



# **ECHOES FROM TWITTER/X: PUBLIC OPINION ON PAKISTAN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES**

Insights from polls posted by  
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## **PREFACE**

This compilation is a review of the Haque Surveys conducted by Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque on Twitter between 2020 and 2022. The primary purpose of this book is to analyze the opinions of Pakistani Twitter users regarding various socio-economic and political issues prominent in Pakistani society. By reviewing the tweets, we aim to understand how the state of debate among the youth could be fostered. The thought processes of Twitter users have shown significant evolution over time, with an increase in their willingness to engage in healthy discussions and debates. This book not only reflects these changing perspectives but also aims to contribute to the broader discourse on policy and development in Pakistan.



# INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become powerful tools for gauging public opinion and shaping policy debates. Twitter, in particular, offers a unique window into the collective consciousness of a society. This book leverages data from surveys conducted on Twitter to provide insights into the thoughts and opinions of Pakistanis on key socio-economic and political issues.

The significance of this endeavor lies in its ability to capture real-time public sentiment, which is often overlooked in traditional policy-making processes. By analyzing the responses to these surveys, we can identify prevailing attitudes, misconceptions, and areas where public education or policy intervention is needed.

The number of social media users in Pakistan has been growing exponentially, with the country now boasting 70 million active users on various platforms, driven by a median age of 20.5 years<sup>1</sup>. Twitter, in particular, has seen a steady increase in users, representing a small but growing share of the public who actively express their opinions. Although this series of surveys is by no means representative of the entire Pakistani public, it is noteworthy that an increasing number of people from diverse backgrounds are leveraging social media to voice their concerns and opinions.

Given this trend and the active younger demographic, social media will play an increasingly critical role in the future as a tool for politicians and policymakers to gauge the public pulse. This shift underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics of online discourse and its implications for policy and governance.

This book covers a range of important topics, beginning with research and development. It delves into the quality versus quantity debate in education, the role of research in academia, and the challenges faced by local think tanks. Subsequent chapters address issues related to democracy, governance, bureaucracy, and the intersection of policy and public perception. The insights derived from these surveys provide a valuable resource for policymakers, academics, and anyone interested in understanding the dynamics of public opinion in Pakistan.

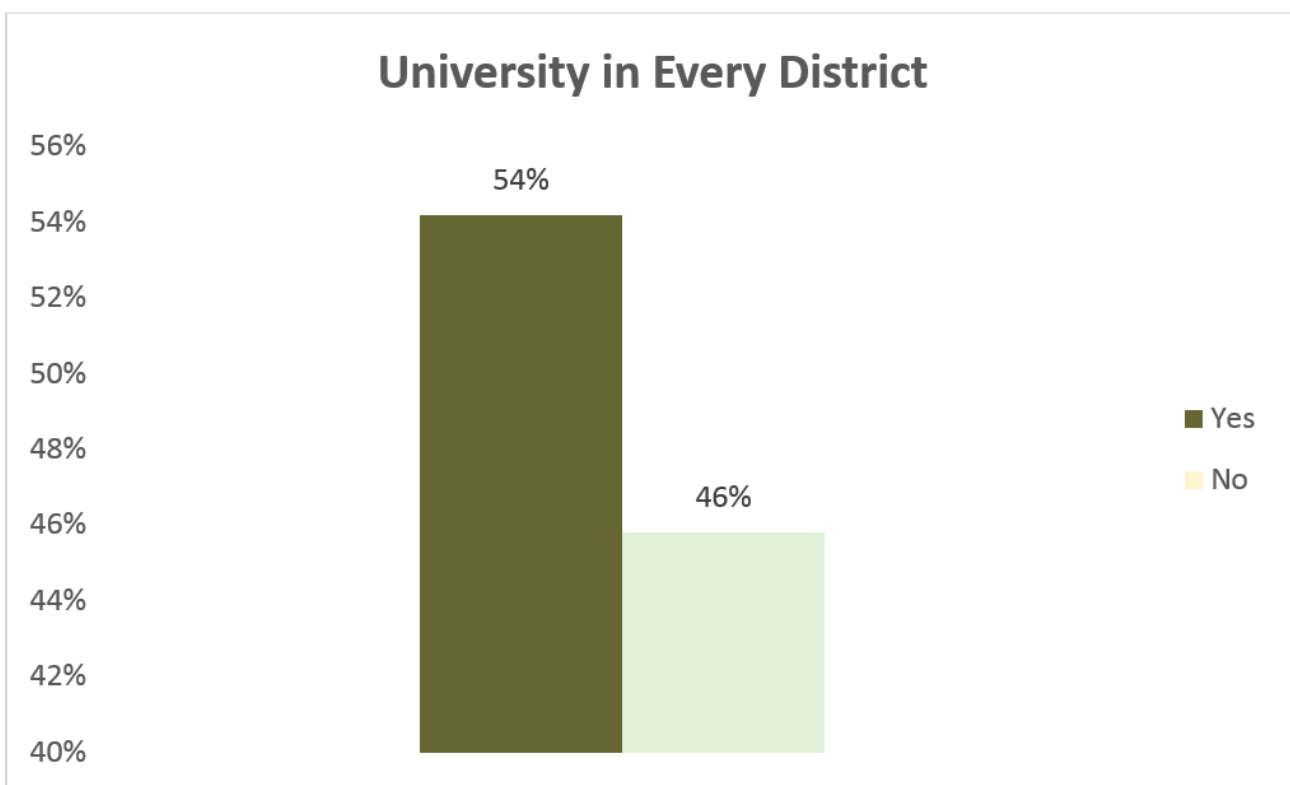
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<sup>1</sup><https://propakistani.pk/2024/02/23/pta-report-reveals-surge-in-digital-engagement-and-bandwidth-utilization/#:~:text=With%20an%20active%20younger%20demographic,within%20the%20global%20digital%20landscape,&text=PTA%20documents%20reveal%20significant%20traffic,utilization%20reaching%20approximately%2018.03%20Tbps.>

# CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

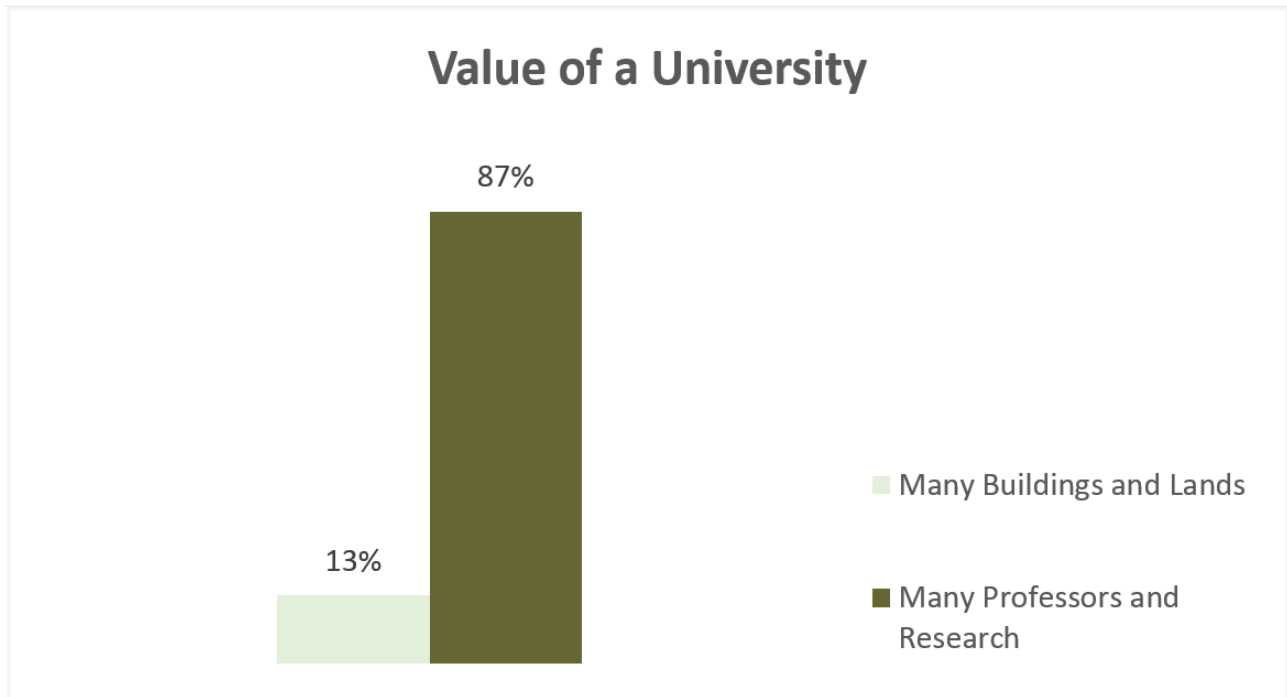
## 1.1. Rethinking Education: Quality over Quantity

Traditionally, the concept of development has been quantitatively driven. This conventional approach focuses on countable aspects such as the number of poor people, school dropouts, educational institutions, teachers, roads, and so forth (OECD, 2012). However, the recent literature and numerous intensive case studies emphasize that the quality of these elements may be the key driver of growth. (Barbier & Burgess, 2021; Civera et al., 2020; Yilmaz, 2019) As evidenced in various areas such as governance, education, and justice, we often settle for an expansion of quantity at the expense of quality. This emphasis on quantity is thus also reflected to an extent in popular perceptions – as gauged by the survey – with people often assuming that more of something essentially means that it’s better. When asked if Pakistan should build a university in every district:



These results show divided opinion among the respondents, with a slight majority of 54% favoring the idea of building a university in every district across Pakistan. Conversely, 46% of the participants voted against this proposition. This does indicate the prevalence of the belief that the construction of more universities will somehow ameliorate the problems plaguing the education sector, even though such beliefs are contrary to evidence (Ahsan and Khan, 2023).

While these results did show that there is notable support for the building of university campuses, when the questions were framed to gauge the true value of a university, the responses of the participants were starkly different.



According to the overwhelming majority of respondents, the essence of a university should not be measured by its physical expanse but by the intellectual capital it harbors. In Pakistan, the proliferation of universities characterized by expansive campuses has unfortunately not been paralleled by an increase in the quality of education offered. The traditional notion, deeply rooted in the academic philosophies of Plato's Academy, asserts that the core of any educational institution should be its faculty and the research it fosters, not the size of its infrastructure.

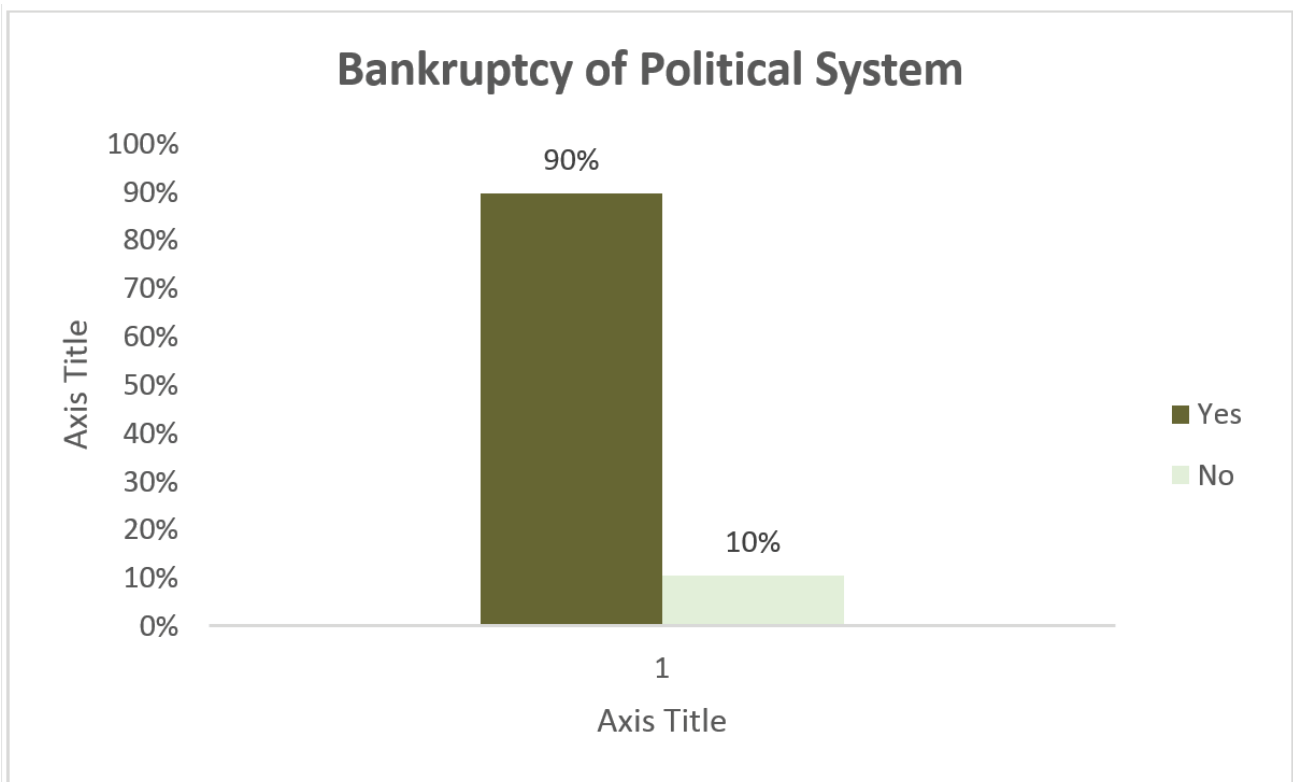
Current practices within Pakistan see universities expanding in physical size across districts, a trend often driven by political motives rather than educational efficacy. This expansion has led to a dilution of academic standards, which shows a distressing short-fall of qualified professors and a lack of robust research programs (Haque et al, 2022).

The emphasis on constructing buildings over cultivating minds leads to an educational environment where quantity overshadows quality. Despite there being more than 200 universities in Pakistan, due to this misalignment does little to prepare graduates for the competitive global market, contributing to high rates of graduate unemployment and underemployment (Chaudhry & Khan, 2020).

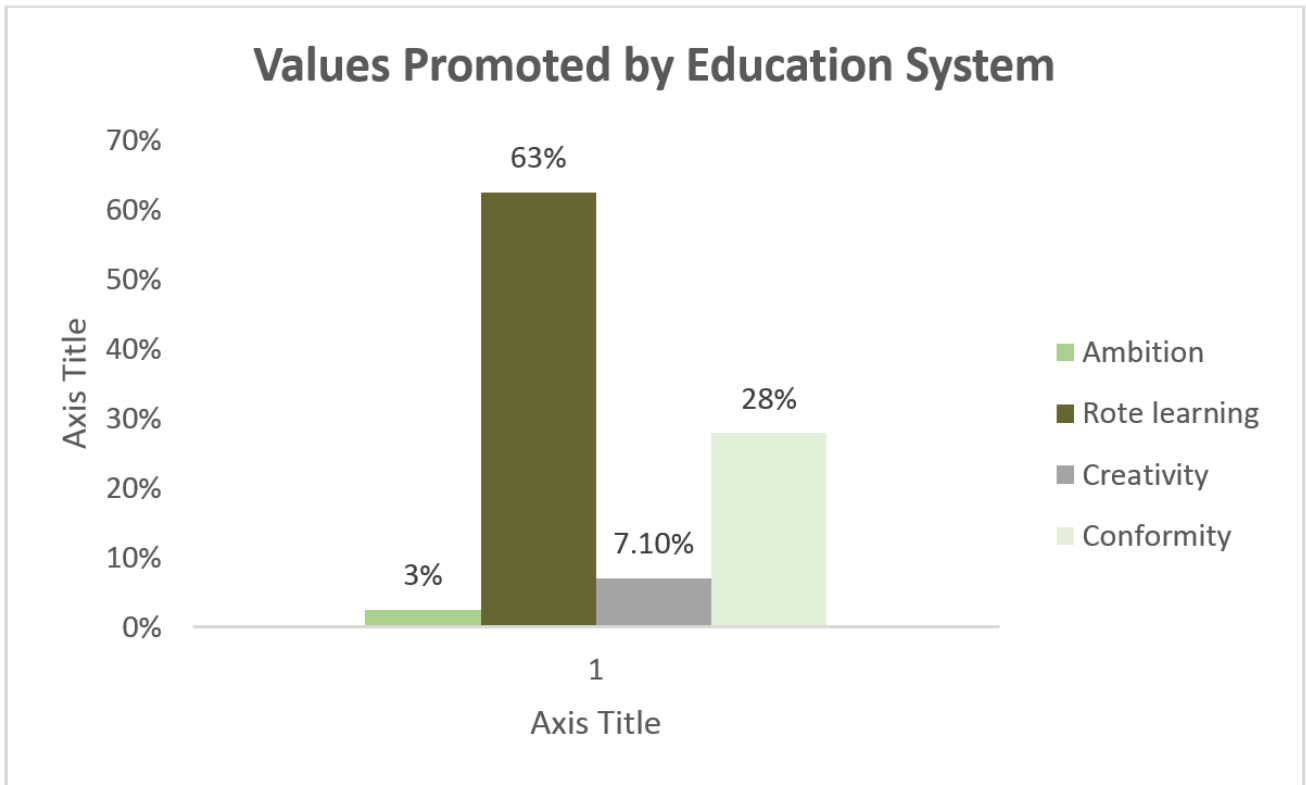
To realign the focus towards academic excellence, policies must prioritize the recruitment of distinguished scholars and the development of cutting-edge research facilities. Universities should be seen as think tanks that contribute to the knowledge economy through innovation and scholarly discourse, rather than merely as physical landmarks.

This strategic shift will require a reevaluation of funding allocations, ensuring that investments in education prioritize intellectual enrichment over physical expansion. Such a focus promises to elevate the overall quality of higher education in Pakistan, making it more competitive internationally and more relevant to the country's development needs.

Inevitably, in light of the fact that universities often fail to provide good quality education and improve the employment and income prospects for their graduates, promises by politicians to build more universities seem – without any commensurate improvement in the standard of education – to ring hollow with the public. So, when polled, the vast majority stated that they perceived the building of universities to show the bankrupt nature of Pakistan's political system.



Another poll was conducted in order to delve deeper into the impact of education imparted in our educational institutes on their pupils. When asked which values and traits our education system promotes and inculcates in students, the overwhelming majority of respondents gave a critical response. 63% said that it heavily promotes rote learning, with another 28% saying that our education system promotes conformity. Only 7% believed that our education system instills creativity in students, with an even lower share saying that it promotes ambition.

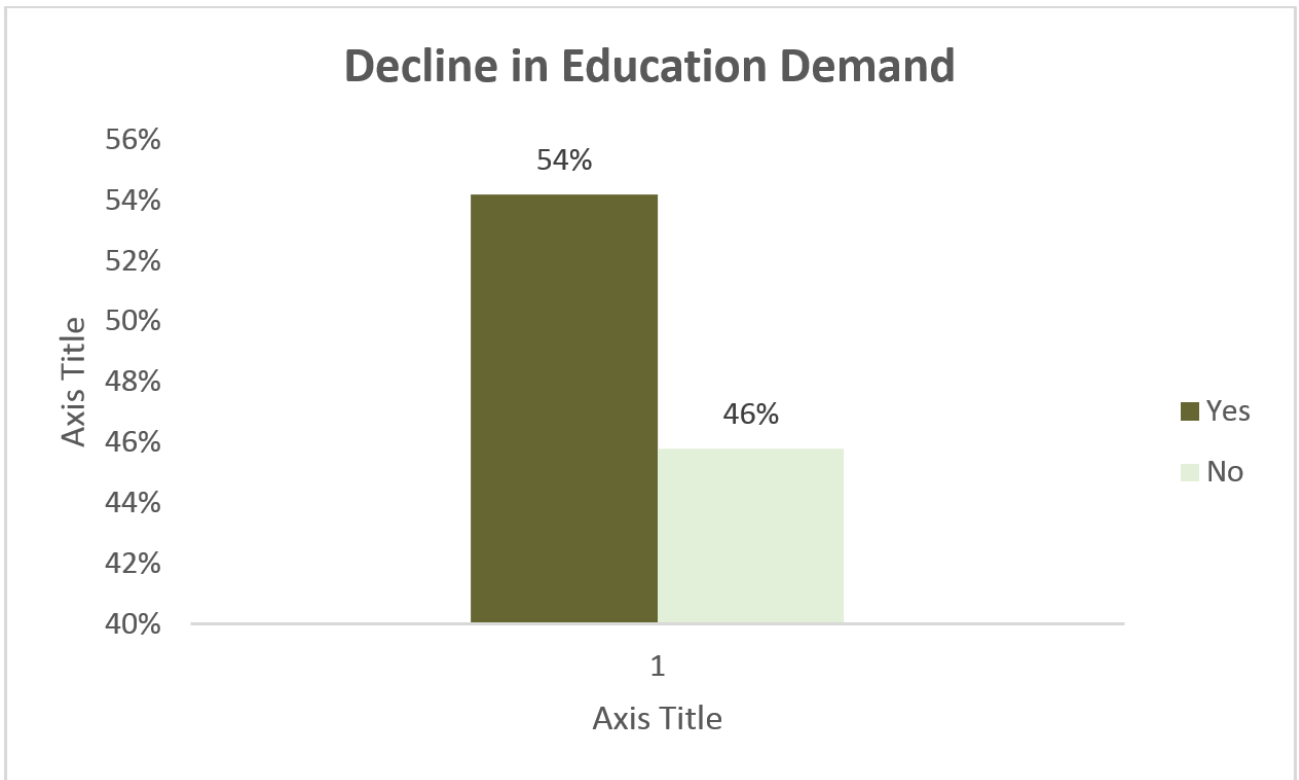


These opinions unfortunately tend to correspond with the reality of our education system, where authorities seem to be preoccupied with devising the curriculum and continuing with outdated educational practices, rather than pivoting towards nurturing creativity and ambition as central pillars of our education system.

