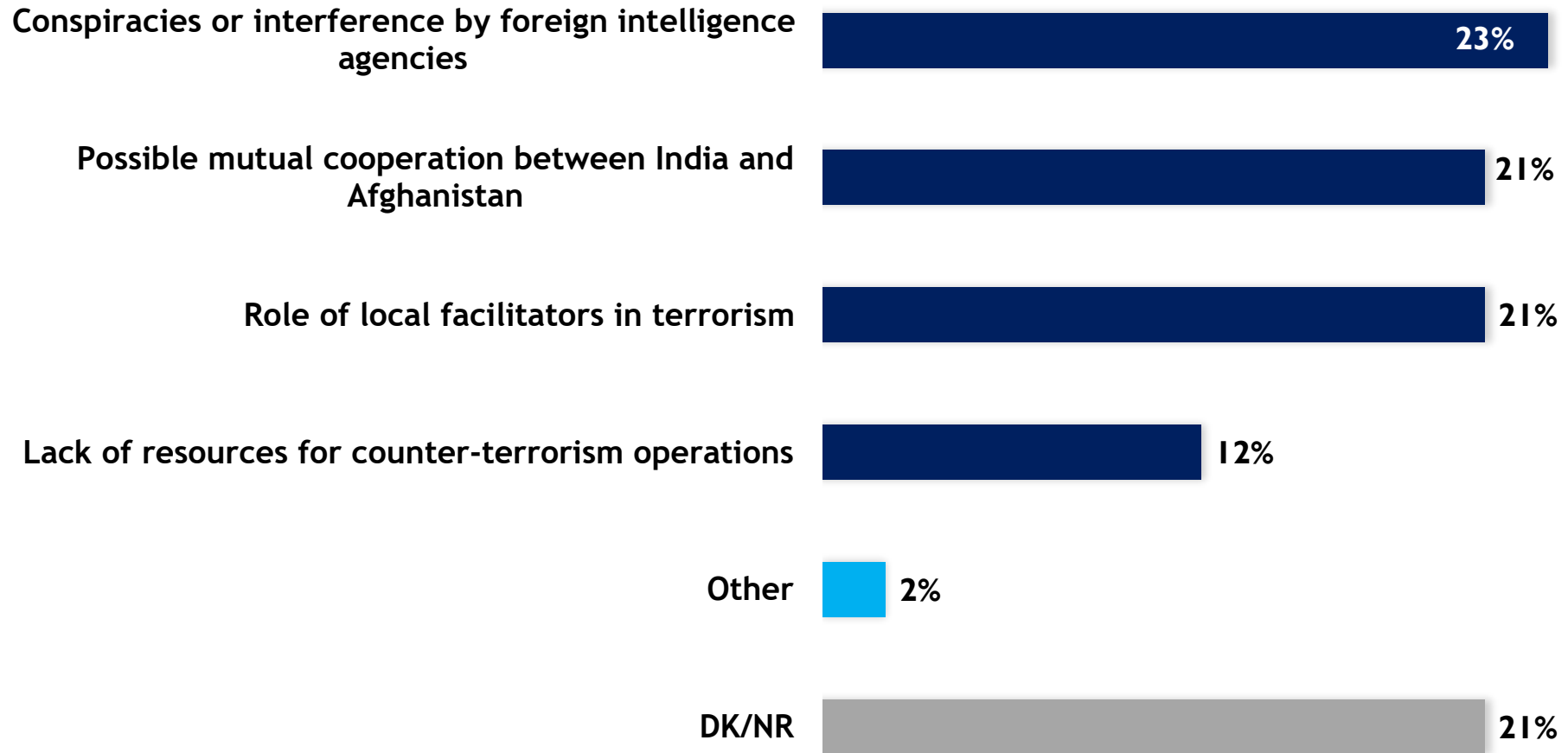
SECTION 06

NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN RELATIONS

Internal Security, Borders and
Pakistan's Regional Relationships



In your opinion, what is the biggest threat to Pakistan's internal and border security?



SECTION 07

SOCIAL VALUES & SOCIAL MEDIA

Changing social attitudes, social concerns
and the digital environment

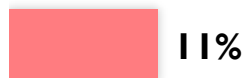


What is your opinion on the increasing use of drugs in Pakistan?

