

Understanding the Preferences and Perceptions of Young Voters

Insights from citizen surveys

By: Yale-LSE-GovLab team

Photo credit: EPA

Overview

As Nepal gears up for local elections, it is important that the programs of political parties are informed by the priorities of citizens. In this memo, we use data from a citizen survey (SNP) conducted by Kathmandu University, Interdisciplinary Analysts and Asia Foundation in Feb-March 2020 to shed some light on citizen preferences and perceptions, especially in relation to local governments. SNP 2020 was administered to a nationally representative sample of 7,060 respondents covering 388 *palikas* (municipalities or rural municipalities).

Throughout the memo, we disaggregate our analysis by four age cohorts: 18-21 (N=446), 22-35 (N=2,268), 36-50 (N=2,316), and 50 and above (N=2,030). Parties might be especially interested in the outlook and priorities of the first age group (18-21) because these young voters are expressing their preferences through the ballot box for the very first time.

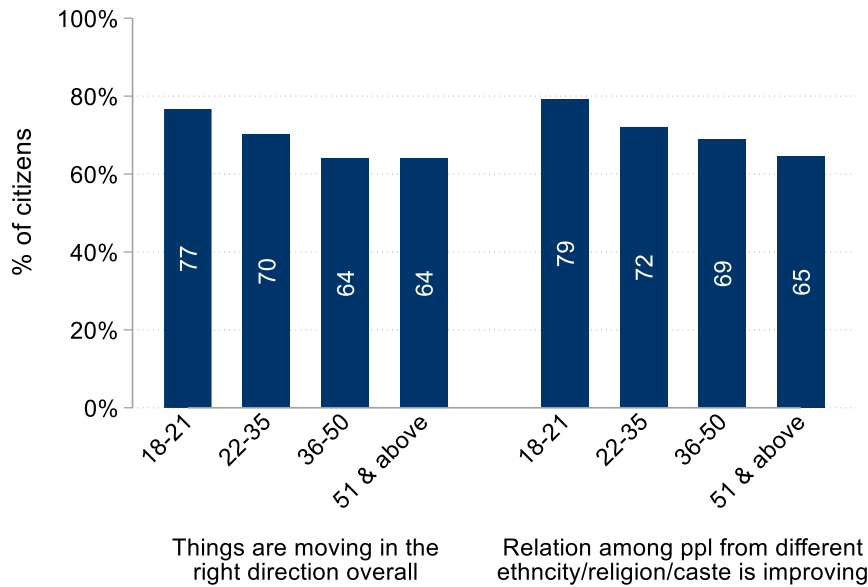
Key Insights

- Young, first-time voters are more optimistic about the country's direction and their household's economic prospects than older voters.
- Irrespective of age group, voters perceive increase in corruption and increase in prices as the major problems in the country.
 - But compared to men, women are more likely to mention increase in prices and less likely to mention increase in corruption.
- Voters of every age group report high levels of trust in their local government, but much lower trust in political parties.
- Young and old voters similarly rate the services provided by their local government.
 - But first-time voters are less aware of their local government's development projects than older voters.
- Voters generally want their local government to prioritize services related to roads, infrastructure, and education.
 - However, compared to older voters, young voters are more likely to want their local government to focus on employment.