Education is a complex variable impacted by multiple factors. Despite extensive research underscoring its benefits, the focus often remains solely on increasing the supply of educational opportunities without adequate consideration of demand. This oversight can lead to negative and ill-informed perceptions of those who opt out of formal schooling.

For instance, Nobel Laureate Gary Becker (1997) argued that education is an investment good, essential for social mobility and economic growth. He demonstrated, along with his colleagues, that education enhances a country's economic development over generations by expanding its knowledge base, or human capital, which in turn boosts economic growth.

However, such theories at times aren't substantiated by practical evidence, therefore, when people were polled regarding their expectation of potential decline in education demand given the dearth of quality job and the lack of entrepreneurship, the responses were closely divided.



Slightly over half of the respondents stated that they felt scarcity of quality jobs led to a decline in education demand. In contrast, 46% maintained that education is vital regardless of job prospects and that education demand won't be adversely affected by poor job prospects.

Critics, including donors and some policymakers, often advocate for expanding educational opportunities without addressing the quality of education or the job market's capacity to absorb graduates. Economic theory suggests that education should enhance job market prospects and command a premium for graduates. Yet, studies like those by Haque and Nayab (2022) reveal that both the graduate and high school premiums are minimal, suggesting a mismatch between educational supply and labor market needs.

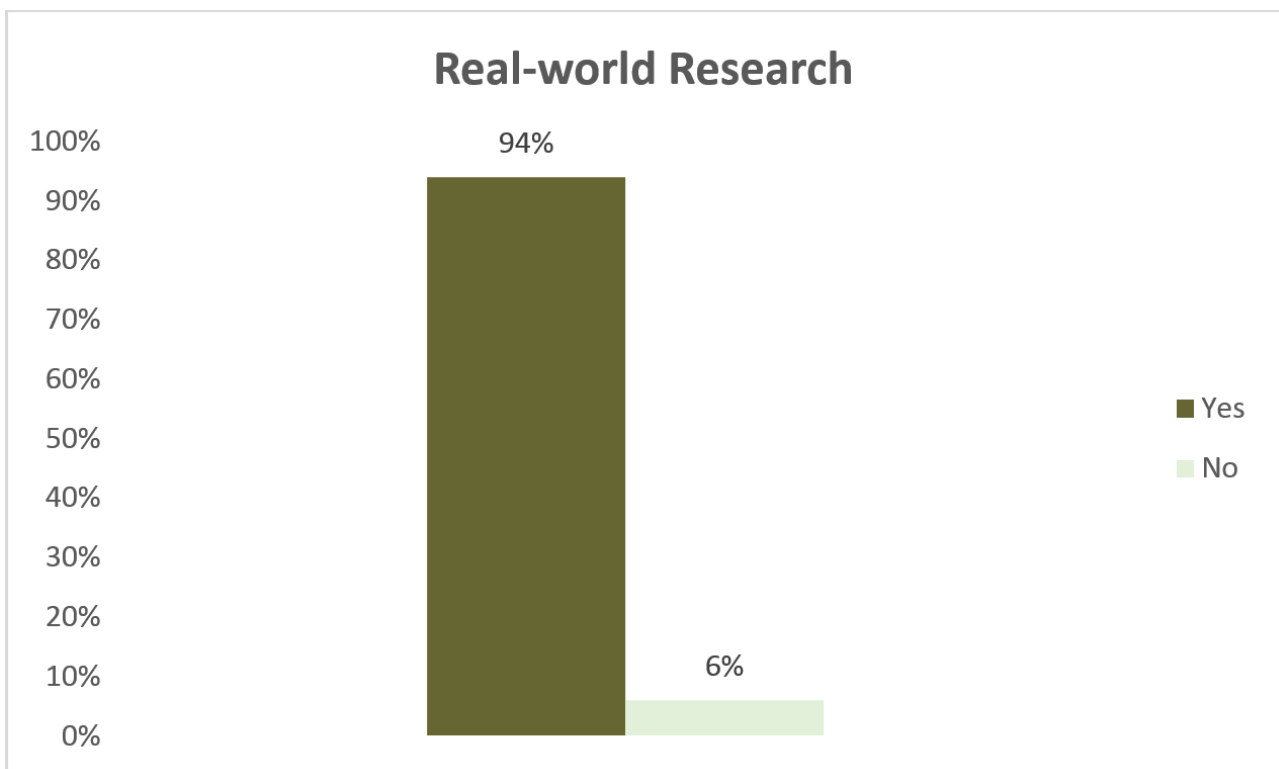
This discrepancy highlights that the education issue is not merely about supply. While increasing educational opportunities may ease the consciences of policymakers and donors, a comprehensive approach that also considers demand is crucial for truly effective educational policies.

## 1.2. State of Research

Closely intertwined with the state of education is the nature and scope of research in Pakistan. The prevalent drive within Pakistani academia to publish in impact factor journals has been sharply criticized for distorting the true purpose of research. This metric-driven approach, initially set forth by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), has unintentionally incentivized quantity over quality of research papers, leading to academic malpractices such as plagiarism and the proliferation of predatory journals (Haque et al, 2018).

This phenomenon is a textbook example of Goodhart's Law: "When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.

In congruence with global academic sentiment, the Twitter poll revealed a consensus on the necessity of focusing on real real-world problems, addressing pressing socioeconomic issues rather than focusing solely on publication metrics.

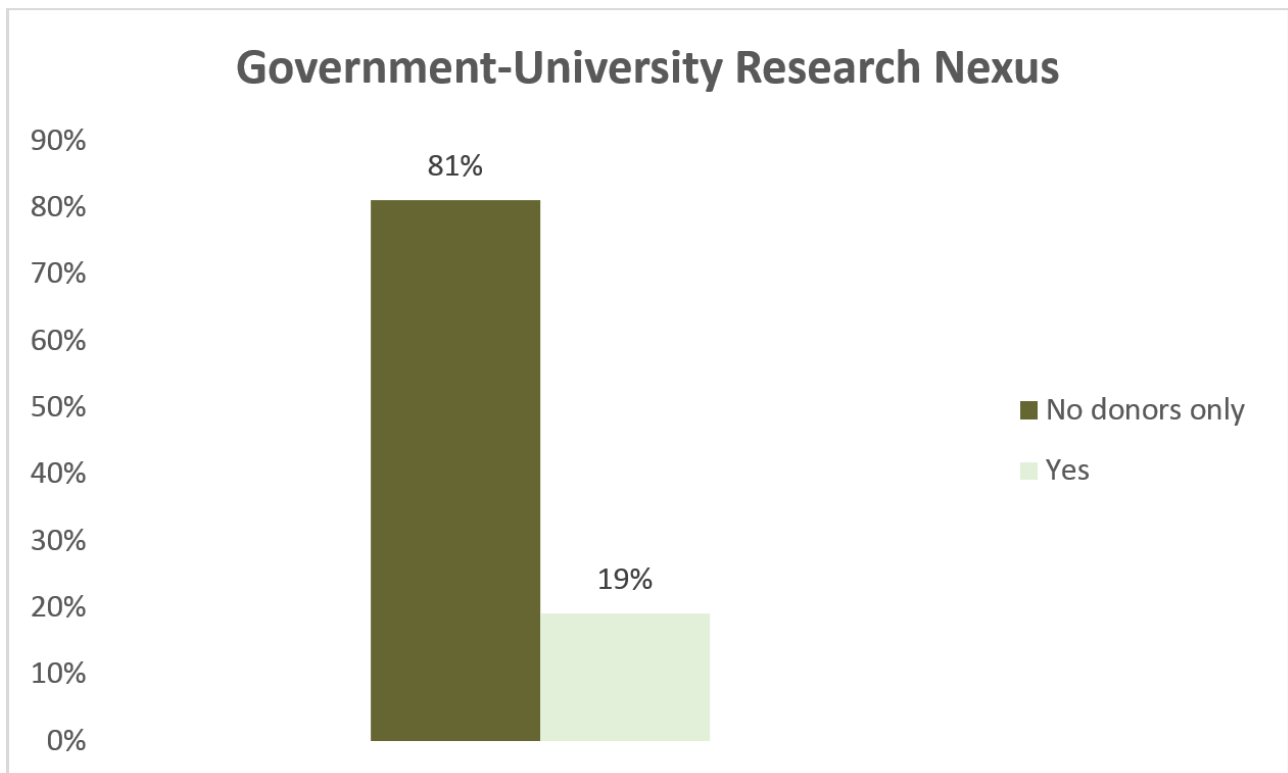


The view of the public is also corroborated by the urgent call from the academic community suggests a shift toward research that impacts real-world problems, promoting a more holistic approach that values quality and relevance over mere numerical targets (Iqbal et al, 2018; Memon, 2017).

PIDE's book on reinventing research underscores this imperative, offering a framework for a more impactful and responsive research ecosystem in Pakistan. (Haque et al., 2020). This shift would align academic efforts with the nation's pressing needs,

ensuring that research not only advances knowledge but also contributes directly to societal and economic betterment.

Not only does most of the research conducted in Pakistan focus on churning out a greater number of papers over ensuring a acceptable quality and relevance of the research but even the good quality policy research that is conducted by local universities, is not leveraged by the government, which is also reflected in the Twitter poll.



A striking 81% of respondents believe that our policies are not genuinely our own, with the government confining itself to listening to and implementing the policy research conducted by donors.

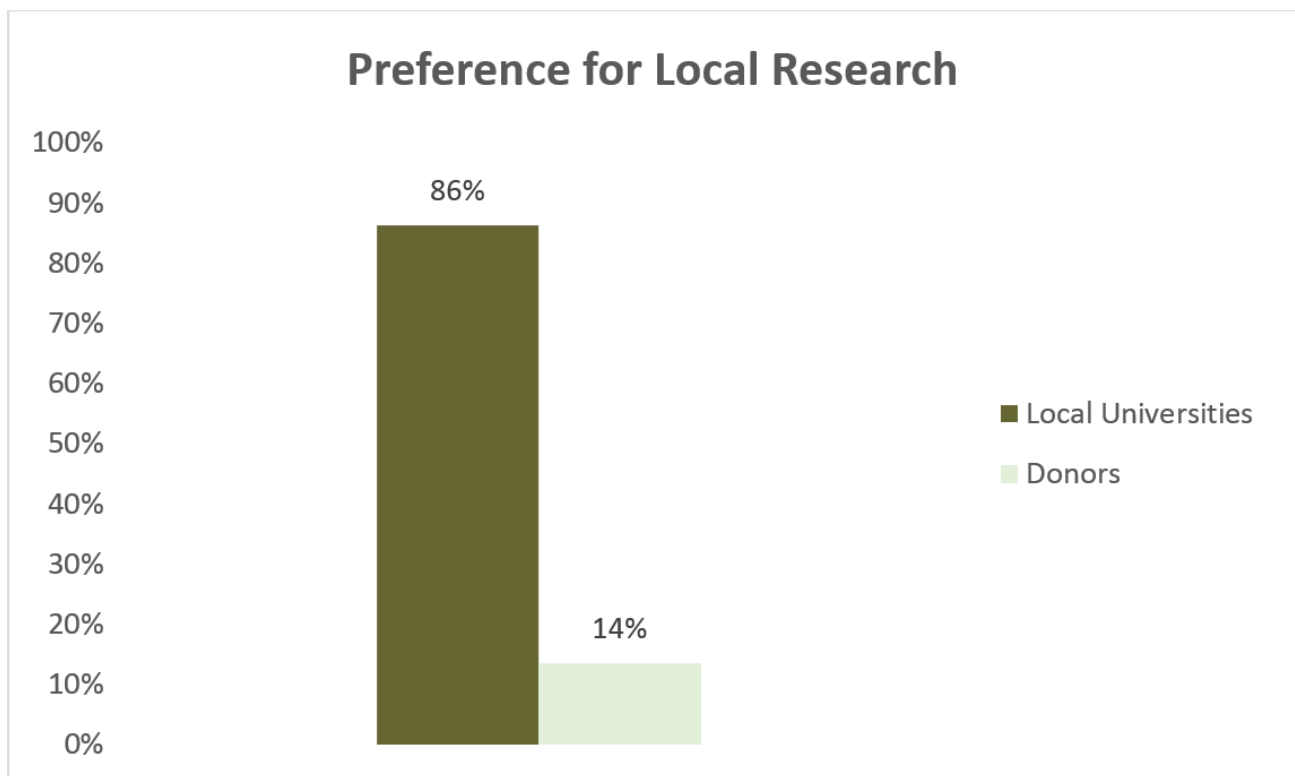
Even after 75 years of independence, and despite the presence of more than 200 universities and substantial international technical assistance, our policy-making remains primarily influenced by external entities. The concept of the "Economic Hitman" illustrates how external control over policy keeps governments in developing countries under subjugation (Perkins, 2004). This enduring influence results in policies that are often standardized and ineffective, ignoring local nuances. The reliance on foreign donors and advisors has not only stifled our policy autonomy but also hindered the development of local intellectual capacity, leaving our universities underutilized in shaping national policies.

Often, the main reason due to which foreign institutions are preferred almost exclusively preferred to conduct and provide policy research on Pakistan is due to the hefty amount of cash provided to them by the donors.



It is widely recognized that most policy recommendations in Pakistan stem from donor-funded initiatives, which are often outsourced to universities or consulting firms located in the donor countries. For instance, Georgia State University, under the patronage of the World Bank and the UK Foreign Office, undertook extensive tax research for Pakistan through the Tax Administration Reform Program (Bukhari & Haq, 2020).

This scenario is emblematic of a broader issue where local expertise and institutions are overlooked in favor of foreign entities. While these projects are well-funded and broad in scope, their effectiveness and relevance to Pakistan's unique context are frequently questioned. This sentiment was also reflected in the sentiment of Pakistanis on Twitter, where more than 86% claimed to prefer local research over foreign research.

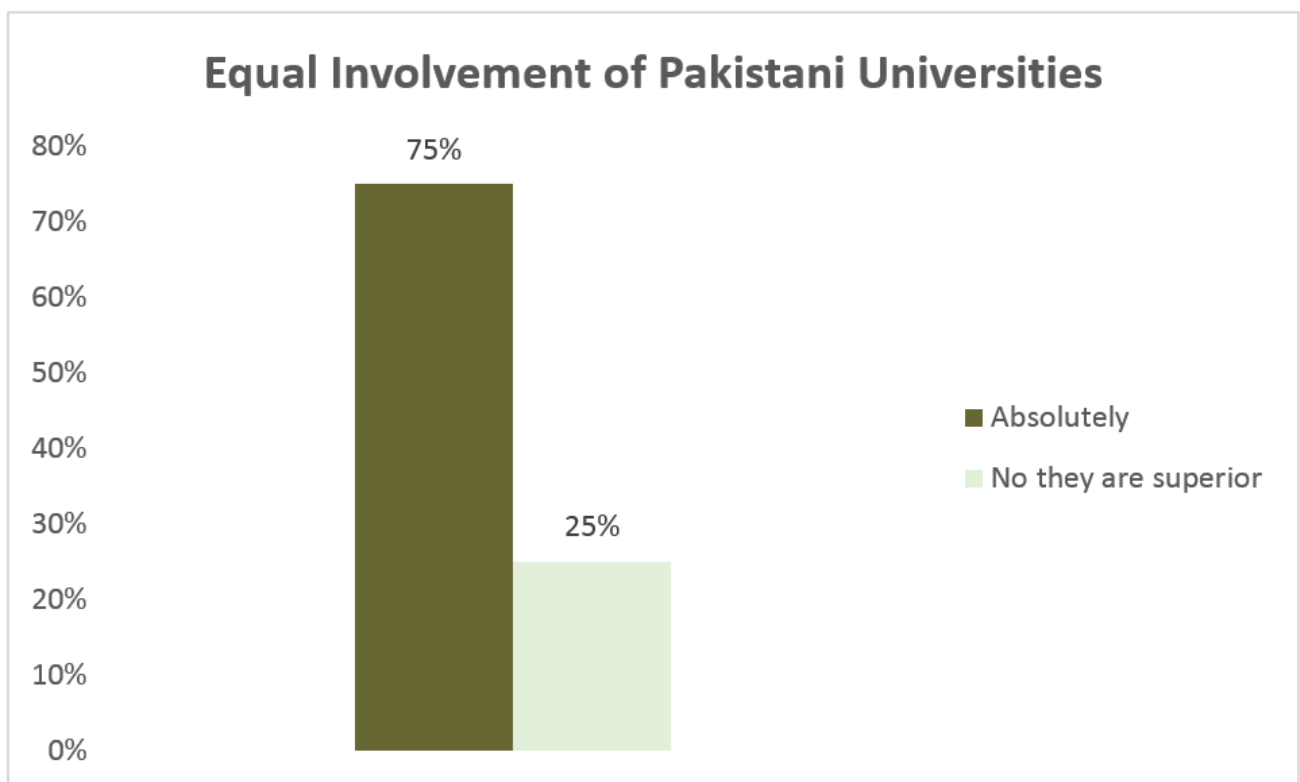


The narrative that international donors, by tying policy advice to financial assistance, dictate the terms of engagement is particularly damaging. It has created a situation where hundreds of millions of dollars flow to foreign institutions, which then generate policy recommendations without substantial local input or consideration. Meanwhile, Pakistani universities, starved of comparable funding, are sidelined from significant policy-making roles.

The stark absence of local academic involvement in policy research and development not only undermines the potential for domestically tailored solutions but also perpetuates a dependency syndrome. The reliance on foreign consultants and institutions for policy insights diminishes the role and development of national think tanks and academic institutions.

By shifting the focus towards enhancing the capacity and involvement of local institutions in major research and policy initiatives, Pakistan can foster a more self-sufficient and contextually appropriate policy environment, which would boost the country's knowledge economy. This would not only build local expertise but also ensure that the policies developed are better suited to address

Subsequently, a related question was posed to Twitter users, asking if Pakistani universities should be regarded as equals by international donors in the peer review process, with the responses revealing that only a quarter would agree that international donors and institutes would be superior to local donors.