Extremely Dangerous



A Matter of Concern



An Unrealistic Concern

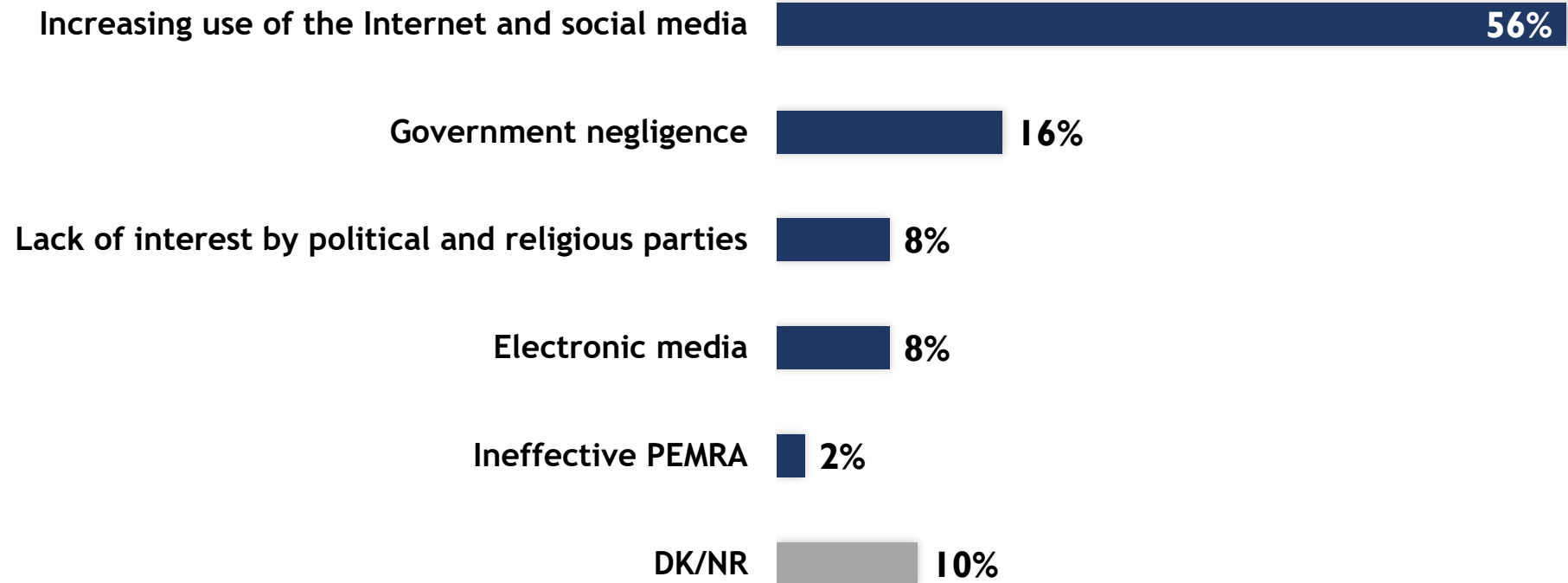


DK/NR





What are the major factors contributing to the decline of moral values and social conduct in Pakistan?





Which sources do you trust most for obtaining news?

Social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, X/Twitter)

42%

TV

29%

Internet other than social media

10%

Newspapers

7%

Radio

3%

Other

3%

DK/NR

6%





What is your opinion on the regulation of social media in Pakistan?

There should be no restrictions on social media 28%

There should be more restrictions on social media for children's protection 25%

There should be stricter regulations for social media companies 16%

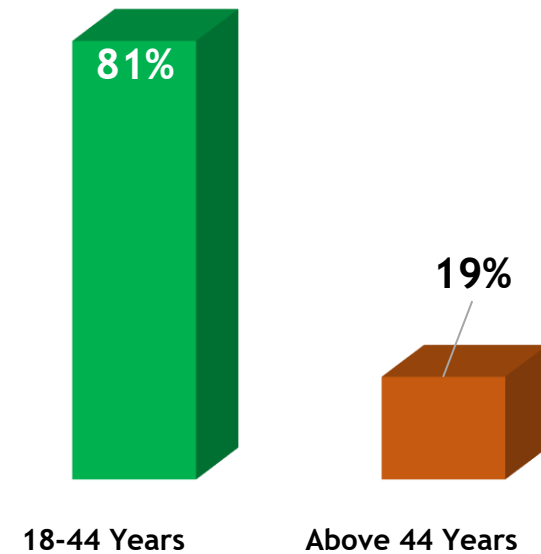
Harmful or illegal content should be removed more quickly 11%

Government should have more effective monitoring and control over social media content 10%

DK/NR 10%

Those 28% who said "there should be no restrictions on social media"

Age-wise Breakdown



SOCIAL MEDIA REGULATION: LESSONS FROM ADVANCED DEMOCRACIES

The international trend is toward platform accountability, child protection and greater transparency — while safeguarding freedom of expression.