Analysis

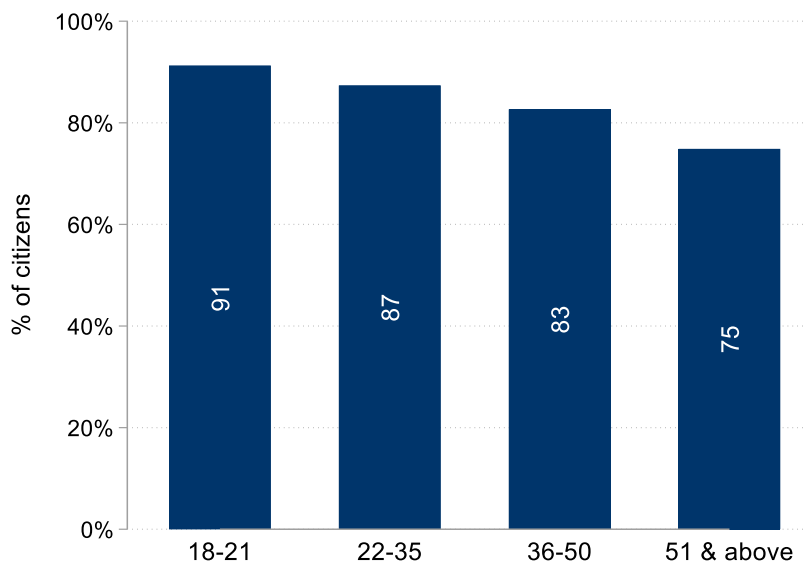
Younger voters are more likely to mention that things in general are moving in the right direction in the country and that social relations among people are improving. Figure 1 (left panel) shows that 77 percent of voters in the youngest cohort (18-21) think that the country is moving in the right direction overall, compared to 70 percent of voters in cohort 22-35 and 64 percent in cohorts 36-50 and 51 and above. Similarly, Figure 1 (right panel) shows that 79 percent of voters in the youngest cohort find social relations improving, compared to 72 percent of voters in cohort 22-35, 69 percent in 36-50, and 65 percent in 50 and above.

Figure 1. Citizens' perceptions of country's overall direction and its social relations



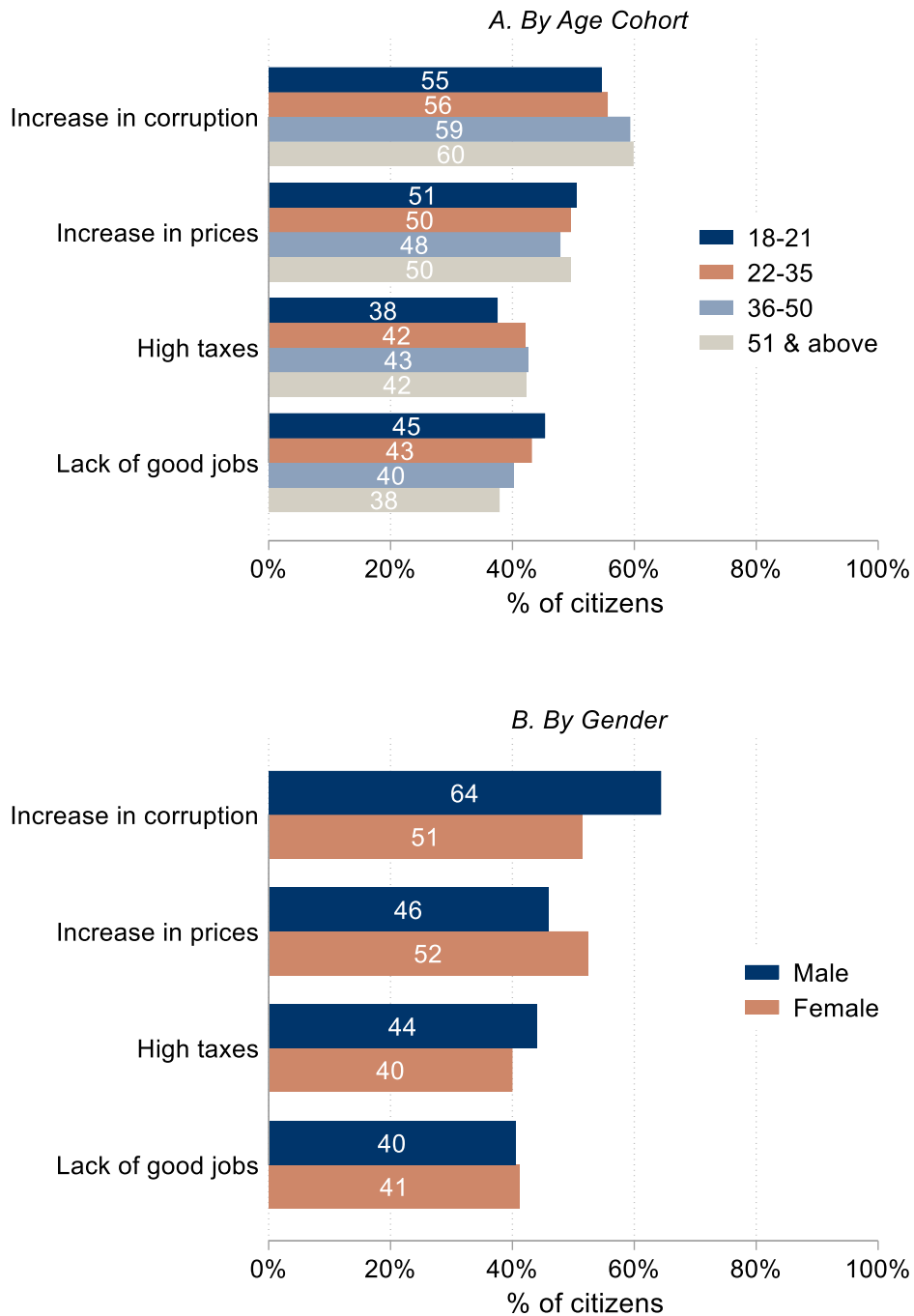
Younger voters are more optimistic about their economic prospects. As Figure 2 shows, 91 percent of voters in cohort 18-21, 87 percent in 22-35, 83 percent in 36-50, and 75 percent in 50 and above are either very confident or think that their household's economic welfare will improve in the next five years.