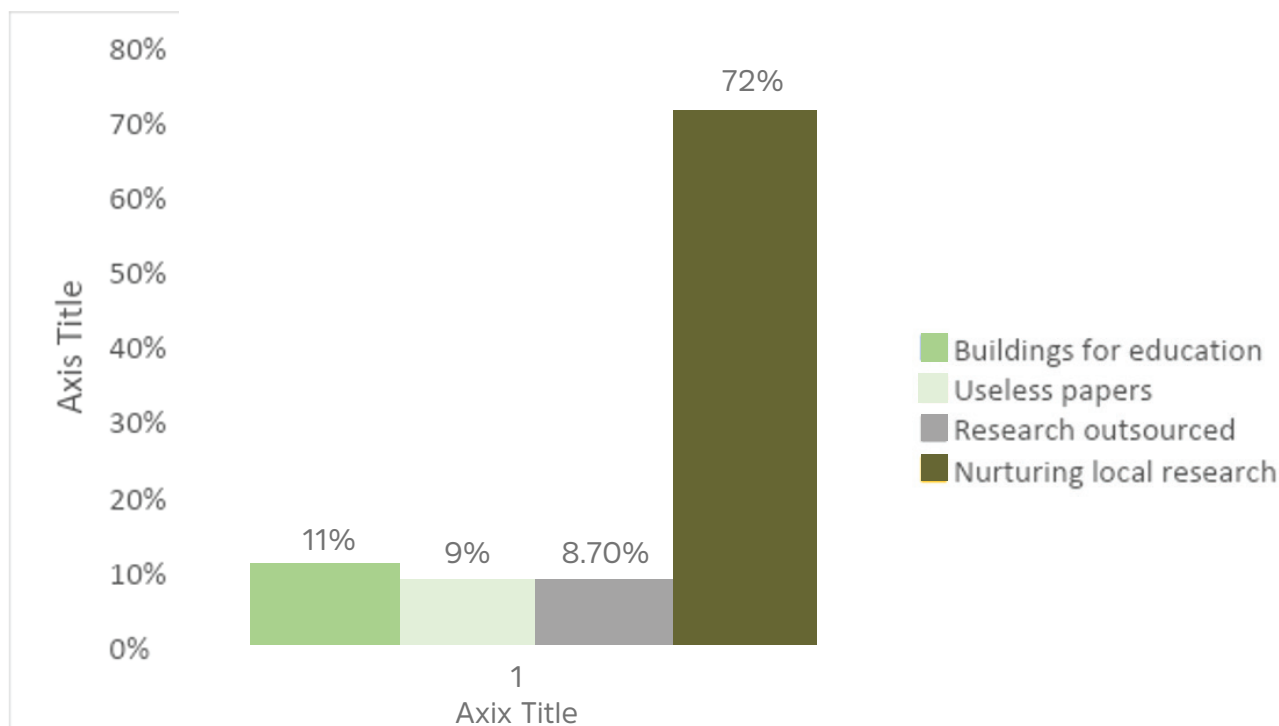
For years, Pakistani universities and think tanks have delved deep into the very issues that now capture donors' interest, developing a nuanced understanding and valuable insights into local challenges. This expertise, cultivated through relentless research and practical engagement, is a treasure trove largely untapped by international donors.

A resounding three-fourths of respondents on Twitter advocate for donors to align more closely with Pakistani institutions. Recognizing and engaging with these local centers of knowledge could revolutionize how donors approach their initiatives. By treating these institutions as equals in peer reviews and decision-making, donors could enhance the effectiveness and relevance of their interventions.

Such collaborations could ignite a vibrant exchange of ideas, merging international resources with local wisdom to craft solutions that are both innovative and appropriate for Pakistan's unique context. This partnership would not only improve outcomes but

also respect and elevate the local intellectual landscape, ensuring that solutions are not just imported but are organically developed through cooperative expertise.

The importance of conducting local research was reinforced through the response of another poll which found that more than two-thirds regarded a knowledge economy to be best characterized by one which fosters local research.

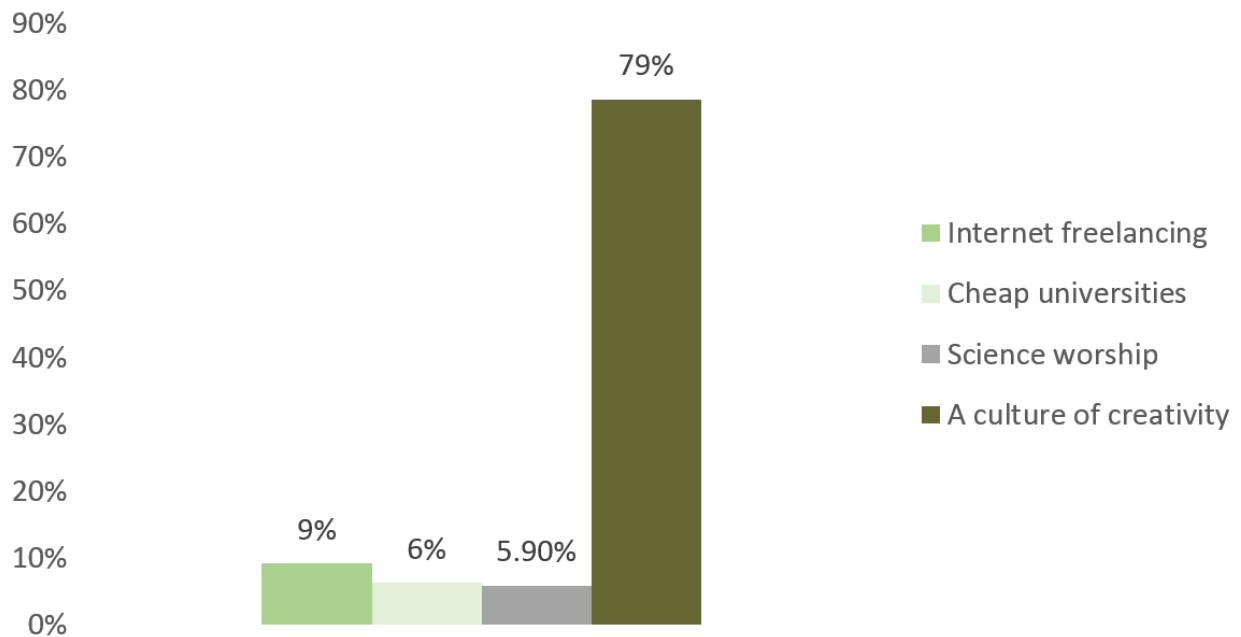


A knowledge economy is primarily recognized as an economic system that values and nurtures indigenous research and intellectual capital. While ministers and policymakers often tout the benefits of a 'knowledge economy', they typically reduce this concept to merely increasing the years of schooling. This approach has led to the construction of more educational institutions, which are too often staffed with poorly qualified teachers, produce poor-quality research and operate on minimal operational budgets. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2022 highlights the subpar performance of students, a clear indicator that the quality of education lags far behind quantity. This stark contrast highlights a significant wisdom gap between public perception and governmental action.

This demonstrates that a significant portion of the public understands that a true knowledge economy requires more than just physical academic institutions, number published papers and outsourced papers —it demands quality and relevance in education and research that are currently undervalued by our leaders and international influencers.

Furthermore, in a follow-up poll, the participants were further queried on what they considered to be the most important component of a knowledge economy. A remarkable 79% of respondents stated they believed that the essence of a knowledge economy lies in fostering a culture of creativity, rather than merely expanding physical infrastructure.

## What is a Knowledge Economy?



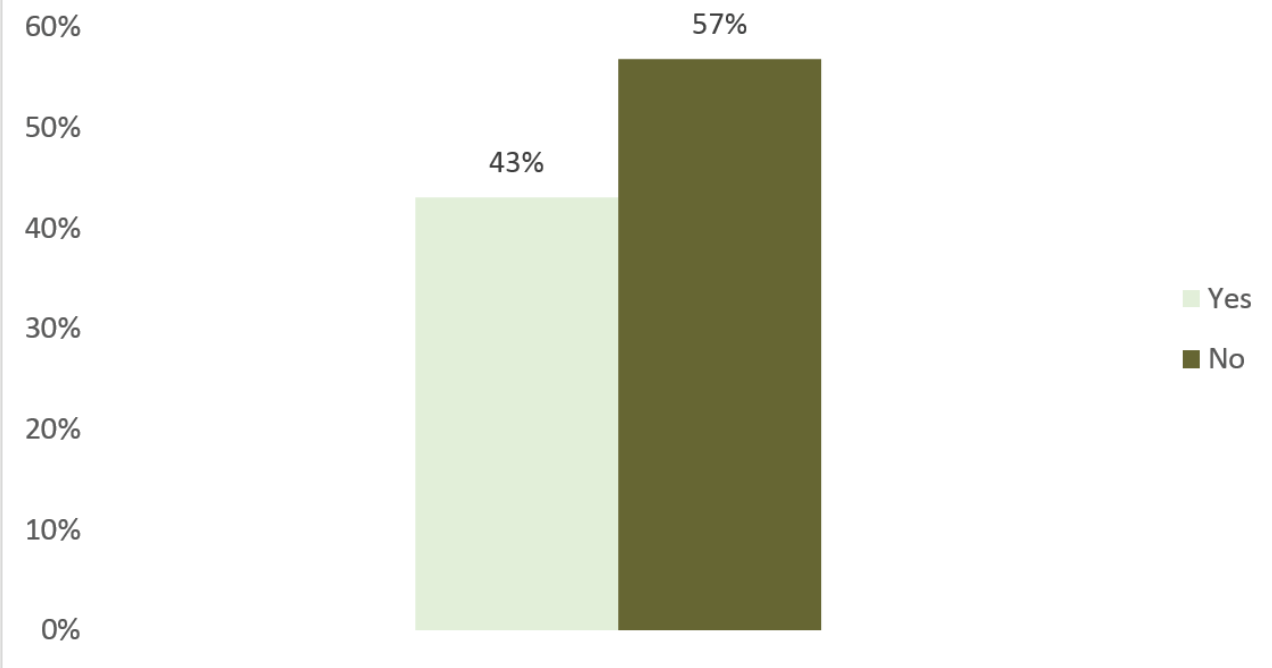
This perspective challenges the long-held "worship of science" promoted by figures like Attaur Rahman, which, according to some, has stifled the growth of social sciences, culture, and broader knowledge sectors in Pakistan. The educated public, particularly those active on social media, recognize that while internet freelancing and affordable access to universities is a valuable opportunity, it is not seen as a major component of the knowledge ecosystem.

A key factor behind the poor state of research and education, is that even when physical infrastructure is built in the education sector, a considerable portion of it is dedicated for faculty housing. In this context, another poll revealed that nearly 60% thought that land allotted to universities should be used for educational and research facilities.

Universities occupy some of the most valuable land in major cities, traditionally using this as an endowment. However, a significant portion of this prime land is currently dedicated to low-density faculty housing complete with private gardens, which could otherwise be utilized to generate crucial funds for the institution. The primary mission of a university is to educate and foster knowledge, not to provide luxury housing. With the need for enhanced educational facilities and infrastructure, there are several more productive ways to utilize this land. Options include developing research laboratories, incubation centers for startups, sports complexes, expanded academic blocks, comprehensive libraries, and dedicated areas for student collaboration and study.

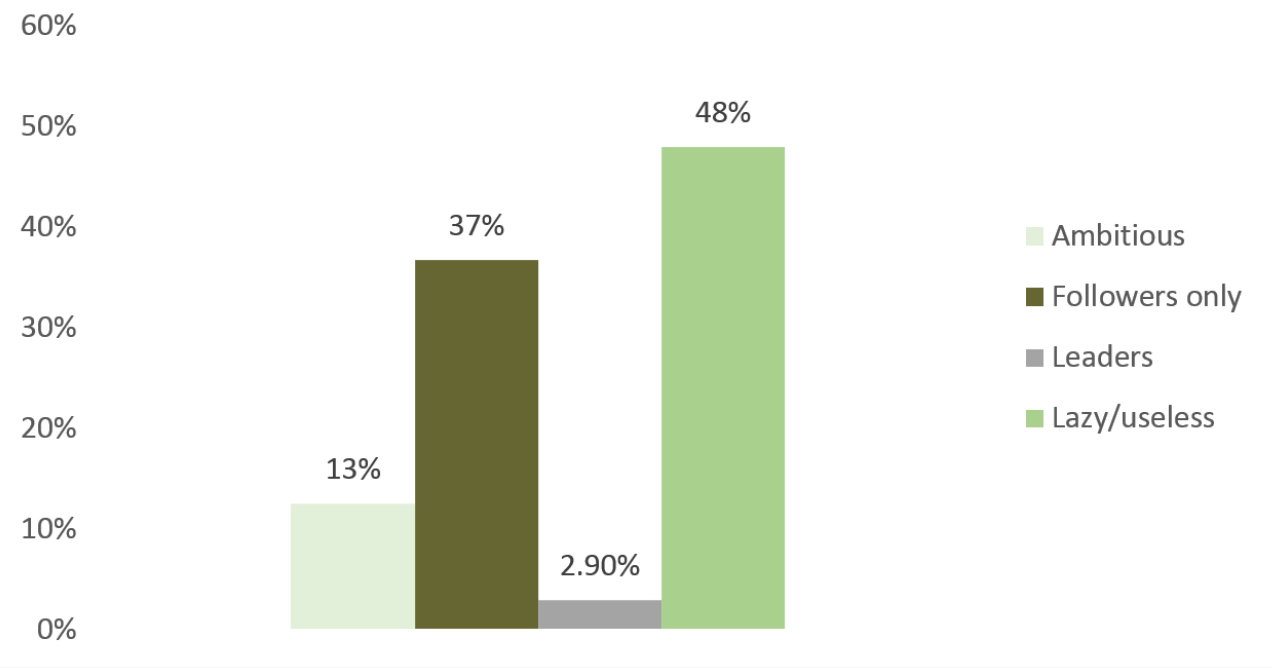
By reallocating these resources, universities can better support the academic community, promoting intellectual growth, innovation, and holistic development across the board. Not only will this help in aligning with the educational missions but also maximizes the benefits to students and faculty alike, ensuring that universities fulfill their role as pivotal centers of learning and research.

### University Land for Faculty Housing



## CHAPTER 2: OPPORTUNITIES

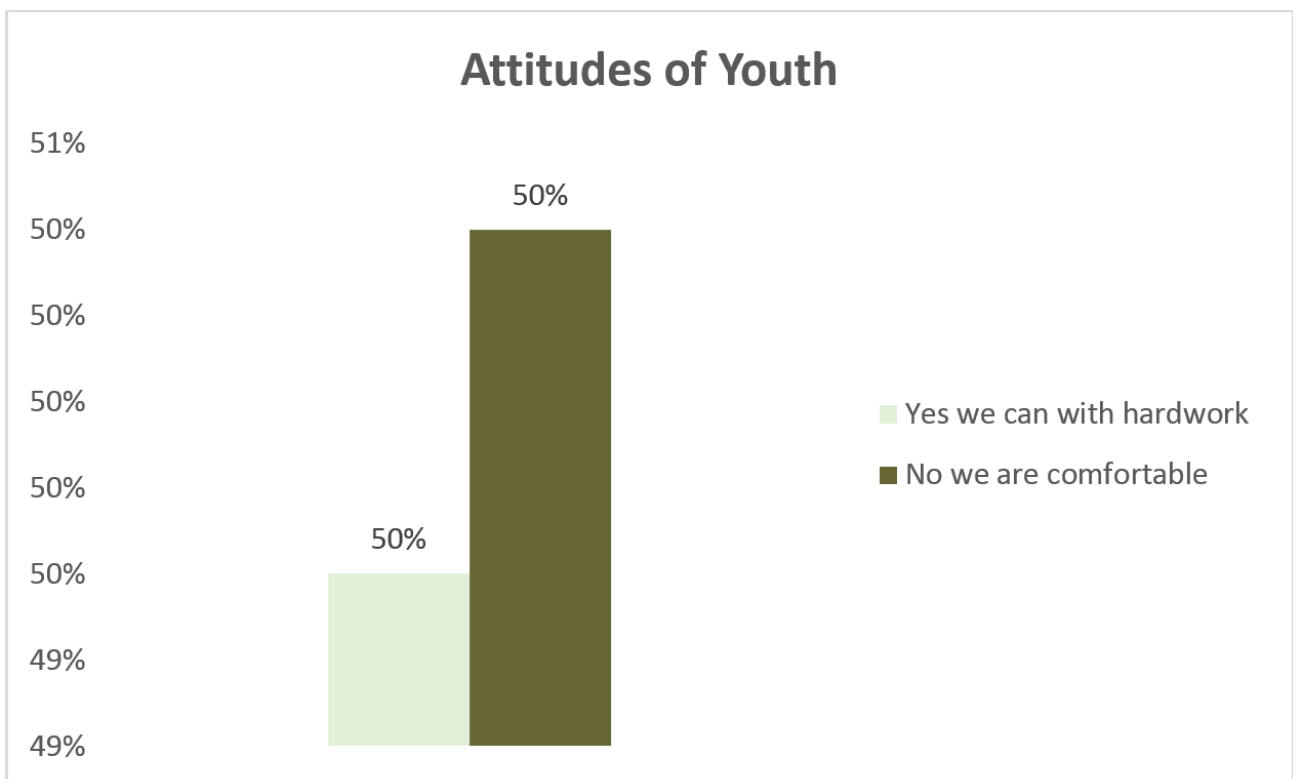
### What describes us best as Pakistanis?



This captivating poll sheds light on how Pakistanis perceive themselves, revealing a complex tapestry of self-identifications. A notable 48% of respondents admit to feeling a sense of laziness and uselessness, while about 37% see themselves primarily as followers, attributing this to a lack of vision or direction. Worryingly, only 13% of participants confidently express their ambition and belief in their potential to make a significant impact. Additionally, a small but noteworthy 3% view themselves as natural leaders.

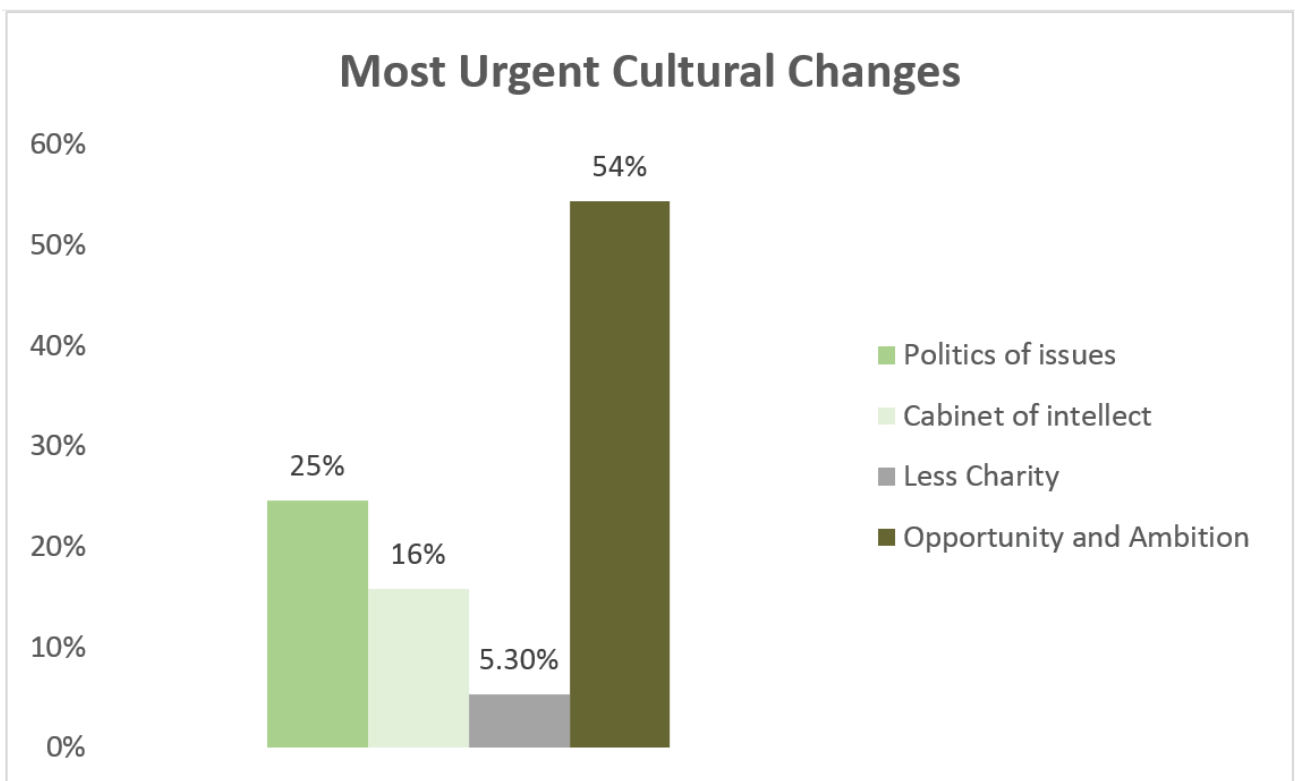
This array of self-perceptions offers a candid look at the personal attributes and aspirations held by many Pakistanis. The high percentage of respondents acknowledging laziness may reflect a collective awareness and possible readiness for personal growth. Those identifying as followers indicate a broader societal need for more robust vision and clearer goals. Conversely, the ambitious minority underscores the potential for personal achievement, while the rare self-identified leaders highlight the unique qualities needed to inspire and guide others.

The concept of stepping out of one's comfort zone, charting one's own path independently and diligently working towards one's goals, is something sorely lacking in our cultural ethos. Thus, this raises the critical question about the factors behind this apparent lack of drive and about whether the youth specifically also see themselves in a similar fashion. There was an even split among the youth, with half saying they could embody Allama Iqbal's Shaheen and succeed globally with hard work and the other half saying that they were comfortable in their complacency.



The fact that half of the youth polled on Twitter demonstrated their lack of ambition and aversion to hardwork may be explained by the youth's freedom to dream big. As gauged by subsequent polls, the dreams of young Pakistanis are largely confined to government jobs or going abroad.