UNITED KINGDOM

Online Safety Act 2023

- Legal duties on social media and search services
- Action against illegal content
- Stronger protections for children and adults
- Platforms must assess and reduce online harms

Source: UK Government

EUROPEAN UNION

Digital Services Act (DSA)

- Easy reporting of illegal content
- Greater transparency in content moderation
- Appeal rights for users
- Enhanced protection for minors and ad transparency

Source: European Commission

AUSTRALIA

Social Media Minimum Age

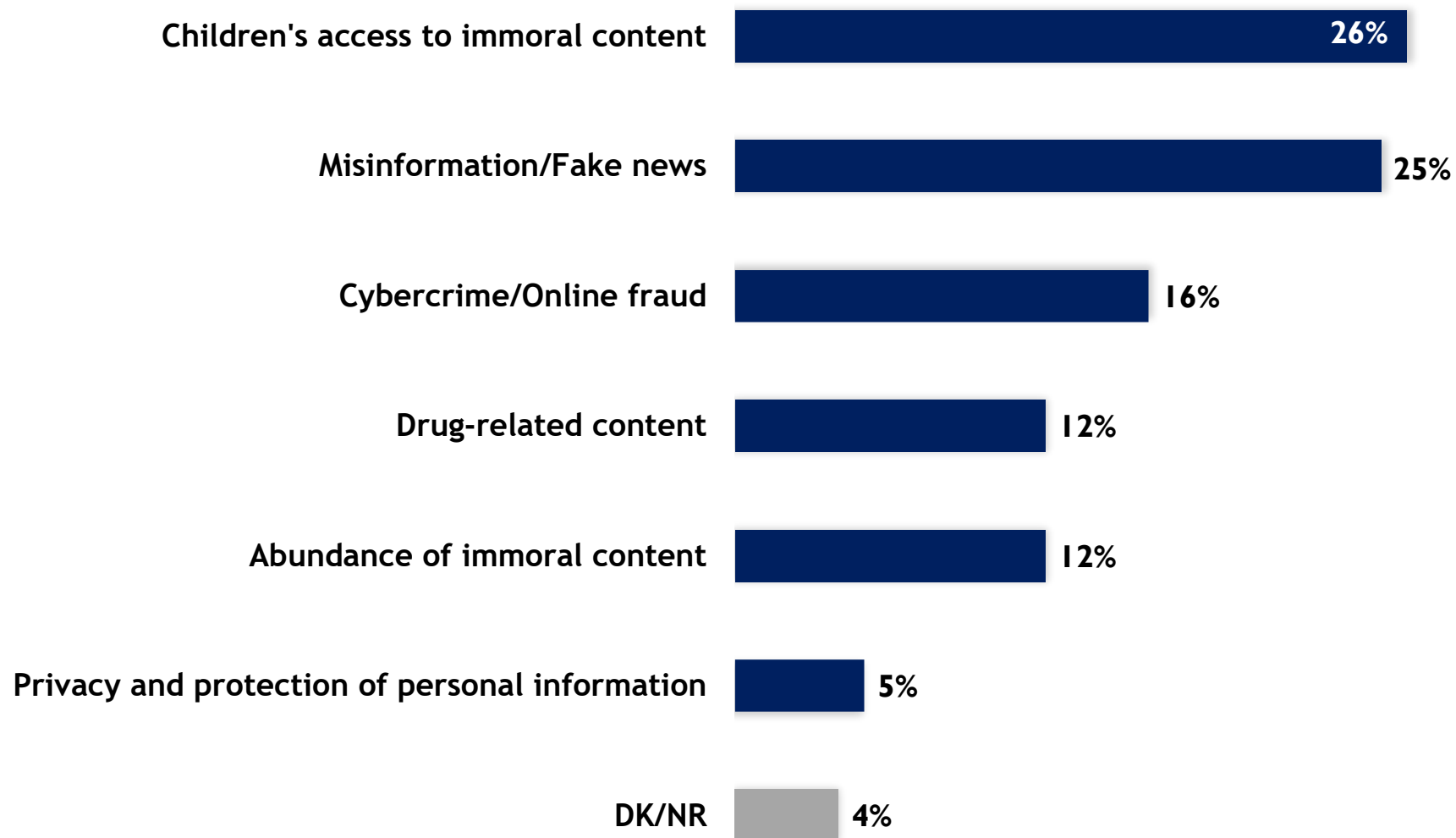
- Since 10 Dec 2025, covered platforms must take reasonable steps to prevent under-16 accounts
- Platforms — not children/parents — carry the compliance burden
- Enforcement powers and significant civil penalties
- Part of a broader online-safety framework

Source: eSafety Commissioner

KEY LESSON FOR PAKISTAN: Regulation can focus on illegal/harmful content, child safety, platform accountability and transparency — without treating all social media use as a problem.