Figure 2. Citizens who think their household's economic welfare will improve in the next five years



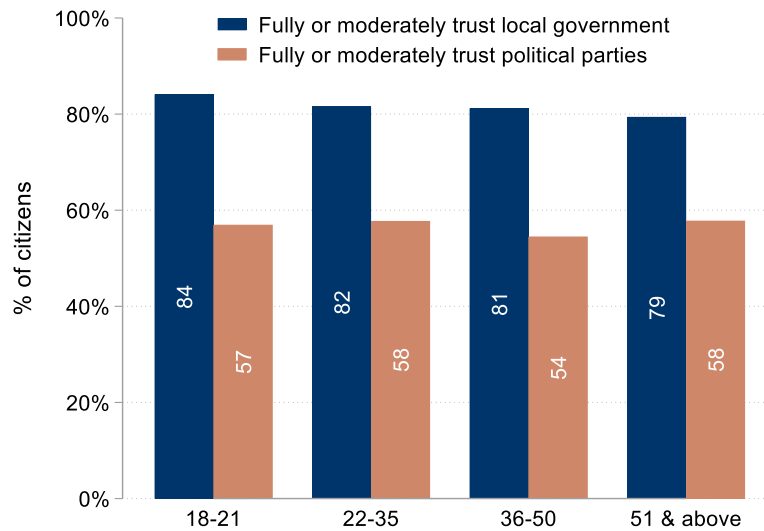
Regardless of age, voters most commonly mention increase in corruption and increase in prices as the major problems in the country. As Figure 3A shows, voters of all age groups perceive increase in corruption as the most important problem the country is facing, followed by price increase. The other most commonly reported problems are high taxes and a lack of good jobs. (Other less commonly mentioned problems are not reported in this figure.) **However, men are more likely than women to mention increase in corruption and less likely than women to mention increase in prices as major problem.** 64 percent of men think increase in corruption is a major problem, compared to 51 percent of women. 52 percent of women think increase in prices is a major problem, compared to 46 percent of men (see Figure 3B).