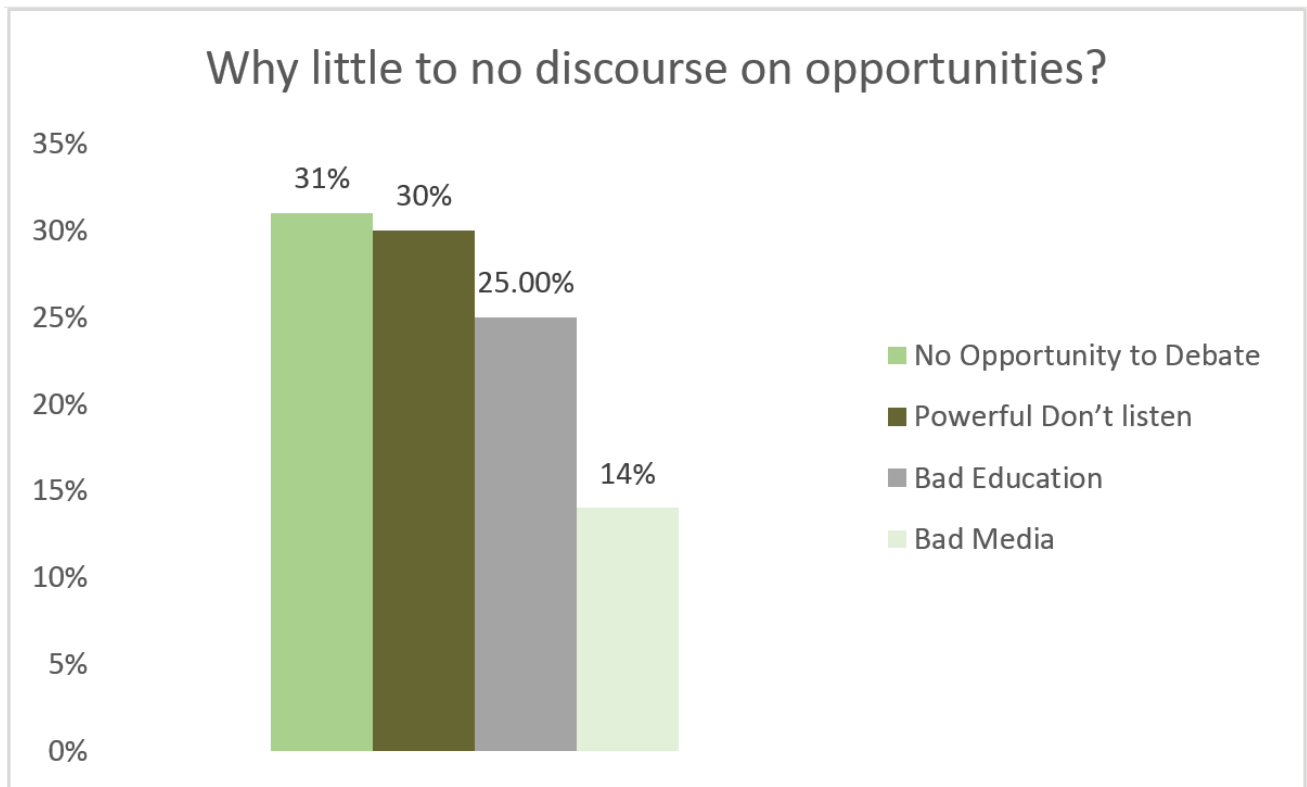
In order to make meaningful changes, it is crucial that changes are not only made in economic policies but at a deeper level, there is wide-ranging are instituted in our culture. Thus, when then Twitterati were asked regarding the most important change that needs to be initiated in our culture, more than half said that that opportunities and ambitions afforded to the average Pakistani should be amplified.



Yet, to truly harness these opportunities, a radical shift in our cultural framework is indispensable. Cultivating a culture that values debate, reasoning, and the open exchange of ideas is crucial, as it lays the groundwork for opportunities to flourish. The majority of Twitter respondents support this call for cultural transformation, recognizing its critical role in sculpting the nation's future.

Furthermore, as reiterated by the respondents Pakistan is at a crossroads, needing a paradigm shift towards a culture that embraces issue-based politics and assembles a cabinet of intellectual leaders. Such changes could act as a catalyst for a new era of progress and prosperity, by creating an environment where individuals are encouraged to carve out their own paths and seize the opportunities that arise.

In light of the fact, that the provision of opportunities and ambition is seen as the most important cultural change which needs to be instituted, it becomes crucial to examine why then is there a dearth of discussion regarding the matter of opportunities to grow and excel. Posing this question to the audience on Twitter elicited a variety of responses.

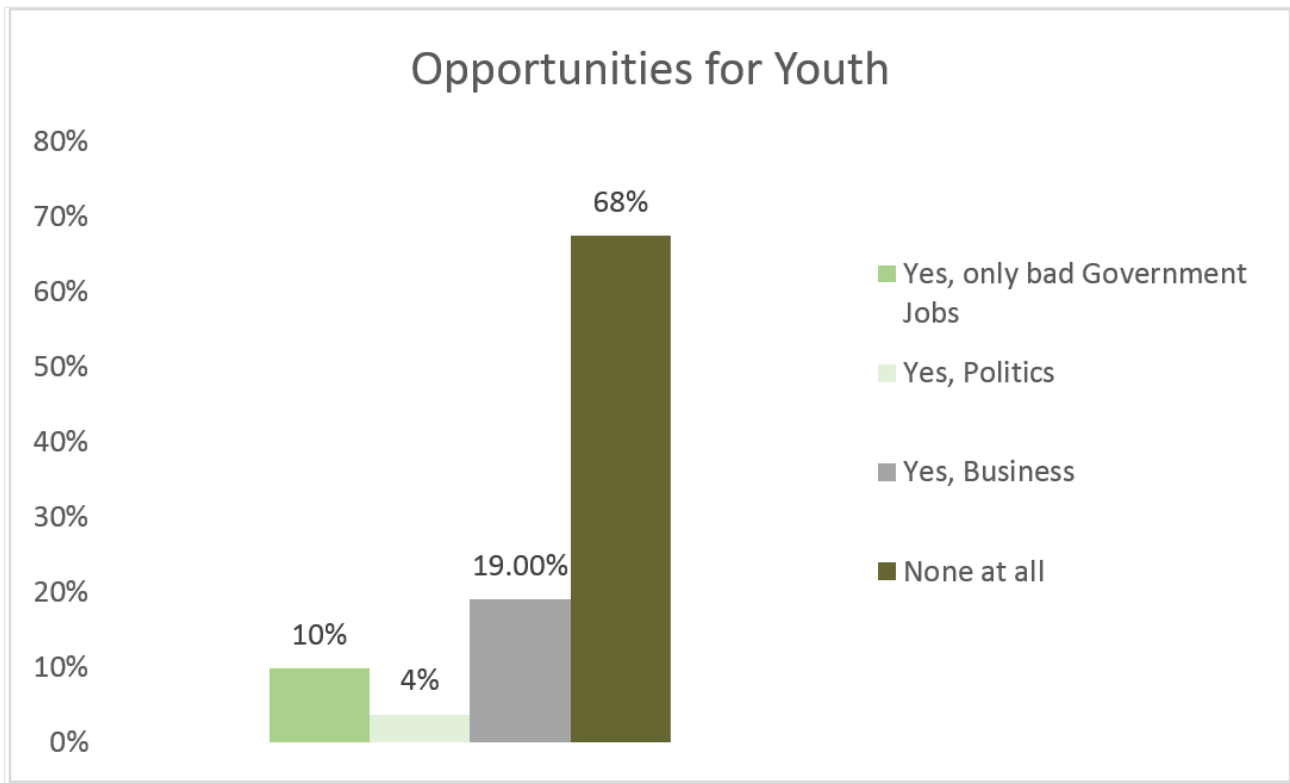


The most common causes highlighted as being the reasons behind the lack of discussion on opportunities were the absence of avenues for debate along with the elites' aversion to citizens' voices. Furthermore, albeit to a lesser extent, an education system that fails to foster interconnectedness and biased media coverage, were also viewed as causing significantly obstructing the pursuit of opportunities. This environment stifles the discussion and pursuit of ways to grow, win, and excel, leaving many to question the feasibility of achieving personal and professional success.

Given the paucity of discourse on the opportunities provided to an average Pakistani, it was important to examine whether the youth in particular feel that have abundant opportunities in terms of possibilities they can avail. Unfortunately, more than two-thirds of the respondents said that they have no opportunities at all available to them.

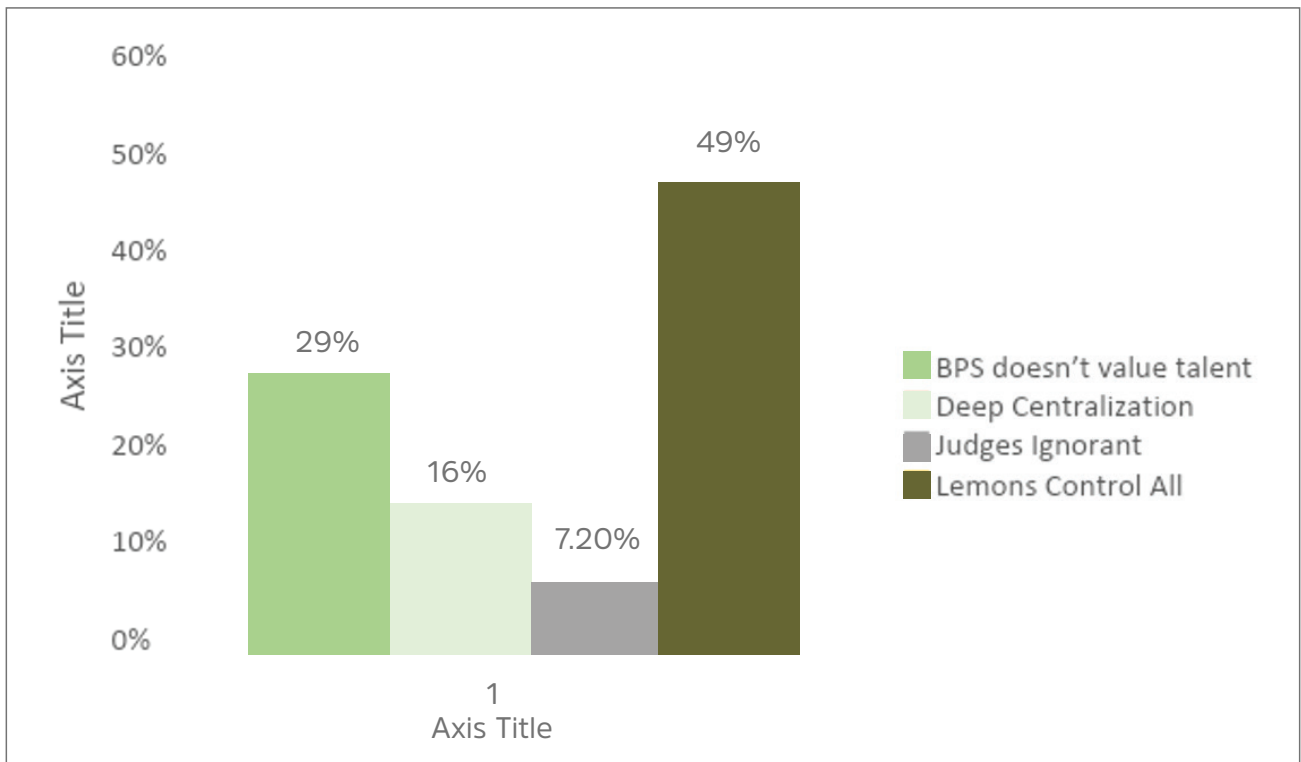
Only a minority stated they had abundant opportunity either in business or in the government sector. The share that said there were abundant opportunities for them in politics was abysmally low.





The lack of confidence displayed by the youth in the governance system and the lack of hope for their future prospects is quite telling. This sense of lack and apprehension regarding their future has already played a large role in contributing to higher levels of emigration from the country over recent years, with 800,000 having left in 2022 alone (DAWN, 2023). This perception challenges the notion of abundance and calls for a critical evaluation of the real conditions faced by young Pakistanis today.

The fact that Pakistan’s youth doesn’t see many opportunities for itself in their own native land should prompt an examination of why Pakistan fails to attract and retain talent. When this question was posed on Twitter, almost half the respondents stated that there was poor talent retention due to elites controlling everything. Elite having a stranglehold over everything entails factors such as insufficient opportunities for career advancement and insufficient incentives.

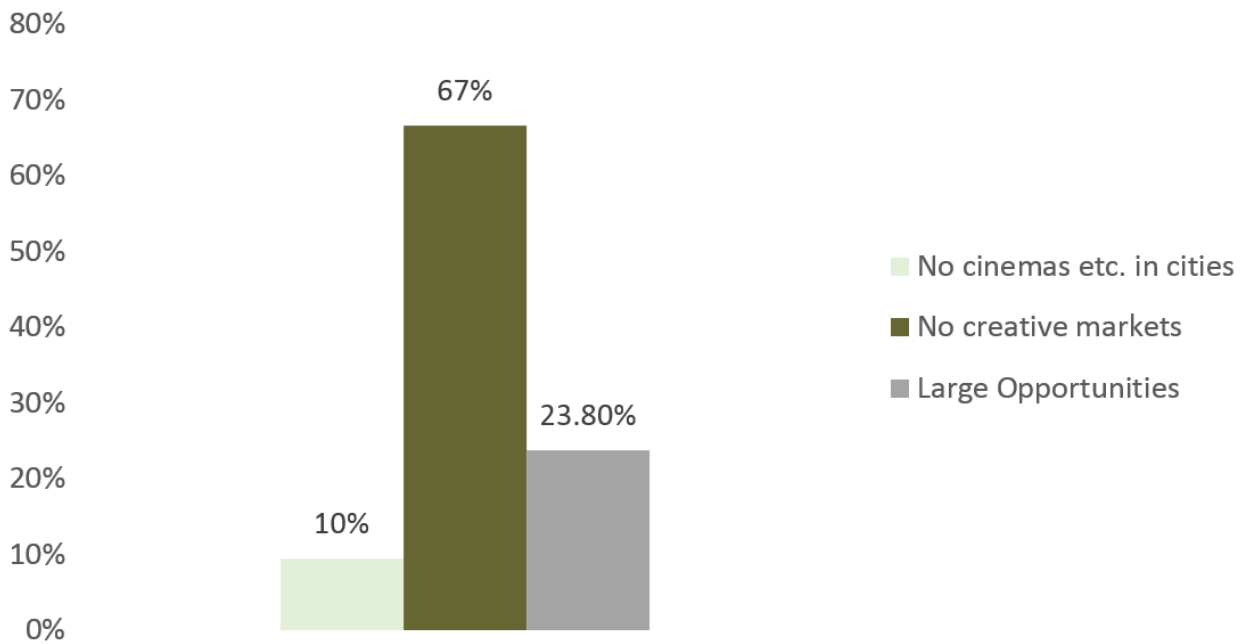


Furthermore, more than a quarter of respondents stated that Pakistan's civil service doesn't recognize or cultivate talent. A further 16% said that there is deep centralization. The remaining 7% held the ignorance and incompetence of judges to be the reason for Pakistan's poor talent retention.

This troubling trend, where innovative ideas are overlooked and unappreciated, stems from a complex mix of systemic issues. Entrenched hierarchical structures and remnants of colonial-era governance combined with a lack of social capital and limited opportunities for youth. The absence of dynamic platforms for debate and an overarching government presence further exacerbate this issue, alongside deficient policy frameworks and other barriers. These perceptions underscore a critical need for reform.

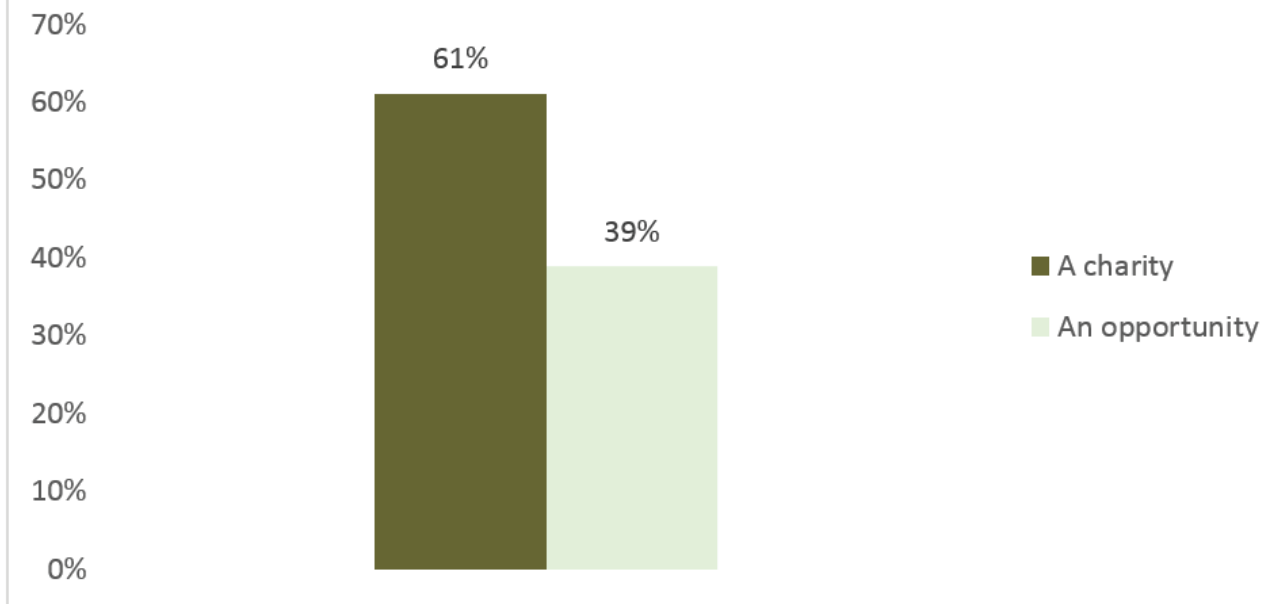
More specifically, given the increasing enrollment in liberal arts colleges in Pakistan, it is worth examining whether a well-groomed young person has ample opportunities in Pakistan's creative industries like movies, theaters, comedy, and writing. Almost two thirds outrightly claimed that there were no creative markets in Pakistan to begin with.

## Opportunities in Creative Industries



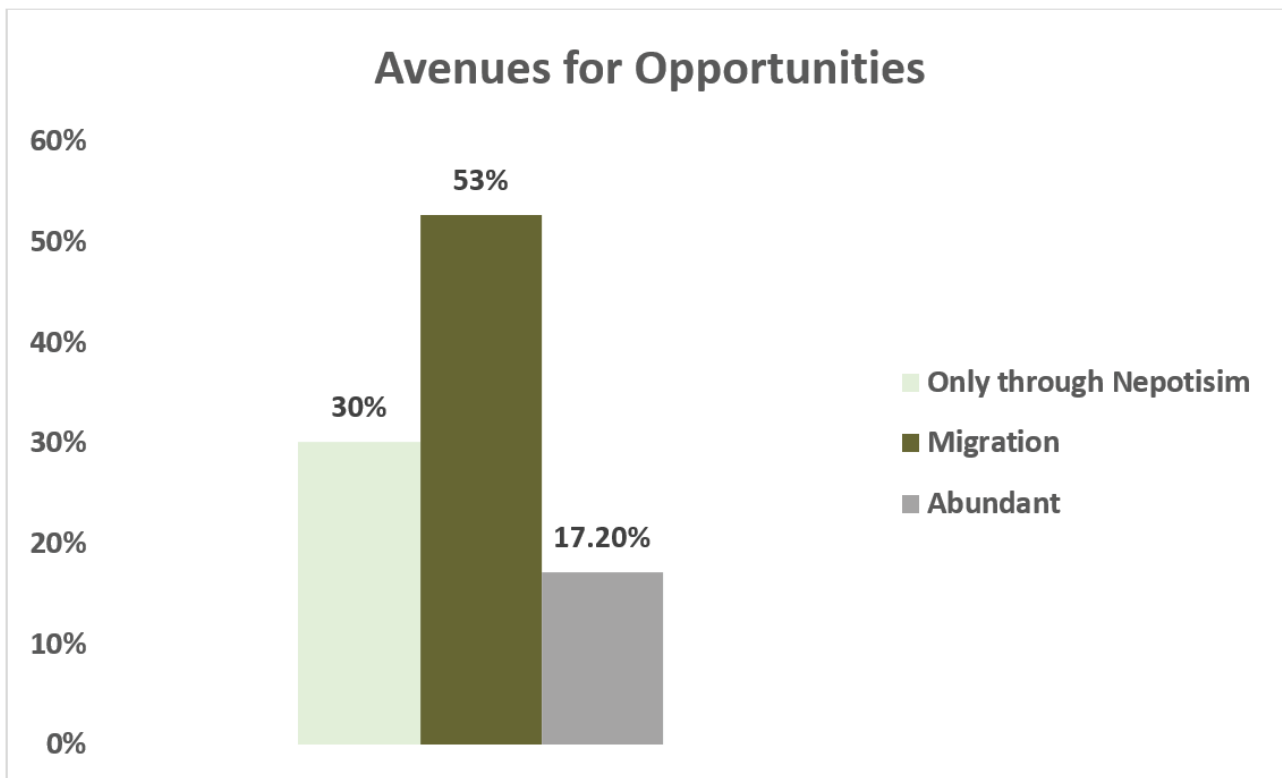
The reality of Pakistan's creative markets reveals a landscape that is markedly underdeveloped, with a glaring lack of discussion around the potential for growth in these areas. Many young talents face the harsh realities of being a starving artist, a situation that discourages many from entering the creative fields. The lack of a robust market-based economy further exacerbates these challenges, hindering the transformation of creative potential into substantial accomplishments. Insights from Twitter polls confirm this viewpoint, showing a broad agreement on the scarcity of opportunities within Pakistan's creative industries. The limited number of cinemas and theaters, crucial for the promotion of creative works, further restricts the industry's growth. Despite this, a tiny fraction of respondents maintain that there are sufficient opportunities for creative individuals, highlighting a split in perceptions about the state of the creative economy in Pakistan.