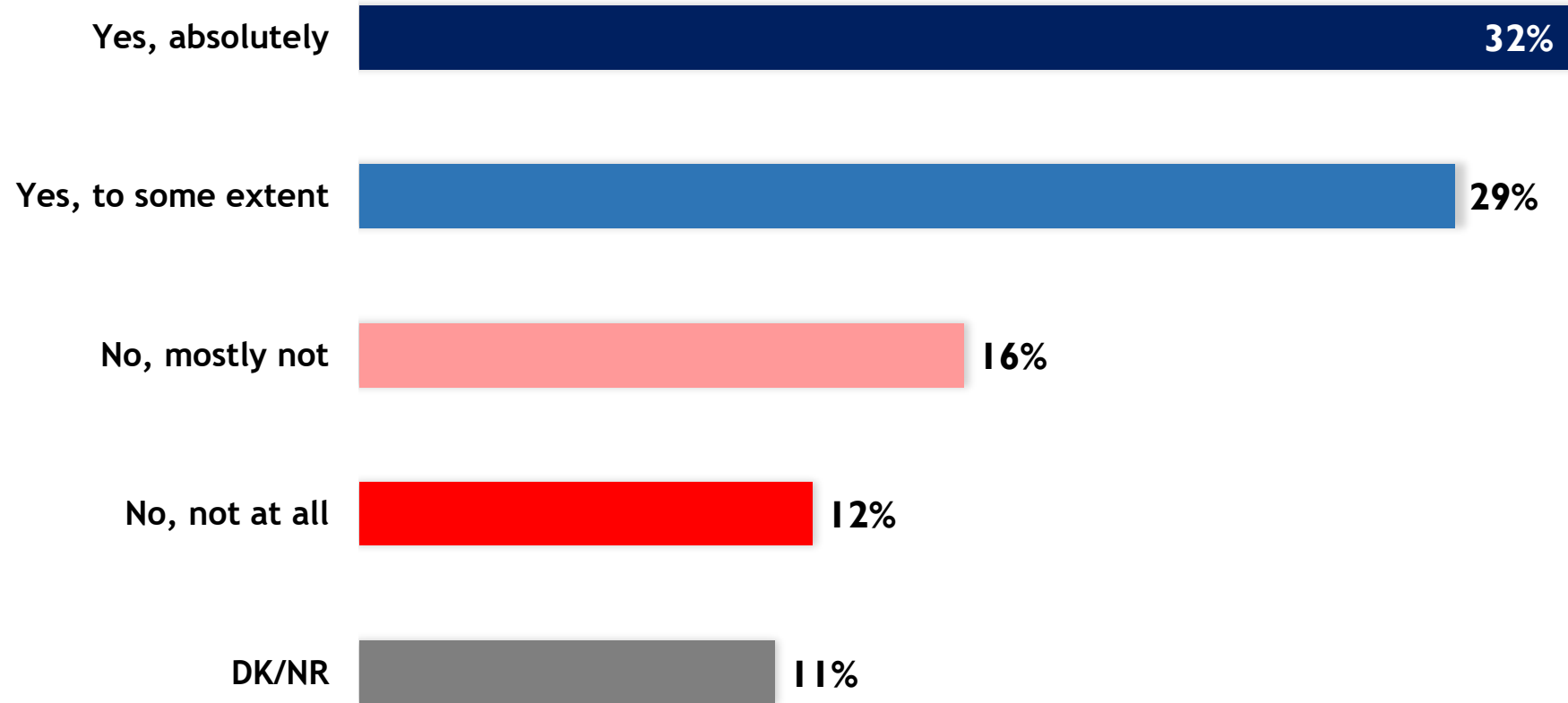


What are your three main concerns regarding social media?





Do you think mainstream and social media accurately identify the real issues facing Pakistan?



Survey Snapshot



Survey Snapshot



The study has been conducted by IPOR

Thank You!

IPOR

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