Figure 3. What citizens think are the major problems in the country



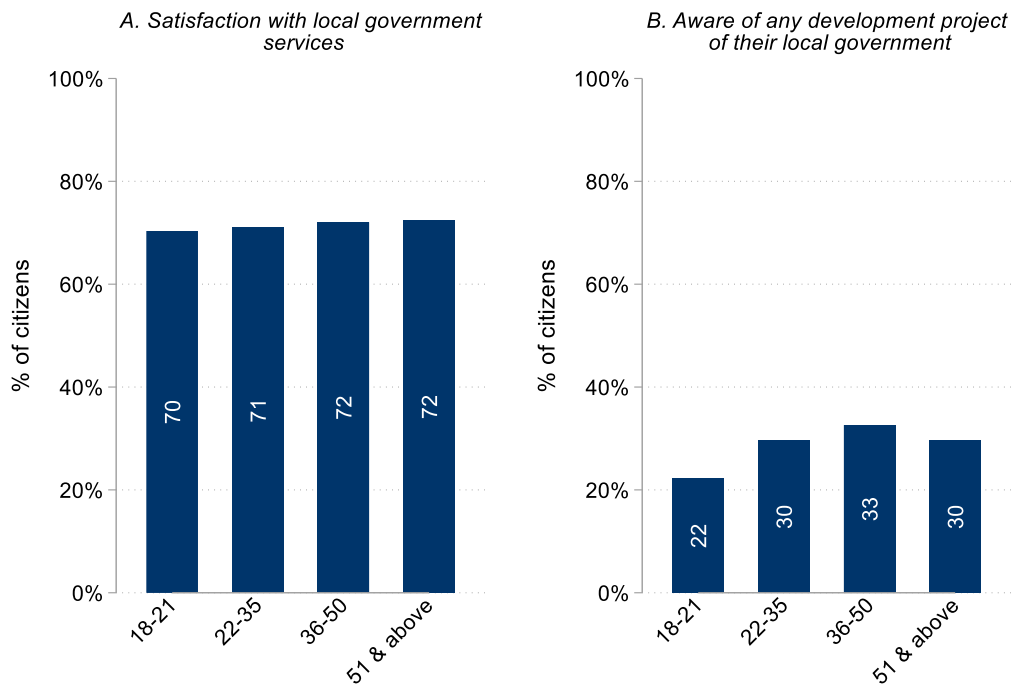
Voters of all age groups report high levels of trust in their local government. But trust in political parties is much lower for all groups. Figure 4 shows that more than 80 percent of citizens say that they fully or moderately trust their municipality or rural municipality. But less than 60 percent say they trust political parties.

Figure 4. Citizen trust in local government and political parties



Voter rating of local government services does not seem to differ by age. For all age groups, around 70 percent of voters say they are satisfied with the service delivery of their local government (see Figure 5A). **But first-time voters are less aware of their local government’s development projects than older voters.** Only 22 percent of 18-21 age group voters, 30 percent of 22-35, 33 percent of 36-50, and 30 percent of 50 and above age group voters report being aware of any development project of their local government (see Figure 5B).

Figure 5. Citizen satisfaction with local government services and their knowledge of local government projects



Voters most commonly think their local government should prioritize roads and other infrastructure, followed by education. Table 1 shows the services that citizens of each age cohort want their local government to prioritize. For each age group, roads and other infrastructure and education are the most commonly reported priorities. **However, younger voters are more likely than older voters to want their local government to prioritize employment.** Table 1 shows that 19.3 percent of voters in the youngest cohort (18-21) want their local government to prioritize employment, compared to 15.9 percent of voters in cohort 22-35 and around 13.5 percent in cohorts 36-50 and 51 and above.

Table 1. What do citizens want their local governments to prioritize?

Rank	18-21	22-35	36-50	51 and above
1	Road and other infrastructure (29.8%)	Road and other infrastructure (30.6%)	Road and other infrastructure (33.3%)	Road and other infrastructure (34.0%)
2	Education (28.0%)	Education (25.3%)	Education (19.8%)	Education (16.0%)
3	Employment (19.3%)	Employment (15.9%)	Employment (13.5%)	Drinking water (13.4%)
4	Drinking water (8.5%)	Drinking water (10.7%)	Drinking water (11.7%)	Employment (12.2%)
5	Health (6.3%)	Health (6.3%)	Health (7.6%)	Health (10.4%)
6	Electricity (3.1%)	Agriculture (4.2%)	Agriculture (6.6%)	Agriculture (5.8%)
7	Agriculture (2.7%)	Electricity (4.1%)	Electricity (4.1%)	Electricity (3.8%)



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