## Youth Perception of Elites & Government's Attitude towards them



The launch of initiatives like the Ehsaas petrol card by the government, which offer discounts targeted to youth, in this case on fuel to young motorcyclists, are often touted as a gesture of benevolence. However, such measures risk cultivating a generation that relies heavily on support, lacking the critical thinking, innovative spirit, and visionary outlook essential for future leadership. Despite this, the youth hold tremendous potential and are undoubtedly a crucial asset for any thriving economy. Yet, prevailing sentiments in Pakistan tend to view the youth more as beneficiaries of charity rather than as proactive agents of change, as highlighted by results from a Twitter survey. Interestingly, a minority still sees the youth as key drivers of the country's future progress and development, indicating a split in perception about their role and potential.

So, few are the opportunities in Pakistan for the success and prosperity of youth, that there is overwhelming pessimism about their future in Pakistan. When asked about the avenues available for success, only a small fraction—less than one in five—felt that there were many opportunities due to their abundance. In stark contrast, more than 80% indicated that the primary ways to find opportunities were through migration or nepotism.

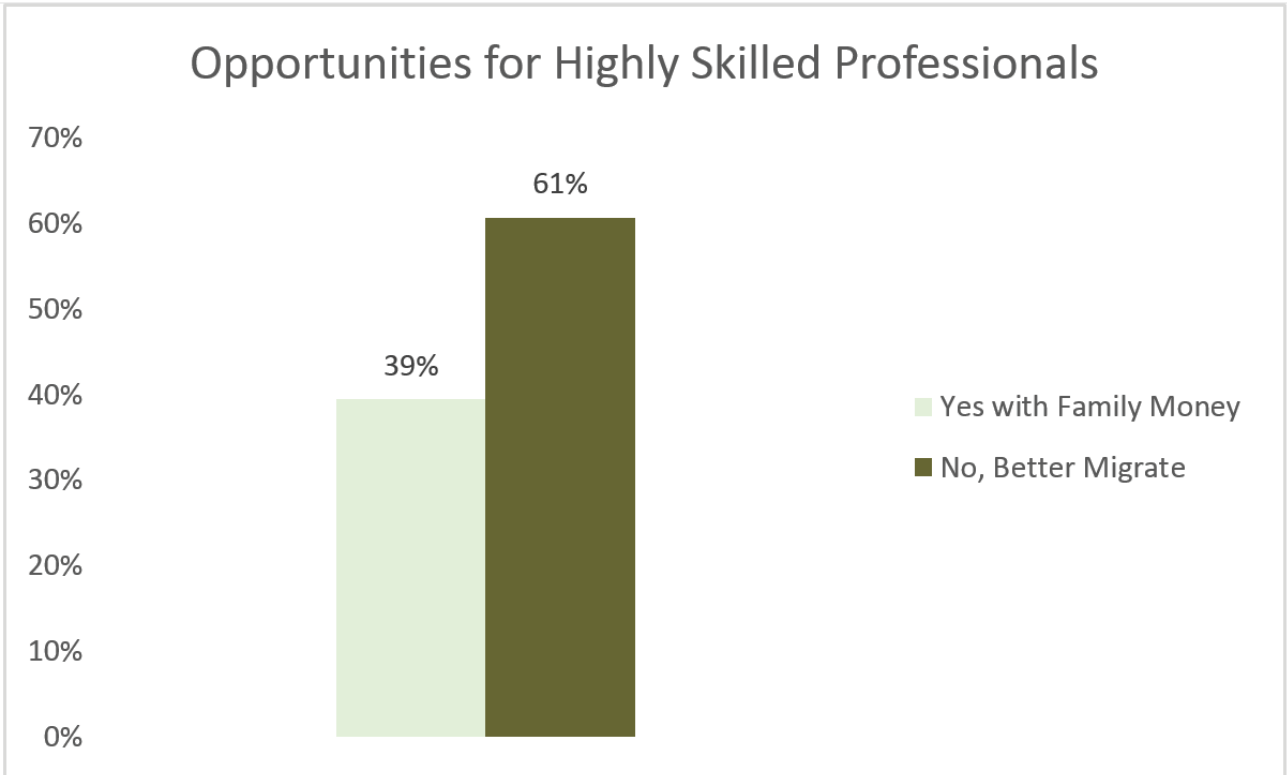


This sentiment drives a considerable number of skilled individuals to migrate to developed nations, attracted by the promise of abundant resources and better prospects that offer a more fulfilling life. This trend is reinforced by the results of a Twitter poll, where the majority believe that genuine advancement opportunities predominantly exist outside of Pakistan. Consequently, each year, thousands of young Pakistanis leave in search of improved living conditions and more rewarding careers abroad.

This migration is further fueled by a domestic environment where success is often more about who you know rather than what you know, compelling the youth to search for environments that value fairness, meritocracy, and equal opportunity.

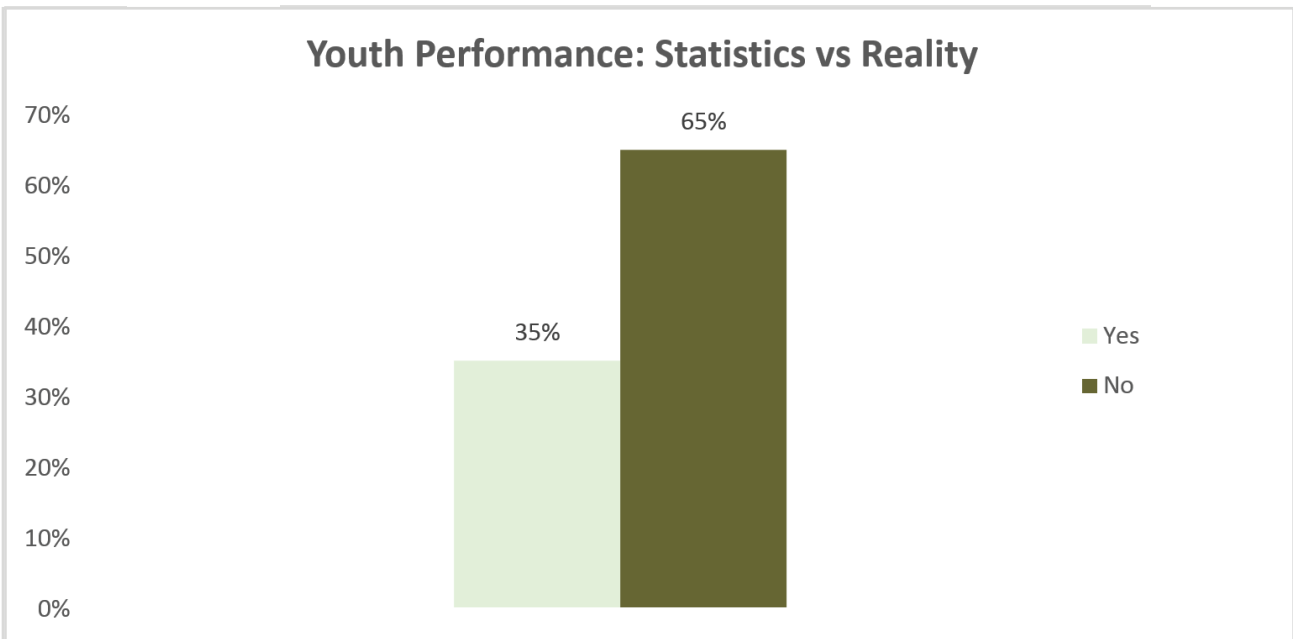
Addressing this exodus requires a multifaceted approach: proactive government policies, robust academic research, thoughtful urban development, and the creation of a broad range of career paths are essential to enable the youth to reach their full potential and find success within Pakistan itself.

Importantly, the Twitterati were equally pessimistic when they were specifically asked about opportunities for highly skilled and educated professionals with only 4 in 10 respondents saying well-educated professionals only had opportunities if they hailed from affluent backgrounds. Conversely, most believed that ample opportunities could only be availed if such professionals moved abroad.



Currently, even those with moderate education are opting for menial jobs overseas, swayed by the daunting challenges of inflation, unemployment, and substandard living conditions at home.

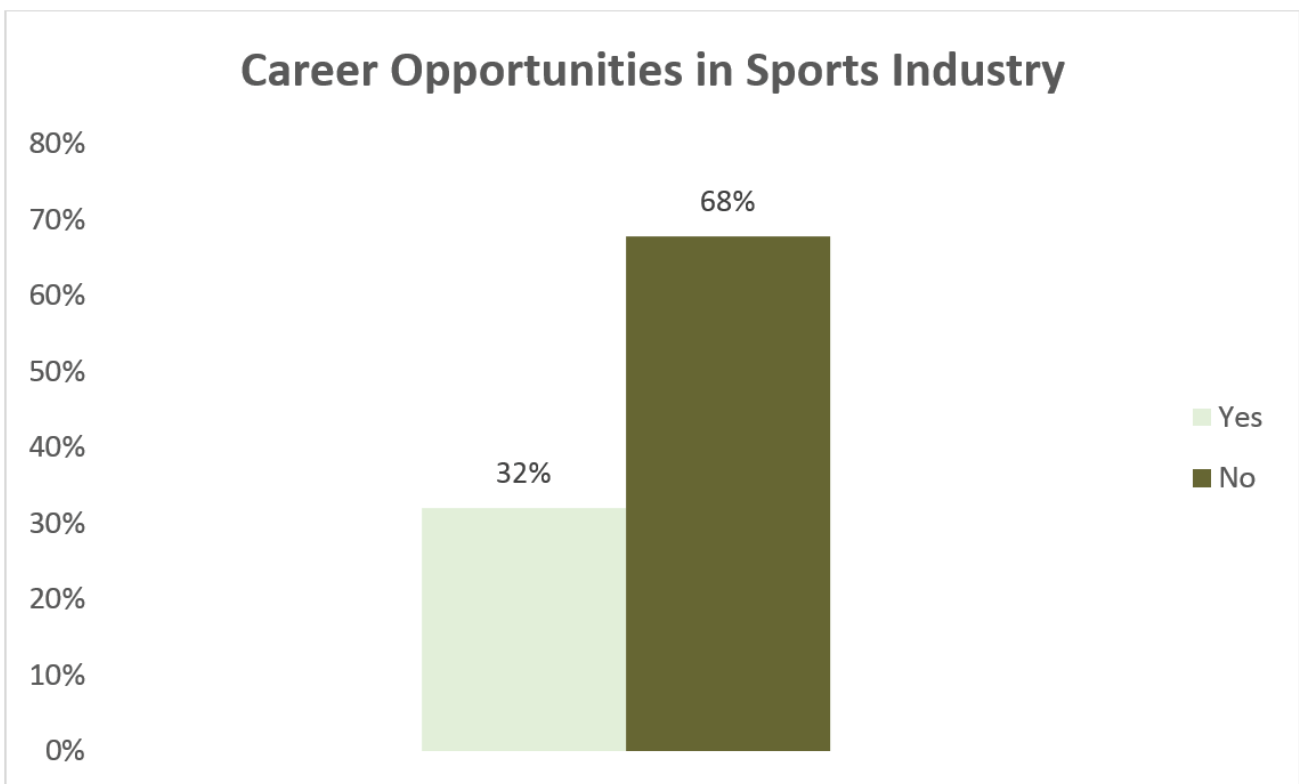
So not only are the opportunities available to the youth especially highly qualified professionals scarce but there also seems to be an incongruity between officially reported statistics and ground reality. A poll gauging the sentiments of the Twitterati in Pakistan found that most felt that there was a disconnect between the high performance of Pakistani youth and the actual opportunities available to them.



Despite government statistics painting a rosy picture of the youth in Pakistan, the main sentiment from Twitter polls illustrates a less promising picture, indicating that opportunities are, in fact, quite scarce. Many believe that the government prioritizes its image and agendas over the genuine creation of prospects for the youth, suggesting a disconnect between reported statistics and the on-the-ground reality.

In this prevailing landscape, there are various challenges regarding the availability of opportunities for the youth. The governance system and state structure, which are crucial in nurturing potential, are in dire need of overhaul. To foster a future where the youth can genuinely prosper, integrating technology and digitization into policy and administration is critical. This reimagining of policies could unlock countless avenues for young individuals to excel.

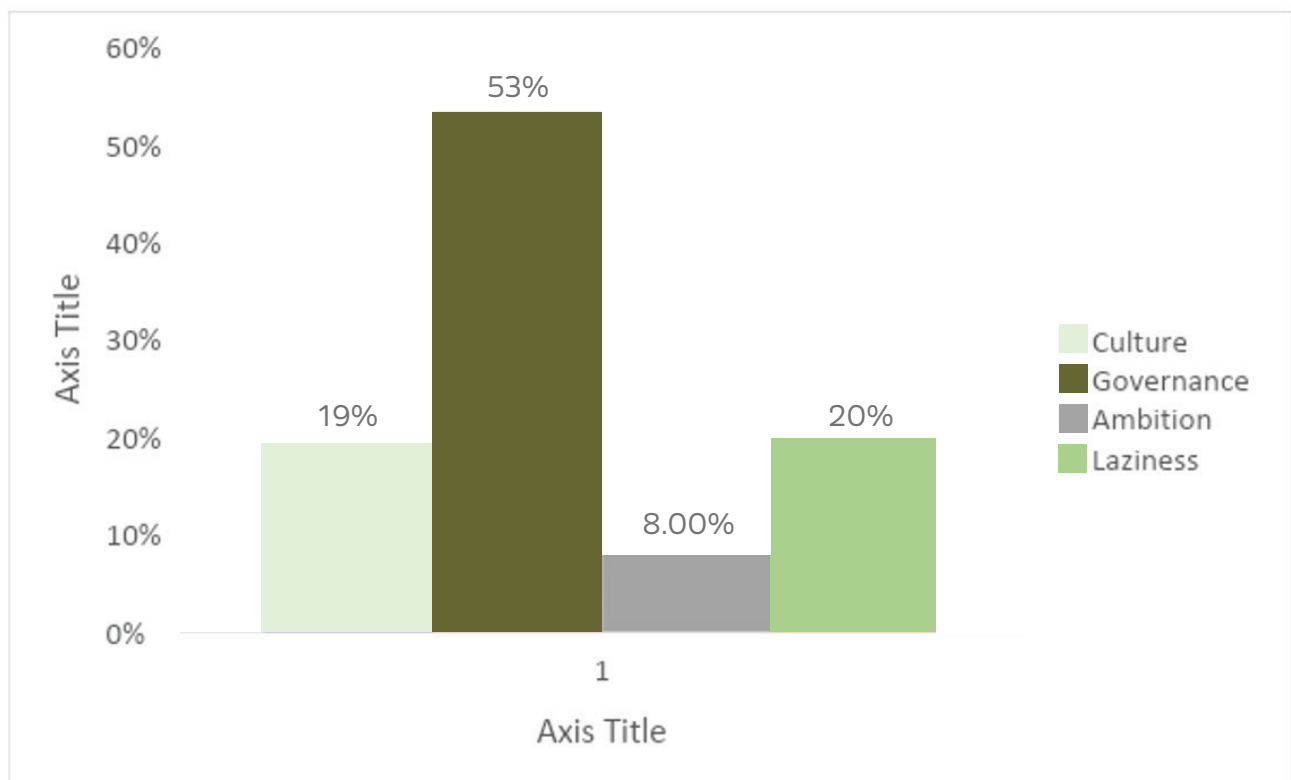
To probe further into the career opportunities available to Pakistani youth in specific fields, the Twitterati were asked about the career prospects for the youth in the sport industry beyond cricket.



The feedback from the respondents indicated a disheartening outlook for the future of Pakistani youth in sports, highlighting a stark lack of infrastructure and investment. The absence of a visionary, long-term strategy to develop these sports compounds the issue, stifling the potential for careers in an industry that could otherwise thrive and inspire generations.

Hockey, once a symbol of national pride, poses significant questions about the current sports landscape in Pakistan. Is it still common to see children playing hockey, or are the necessary facilities to nurture this talent increasingly scarce? This issue extends beyond hockey to other sports like badminton, table tennis, squash, lawn tennis, swimming, basketball, and football, where career opportunities are either woefully inadequate or utterly non-existent. These limited opportunities are often further compromised by entrenched nepotism and the influence of vested interests.

No wonder then that Pakistan despite having the 5th largest population in the world fares so badly at international sporting competitions like the Olympics.



Pakistan's absence from the podium in Olympic and international competitions often sparks debates about the underlying causes. Most point fingers at governance and the control government officials wield over sports associations, turning these entities into personal piggy banks rather than fostering genuine athletic development. The misuse of these associations for perks like international travel sidesteps their fundamental purpose: to nurture and develop competitive athletes.

However, the issue extends beyond mismanagement. Societal factors like complacency and aversion to hard work also play a significant role. A prevailing cultural attitude that prioritizes power and wealth over hard work and excellence diminishes the drive for international sports achievement. This cultural trait has not only impacted our performance in global arenas but has also stifled the ambition of our youth, cultivating a mindset that is less about striving for excellence and more about settling for the status quo. This blend of poor governance and a culturally ingrained lack of ambition leaves Pakistan lagging behind on the international stage, a stark contrast to nations where sports and excellence are deeply valued and vigorously pursued.

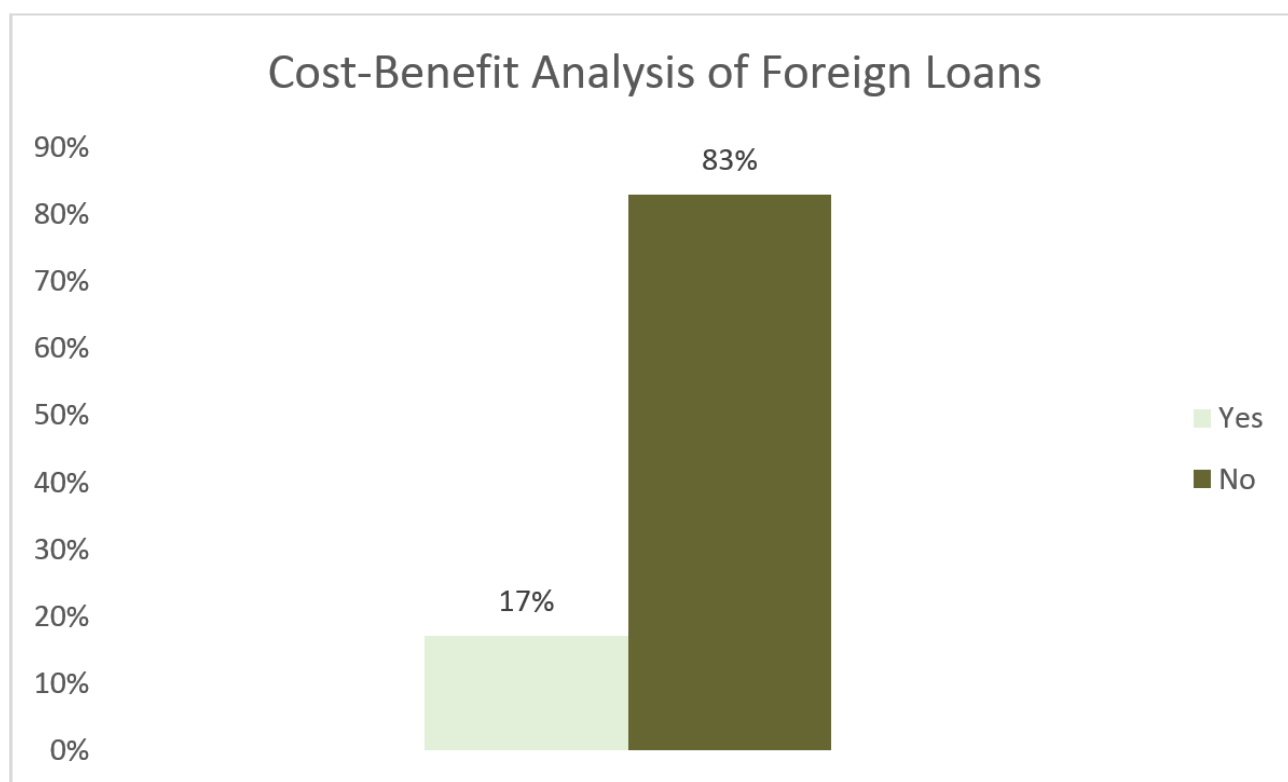


## CHAPTER 3: DONOR ENGAGEMENT

### 3.1. Donor Engagement with Local Think Tanks

Pakistan is a highly aid-dependent economy that often accepts international advice without substantial scrutiny. Our leadership frequently meets with donor representatives, who provide policy ideas along with financial incentives, finding a ready acceptance of their proposals.

Infact, our leadership's desire to readily accept aid and loans is insatiable and thus deeply worrisome. This also prompts concerns regarding the competence of such decisions as aid is accepted with little to no cognizance of the far-reaching implications of doing so. Since, our government institutions notoriously lack robust feasibility plans for managing these loans, often leaving us blindsided about the economic repercussions. The Twitterati is largely in unanimity regarding the absence of a thorough cost-benefit analysis.



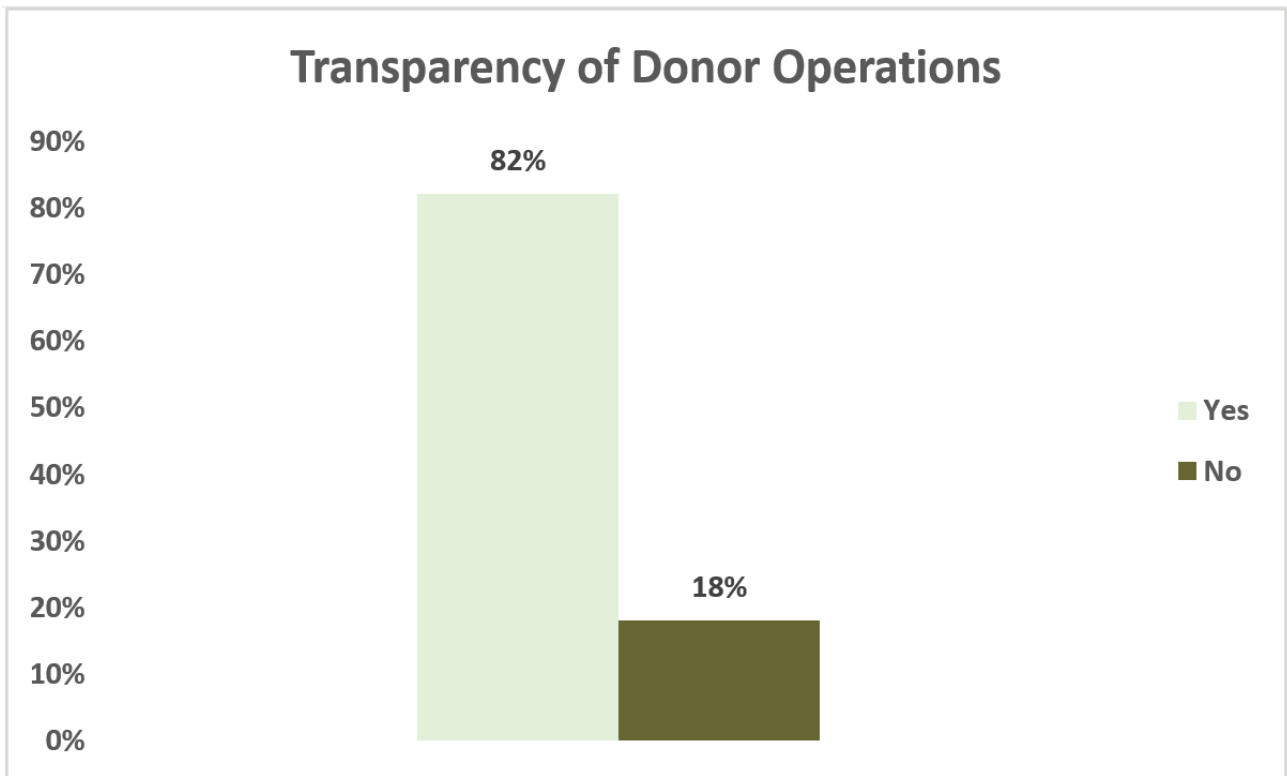
This oversight is stark when considering Pakistan's chronic dependence on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), having sought its aid an astonishing 24 times—a sharp contrast to India's and Bangladesh's 7 and 14 times, respectively. (IMF, 2024)

Despite decades of foreign aid funneled into poverty alleviation, healthcare, and education, the persistent exacerbation of these issues raises a critical question: Does foreign aid truly benefit us, or does it merely perpetuate dependency and incapacitate our

nation's ability to self-govern?

Not only does the government do an extremely poor job of evaluating the long-term benefit of taking on a humongous loan or aid package but often the operations and activities of donor agencies in Pakistan is shrouded in mystery.

This state of affairs is diametrically opposed to the wishes of the public on Twitter, which overwhelmingly believes that every single detail of donor operations, from projects and programs to consultants and contractors, should be made public.



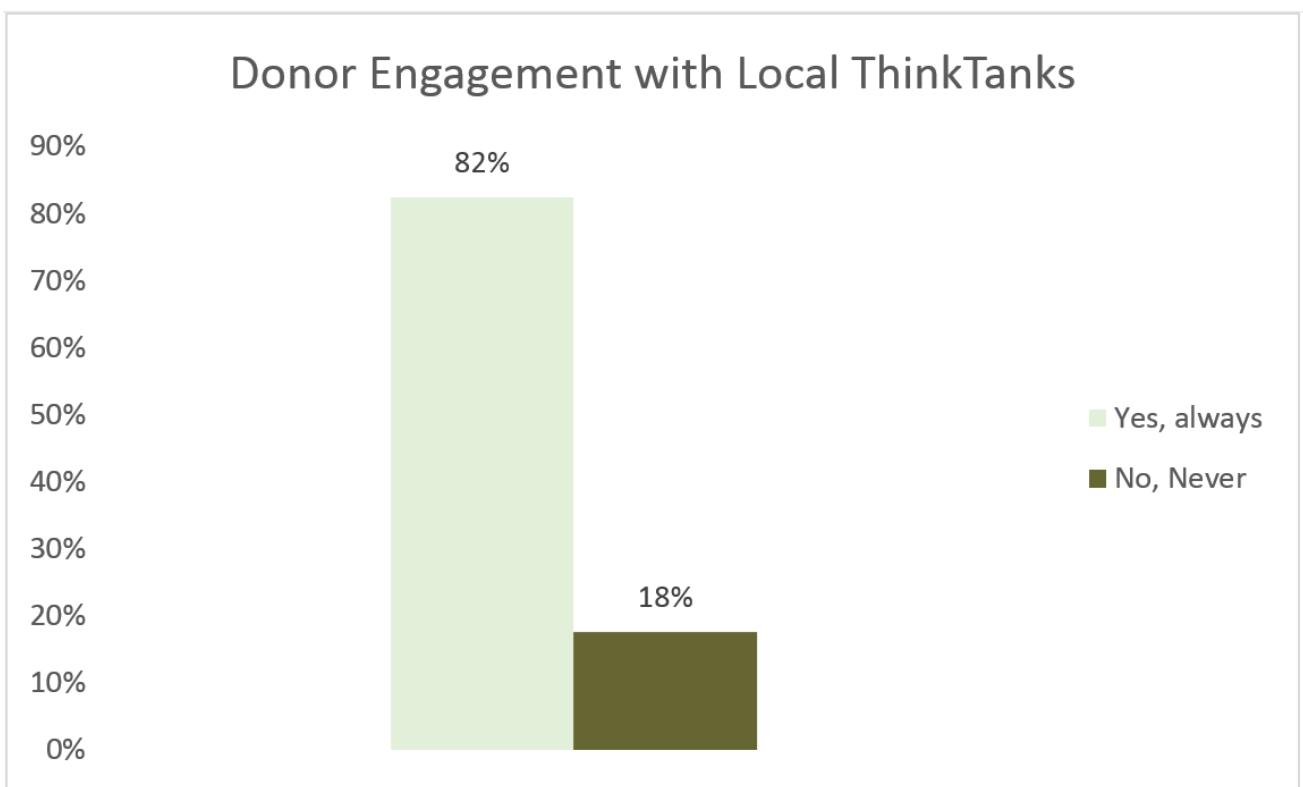
Trent Shelton once powerfully stated, "Your transparency will lead to other people's transformation." This maxim underscores the transformative power of openness, a quality that respondents overwhelmingly desire from international donors operating in Pakistan. Echoing this sentiment, the Dalai Lama warns, "A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity." This serves as a stark reminder of the dangers posed by secrecy and opacity.

It is imperative that all elements of their work—ranging from the selection of consultants and contractors to the specifics of their programs and outputs—be made publicly accessible. Transparency in these matters is not merely beneficial; it is essential to ensure that there is no room for manipulation or hidden agendas.

By demystifying the intricate details of donor operations, we can empower citizens, foster trust, and cultivate a robust culture of accountability. This level of transparency will not only enlighten the public but also enhance their participation in the democratic process, ensuring that international aid truly benefits the nation without ulterior motives.

Despite having a substantial intellectual infrastructure with over 200 universities and nearly 100 think tanks, there is a noticeable reluctance among international donors to engage with local institutions like PIDE (Jilani, 2020). These donors seldom participate in local conferences or seminars and typically decline invitations to present their work, citing the need for peer review or don't reply for requests for research cooperation (Haque & Mehmood, 2024). This prompts the question: why shouldn't the policy advice of donors be subject to review by local organizations and be mindful of the research carried out by them.

There was widespread agreement among the Twitterati that donors should interact with local think tanks with more than 8 in 10 respondents saying that they would want donor agencies to engage and collaborate with local think tanks.

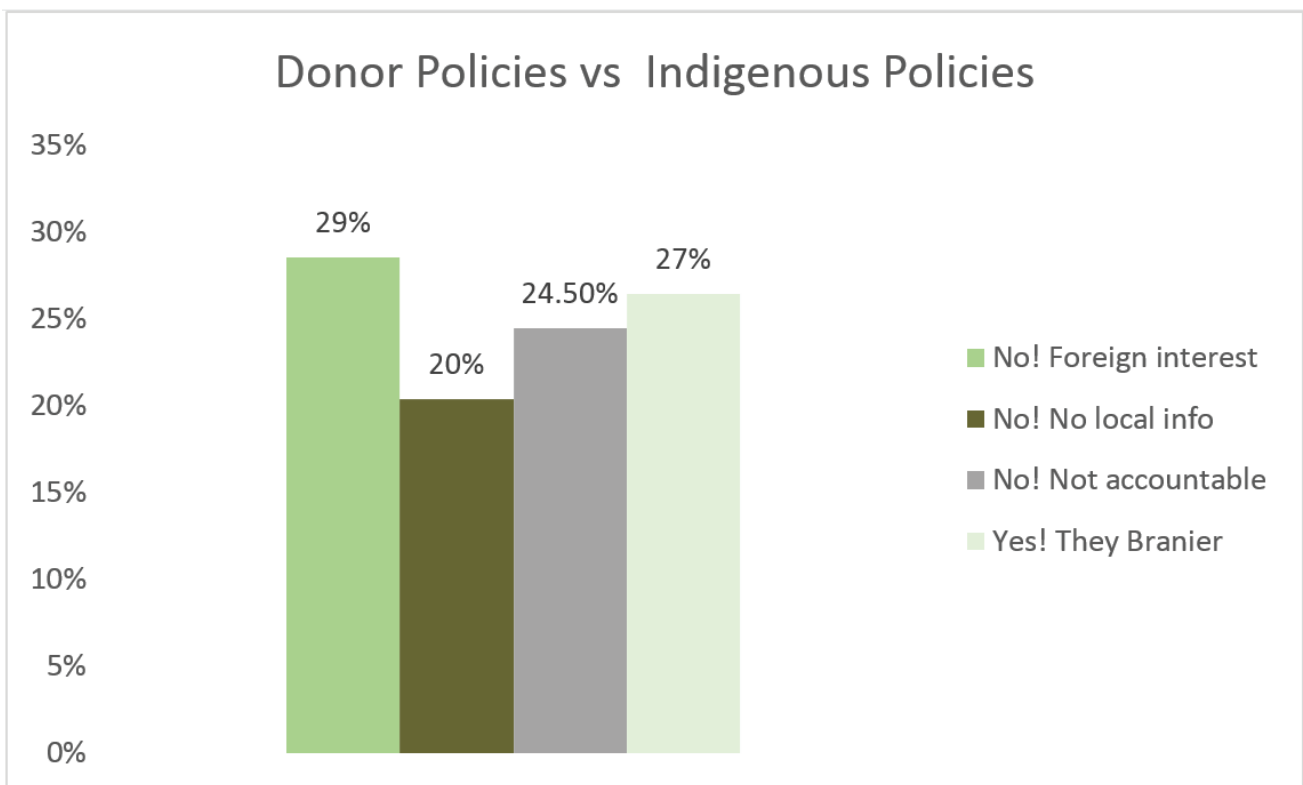


Donor engagement with local think tanks is highly crucial because, as Haque (2020) argues that such technical assistance often amounts to "dumping" on Pakistan's intellectual industry—universities, think tanks, and consultancy firms—are sidelined as foreign entities create and fulfill a demand for research through loans and grants without proper integration with local intellectual frameworks.

Furthermore, the disengagement from Pakistan's intellectual output is not limited to donors; it extends across our political, bureaucratic, judicial, and military leadership, which often disregards local academic and research contributions (Khan, 2017).

### 3.2. Local Policies & Research vis-à-vis Donors

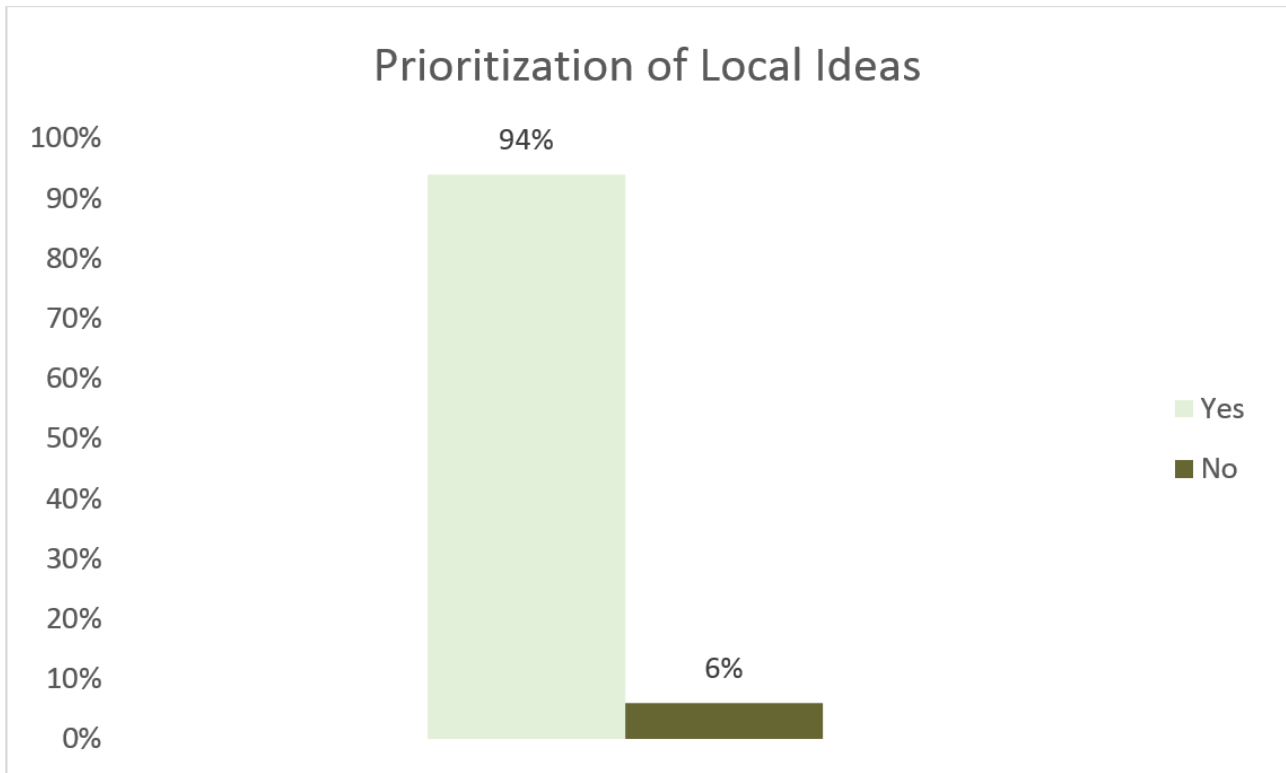
In relation to the earlier question asked from donors and given that do often tend to dominate the policy debate (Khan, 2017), it was also important to gauge the perceptions of people regarding the level of priority which should be given to policy advice from international agencies. More than half the respondents were emphatically opposed to the work of foreign agencies due to either viewing them as (representers) of foreign interest or viewing them as completely lacking accountability. 20% said that policy research from local institutes should be prioritized over that from international agencies. Disappointingly, a large share or more than a quarter of all respondents felt that international lenders should be tasked with dispensing policy advice as they believed them to be smarter.



International financial institutions (IFIs), the primary donors and lenders to nations like Pakistan, often deliver research and forecasts that critics argue barely scratch the surface of our complex social and economic landscape. This externally generated insight is frequently criticized for being disconnected from the realities on the ground. To harness more accurate and relevant data, it's crucial that we turn to local researchers who grasp the intricacies of our own society.

Local experts are deeply familiar with the social, economic, and cultural dynamics specific to their communities. For a truly effective and relevant policy framework, it is essential to elevate and prioritize local research and advocacy, ensuring that policies are not only made in Pakistan but are made for Pakistan.

Question: In a democracy, should the government prioritize local ideas and leverage domestic academic resources in policymaking?



In theory, democratic governance should embody the will and wisdom of its own people, drawing extensively from local thought leaders and universities. To understand public sentiment on this matter, a survey was conducted: a resounding 94% of respondents affirmed that domestic policy and research should form the backbone of governmental decision-making.

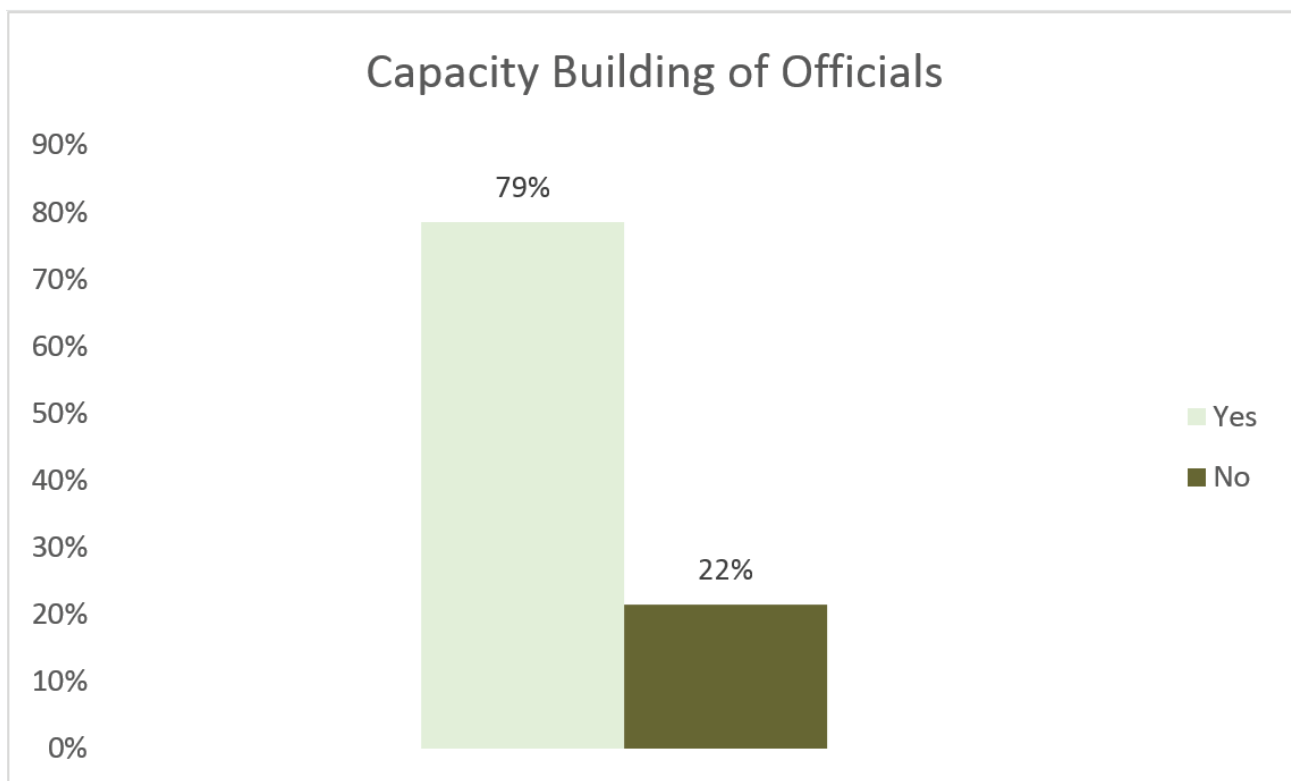
However, the reality is starkly different. Our investigations reveal that ministers, and even the Prime Minister, meet with international donors with alarming frequency—sometimes daily. These external entities have had a hand in shaping significant initiatives, including judicial reforms and the Ehsaas Program. Unfortunately, many of these externally influenced policies, like the IPPs and energy reforms, have become notorious for their shortcomings.

Despite these failures, the allure of benefits from these relationships—such as job offers, consulting contracts, and trips abroad for government officials and their acquaintances—keeps our leaders tethered to these foreign advisors. This dependency on international lenders and their agendas continues to sideline the rich pool of local expertise available within our own borders.

The presence of and extensive work done by local think tanks provides an opportunities for local (powerbrokers) officials to collaborate with them and produce and adopt policies with a solid basis (Haque, 2020).

Local think tanks, engage in significant knowledge building, with institutes like PIDE alone, having conducted approximately 400 webinars covering a wide array of topics on Pakistan’s development and continues to host these sessions nearly twice a week. Notably absent from these webinars are key groups including government officials,

politicians, and the consultants and lenders they work with. This lack of participation starkly contrasts with practices in other countries where policymakers actively engage with local research, recognizing its relevance and utility.

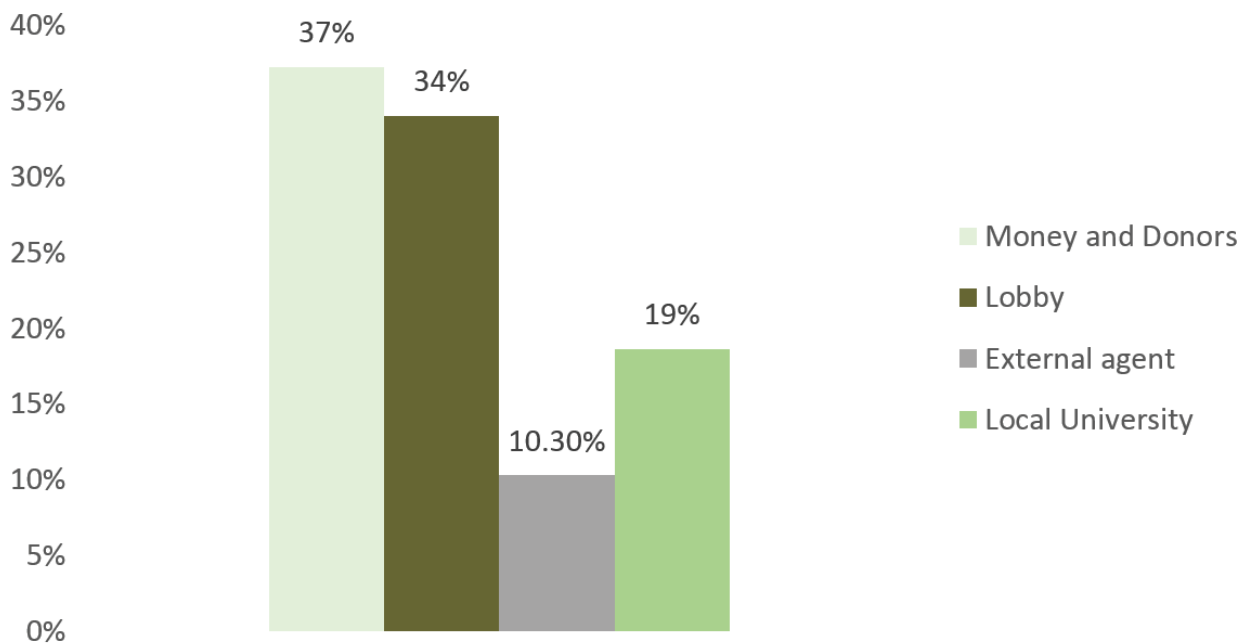


It is encouraging to note that a survey revealed 77% support for the notion that local seminars offer valuable insights that policymakers and consultants should leverage. This substantial majority underscores the potential benefits of engaging with local intellectual resources, suggesting that a significant portion of the community believes in the importance of such knowledge exchange.

Around 100 different entities in Islamabad alone, ranging from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and aid agencies to banks, are actively shaping our policies. They possess vast research capabilities and employ consultants to mold narratives that suit their interests. Meanwhile, our local intellectual resources, such as universities, think tanks, and consulting firms, are systematically excluded from the policy research supply chain. This exclusion allows these lenders to effortlessly lend money and control policies without much local challenge. Our ministries, lacking in professional and research capacities, are simply overwhelmed by these external pressures (Haque, 2020).

Almost half of the respondents believe that our policies are fundamentally shaped by external donors or other external agents. Another third believed that policies formulated in Pakistan were shaped by lobbyists, often comprising general and former bureaucrats. Shockingly, only 19% of the respondents on Twitter claimed that our local universities play a pivotal role in making policies. In reality, both government and civil society often view universities merely as holding areas to keep the youth occupied, continuously expanding them despite a stagnant job market.

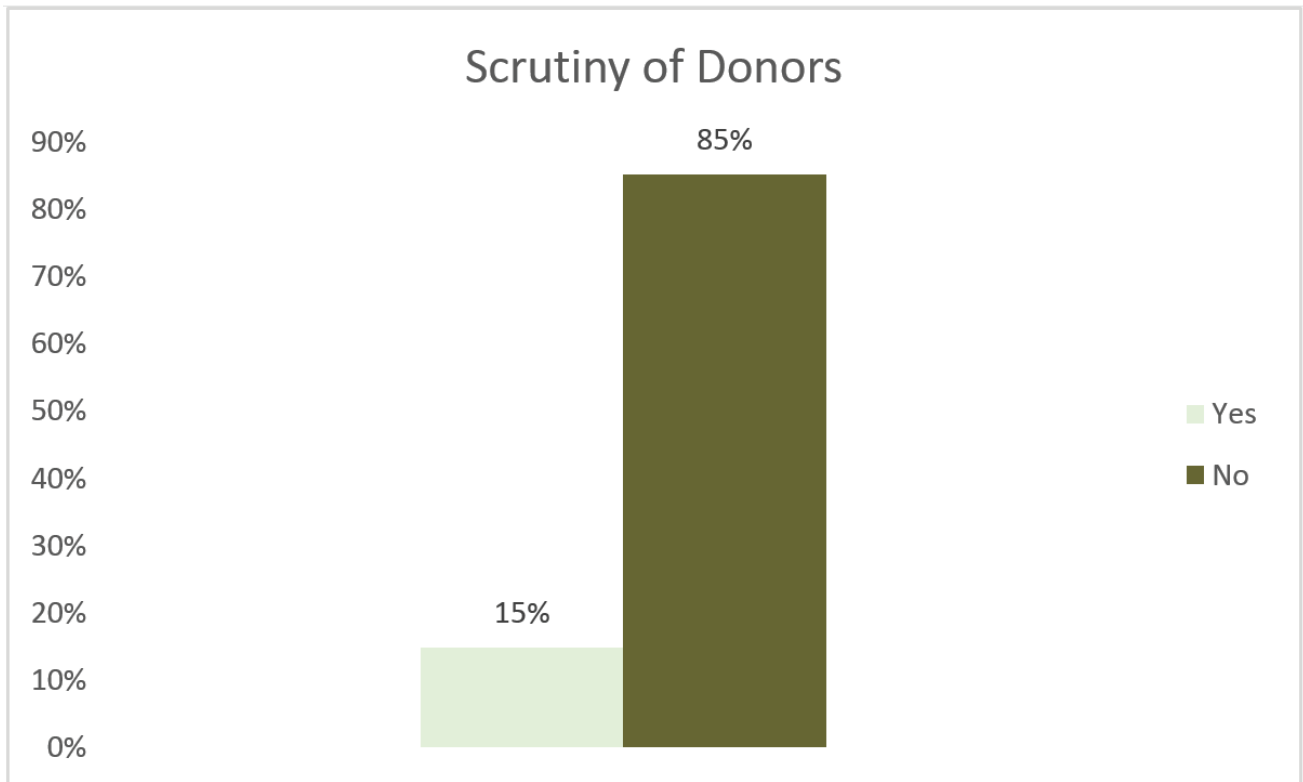
## Greatest influence on Policymaking



Nobel Laureate Angus Deaton has criticized the dual role of lenders and donors, highlighting the inherent conflict of interest when those providing financial aid also dictate policy (Deaton, 2013). The economist Bill Easterly has in particular criticized the efficacy of Western claiming that donor interest often incongruent with recipient needs. This can potentially divert national policies away from the public good, driven by the agendas set by foreign money rather than domestic needs aid (Easterly, 2006). Additionally, the quality of consultants and the bureaucratic agendas involved often diverge significantly from what the local population desires.

This situation is made worse by the fact that the policies of donors aren't adequately scrutinized, or in many cases not scrutinized at all. The issue of how donors peddle their technical advice remains a critical concern for local policy circles. Faheem Jahangir Khan (2017) has noted the presence of around 100 INGOs and 200 consultants operating in the country, each eager to sway policy discussions with their technical assistance. Yet, the transparency about the origins of this assistance, the agenda-setting process, and the decision-makers involved remains alarmingly opaque.

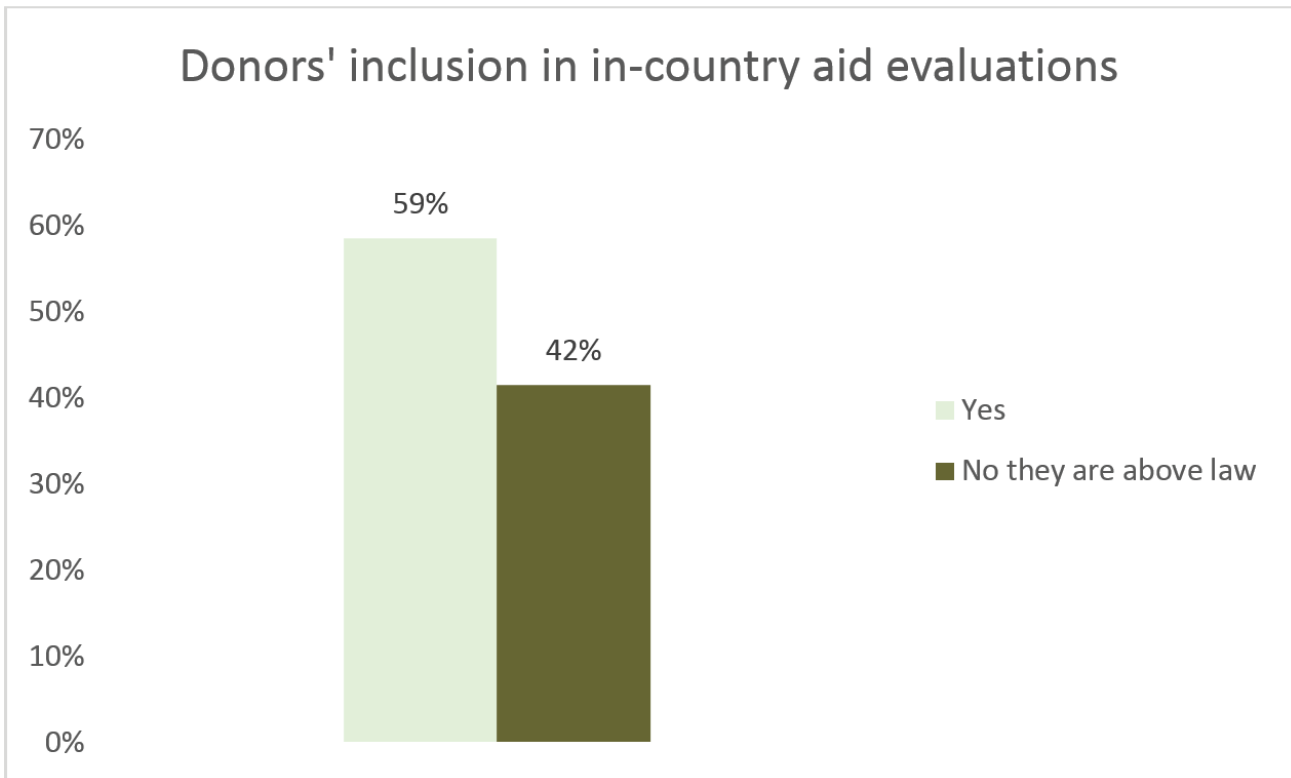
### 3.3. Donor Scrutiny



Disturbingly, 85% of respondents in a recent poll indicated that this foreign technical assistance rarely involves local academic entities in any form of peer review, undermining the development of homegrown policy solutions. Despite this, our policymakers routinely permit such foreign-led policy development, contradicting the loud calls for independence from foreign influence—a concept our leaders seem to misunderstand profoundly.

Donors often preach transparency and claim to uphold good behavior; they even introduced the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) to Pakistan. Yet, when the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) proposes to scrutinize the effectiveness of foreign aid, suddenly these advocates of openness become gatekeepers. This raises a critical question: Should donors be allowed to participate in in-country evaluations of the aid they provide?





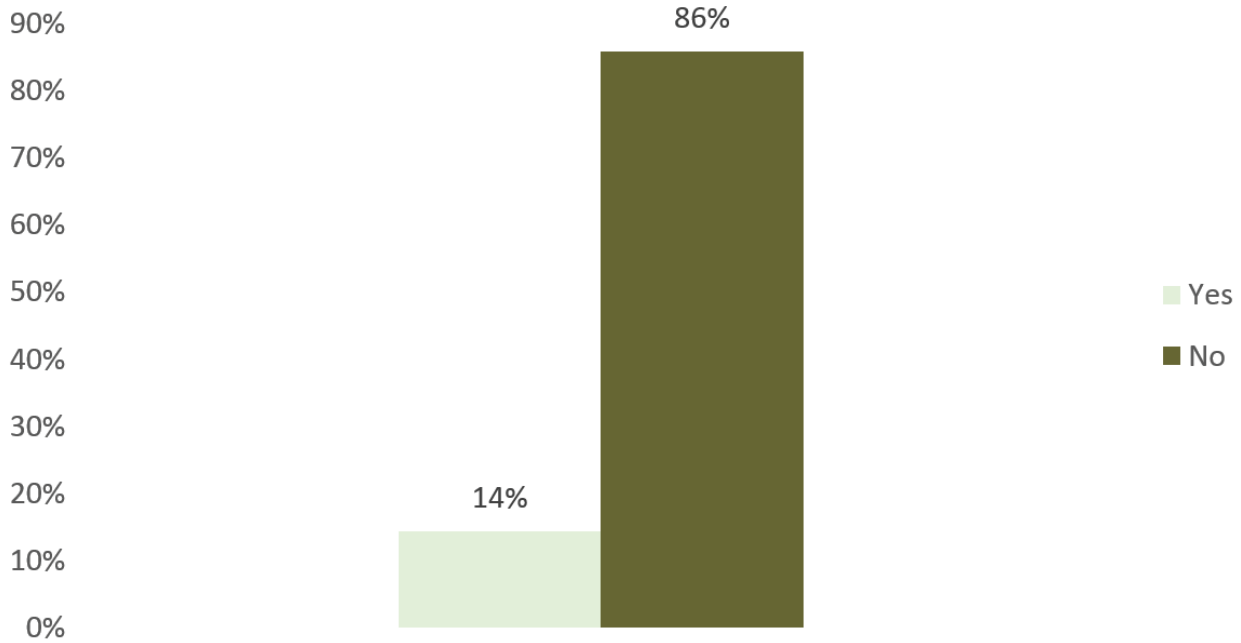
The issue is contentious. According to recent survey data, 59% believe donors should be involved in evaluating their contributions, citing their insights and resources as beneficial for comprehensive assessment. However, a substantial 41% argue against donor involvement, voicing concerns over potential bias, conflicts of interest, and the risk of donors wielding undue influence over the evaluation outcomes.

This division underscores a broader dilemma: while donor involvement could enhance understanding of aid impacts, their presence in evaluations could also skew the findings to favor their narratives. The current situation underscores a broader need to demand the thorough appraisal of foreign aid in order to ensure transparency and accountability.

It's a shocking revelation that the ADB, a pillar of development finance, refuses to share comprehensive data about its operations with the Pakistani public, insisting instead on transparency from us. This raises a critical question: What does the ADB have to hide if their operations are above board?

This situation highlights a glaring case of information asymmetry, where the demand for transparency is unidirectional. Surprisingly, while these institutions hold Pakistan to stringent transparency standards, they themselves operate under a veil of secrecy. The reluctance of foreign donor agencies to withhold data at will also raises questions about the fairness of these donors demanding transparency from Pakistan.

## Fairness of Donor Demands for Transparency

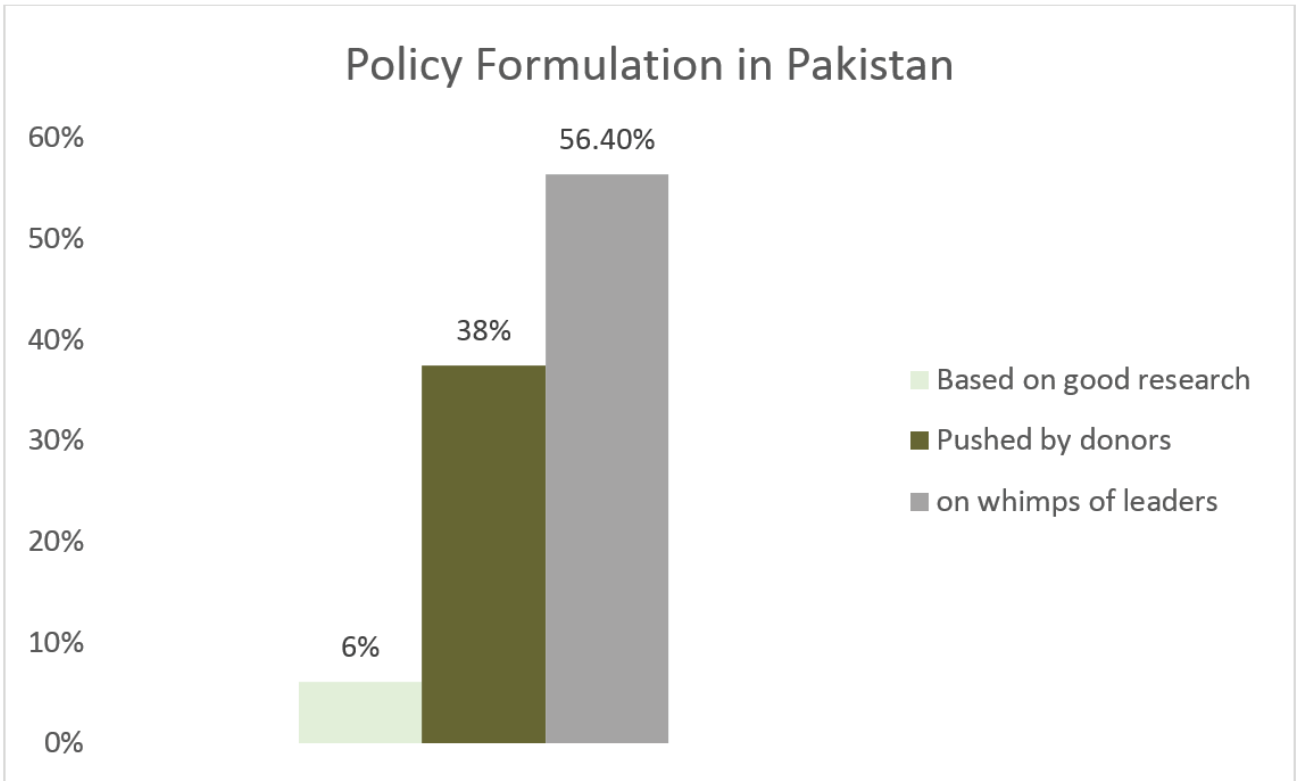


An overwhelming 86% of respondents in a recent survey argue that such data should not only be accessible but readily available for academic and industrial scrutiny. This strong public stance underscores a growing intolerance for double standards in transparency, pressing for an era where data accessibility is universal, promoting a more informed and engaged populace.

## CHAPTER 4: POLICYMAKING

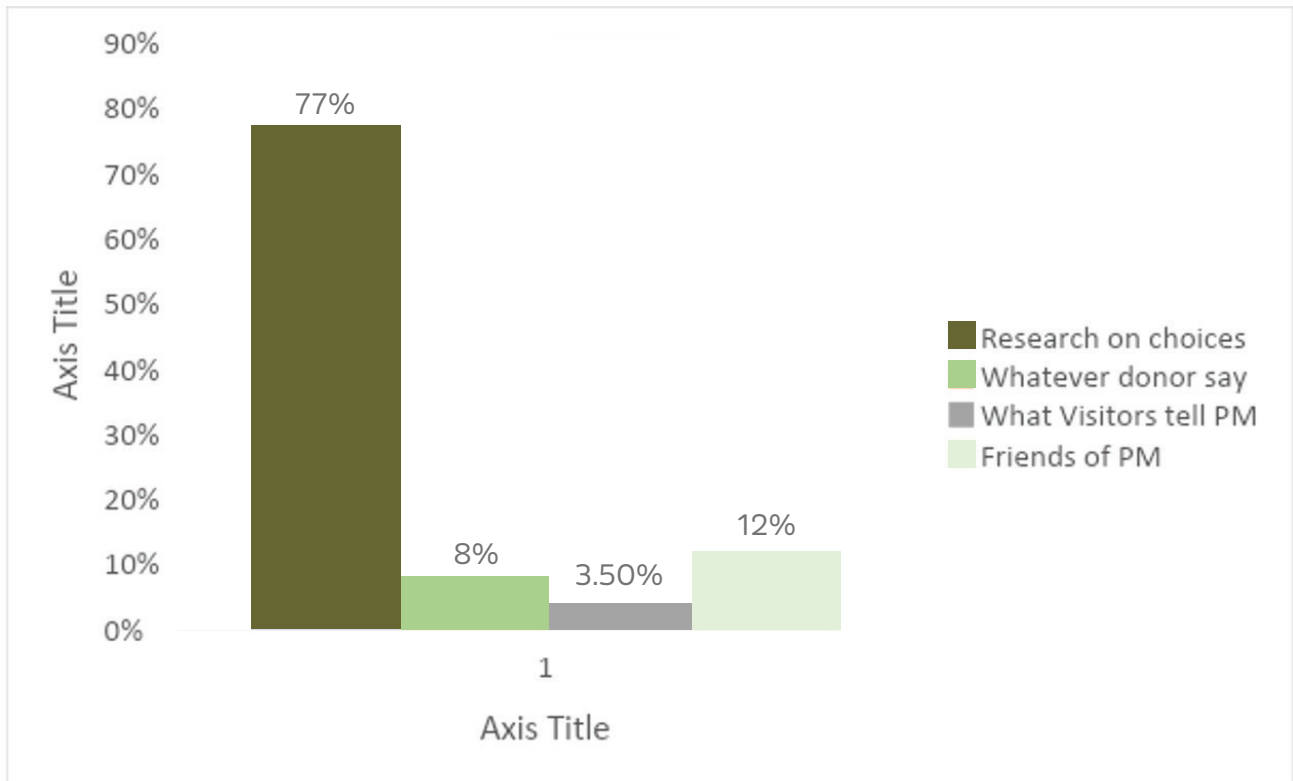
### 4.1. Policymaking in Pakistan

Examining the perception of how policy is formulated in Pakistan is crucial because it directly impacts the country's development outcomes, governance, and social equity. Policies influenced by personal interests or external donors can misalign with the genuine needs of the populace, leading to inefficient resource use and increased inequalities (Khan, 2017). By scrutinizing the public perception of the policy-making process, stakeholders can advocate for greater transparency, accountability, and public participation, ensuring that policies serve the broader public interest and address the most pressing issues effectively.



Unfortunately, only 6% of the population believed that the policies formulated in the country are actually based on good research. More than half stated that policy is formulated on the whims of leaders. While a third of the respondents felt that policies formulated are pushed by donors.

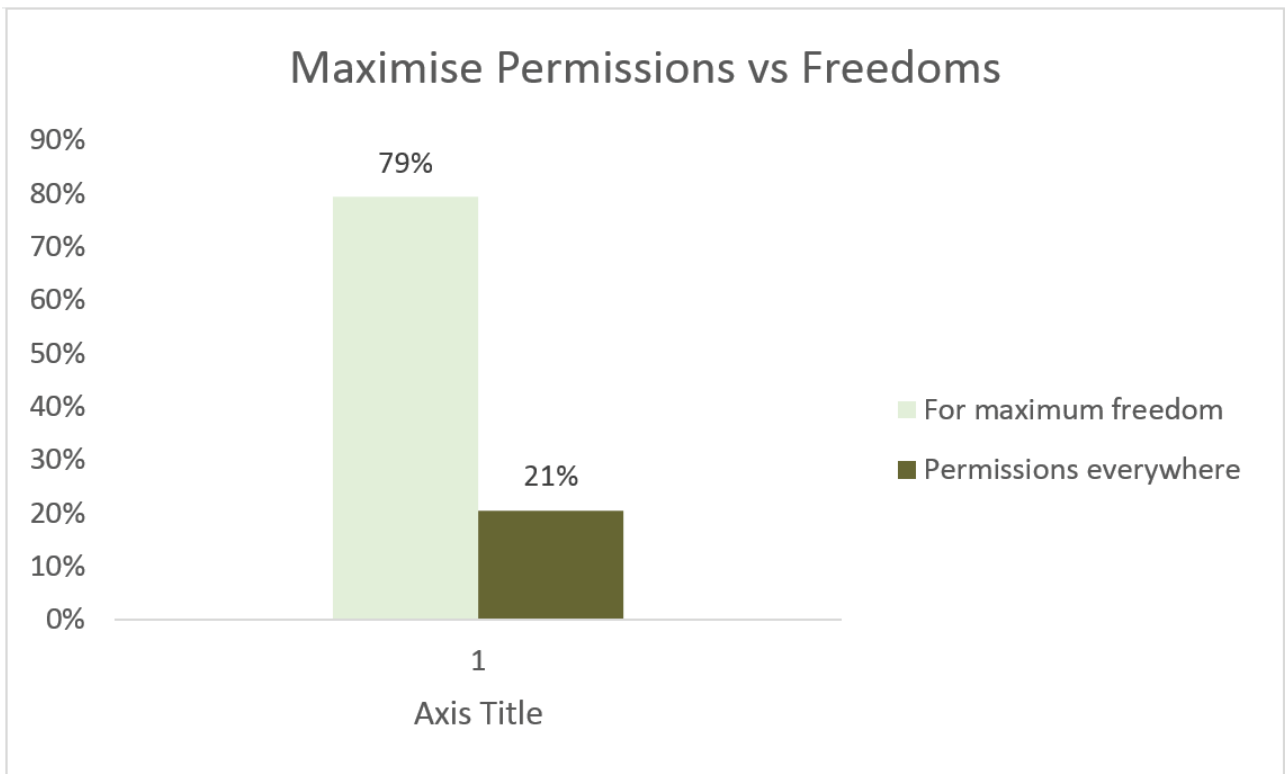
While there are instances where policies are developed through thorough research and evidence-based methods, their effectiveness and longevity can be compromised by subsequent governments pursuing their own agendas. The prevailing method for policy creation in Pakistan tends to be heavily influenced by donor-driven agendas, limiting the opportunity for policies that are truly tailored to local conditions and supported by solid evidence. This approach calls for a critical reassessment to ensure that policy-making is more inclusive, transparent, and genuinely beneficial to the nation. Given how people conceive of policies to be presently crafted, it is important to gauge how better policies can be crafted.



A majority of respondents emphasize that sound policies should be grounded in meticulous research rather than being swayed by external influences such as donors or the personal connections of political leaders. This public consensus highlights a critical demand for research-based policymaking, which ensures that decisions are made on the basis of verified information and objective analysis.

Undoubtedly, the cornerstone of effective policymaking is solid, rigorous research. Policies founded on thorough research help circumvent the pitfalls of interest-driven and biased decision-making. It is essential that academia, universities, and think tanks are actively involved in the policy development process, leveraging their expertise to ensure that policies are not only well-informed but also impartial and effective.

When asked whether an effective policy issue should be framed in such a way that it maximizes freedoms vs creating a need for permissions, the vast majority or 3/4ths stated that policies should be designed such a manner to maximise freedoms.

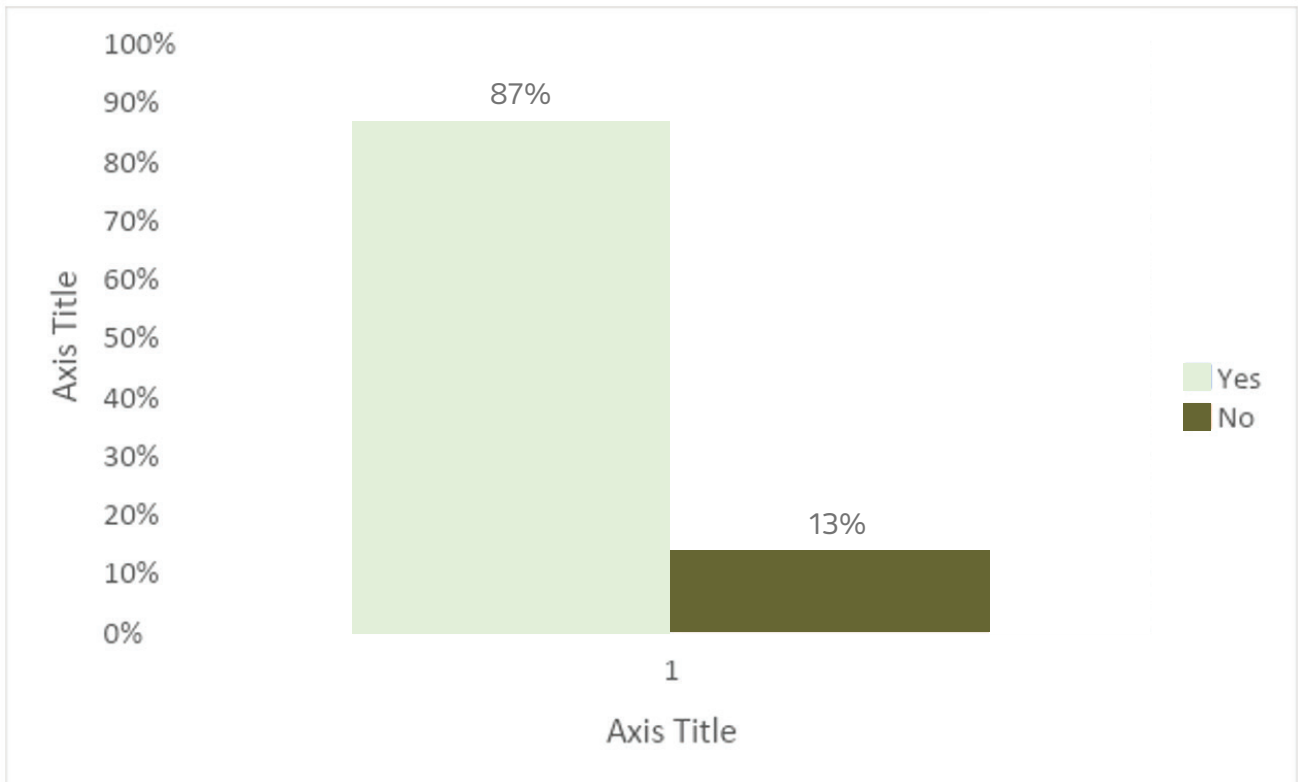


For a policy to be effective, it must begin with a meticulous process of identifying the problem it intends to solve, ensuring that public resources are optimally utilized to address societal challenges for the greater good. Yet, in many cases, especially in Pakistan, the deployment of policies is tangled in a complex web of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) and permissions that hinder smooth implementation. Moreover, the actual crafting of policies often bypasses rigorous problem analysis and instead caters to the vested interests of those in power.

A sound policy formulation process requires a deep understanding of societal challenges, involving thorough investigation into the root causes and consequences of the issues at hand. This should be coupled with a clear assessment of available resources and feasible solutions. Without such foundational work, policies may fail to effectively address the issues they are meant to solve, leading to suboptimal outcomes for society.

While both policies and packages are crucial in decision-making, they serve different purposes. A policy outlines general guidelines or principles that dictate the framework for decisions, establishing directions, objectives, and rules for consistent action across various domains.

Are policies and packages distinct?



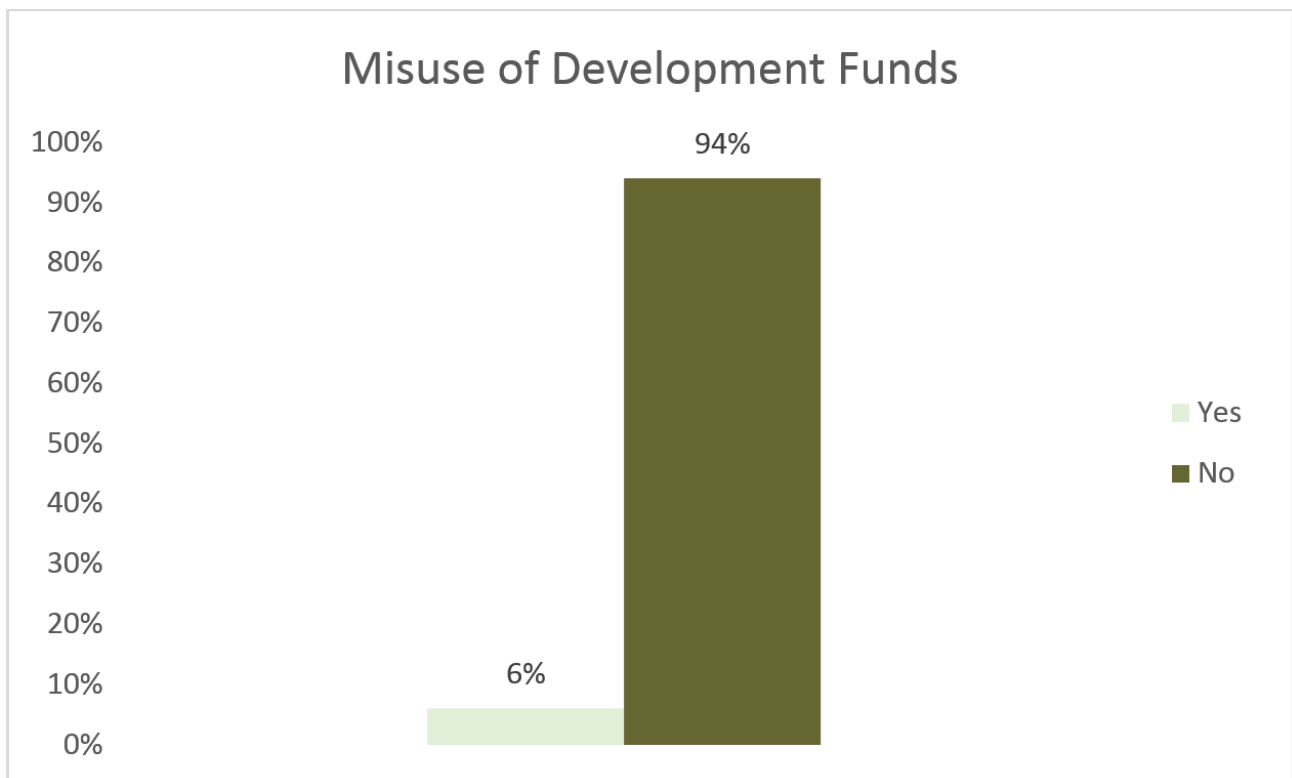
The Twitterati do display the understanding that policies and packages are distinct with more than 80% saying that they see them as separate.

In contrast, a package consists of a comprehensive set of specific measures and initiatives designed to tackle particular challenges or achieve certain goals. These are implemented in a coordinated manner, often in complex areas such as economic stimulus, social welfare, or development programs, where multiple, interlinked actions are necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.

Packages are generally more effective than standalone policies because they translate broad policies into actionable steps that directly address real-world issues. This practical application is essential for bringing about substantial change, ensuring that strategic visions are effectively realized. This of course is in contrast to our politicians' emphasis on policies alone and very little discourse on packages.

## 4.2. Development Policies

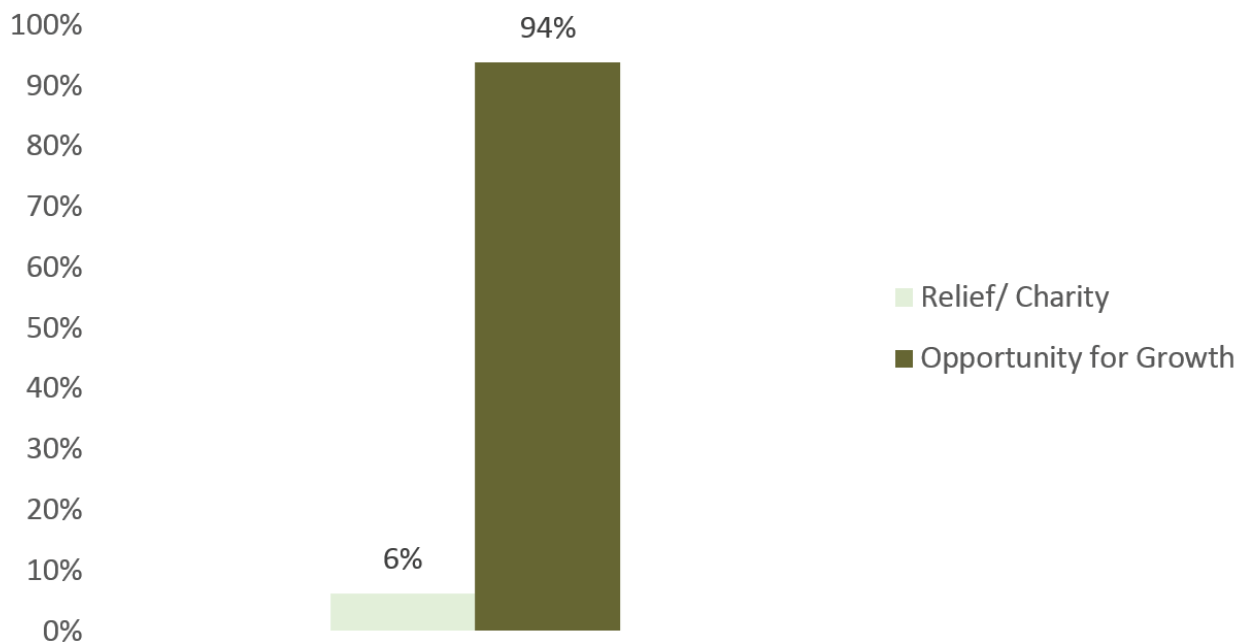
In a revealing discussion, some politicians unabashedly admitted they believe it's their prerogative to spend development funds at their discretion, a stance that fundamentally opposes the principles of local government and paves the way for rampant misuse of these funds. Astoundingly, 94% of Twitterati vehemently oppose this view, recognizing the detrimental impact such politicization has on our economy. Which prompts the question that have politicians turned development funds into their personal piggy bank, justifying their resistance to local governance? Is this misuse of public money acceptable?



This stark discrepancy highlights a deep divide: while the Twitterati are crying foul over the personalization of public resources for political gain, politicians seem to carry on unbothered, viewing these funds as tools for cementing their power rather than serving the community. Is this disconnect between political actions and public opinion sustainable, or are we on the brink of demanding a major overhaul?

Question: Is it enough to provide the poor with relief and charity, or do they need real opportunities to transform their lives?

## Real Opportunities vs Relief for Poor



A radical paradigm shift is necessary to move beyond the conventional view that relief and charity are the best ways to uplift the impoverished. While these measures might offer temporary solace, they fall short of empowering individuals to escape the cycles of poverty. Pakistan brims with untapped talent, yet the true key to unlocking this potential—self-realization and personal growth—remains largely overlooked.

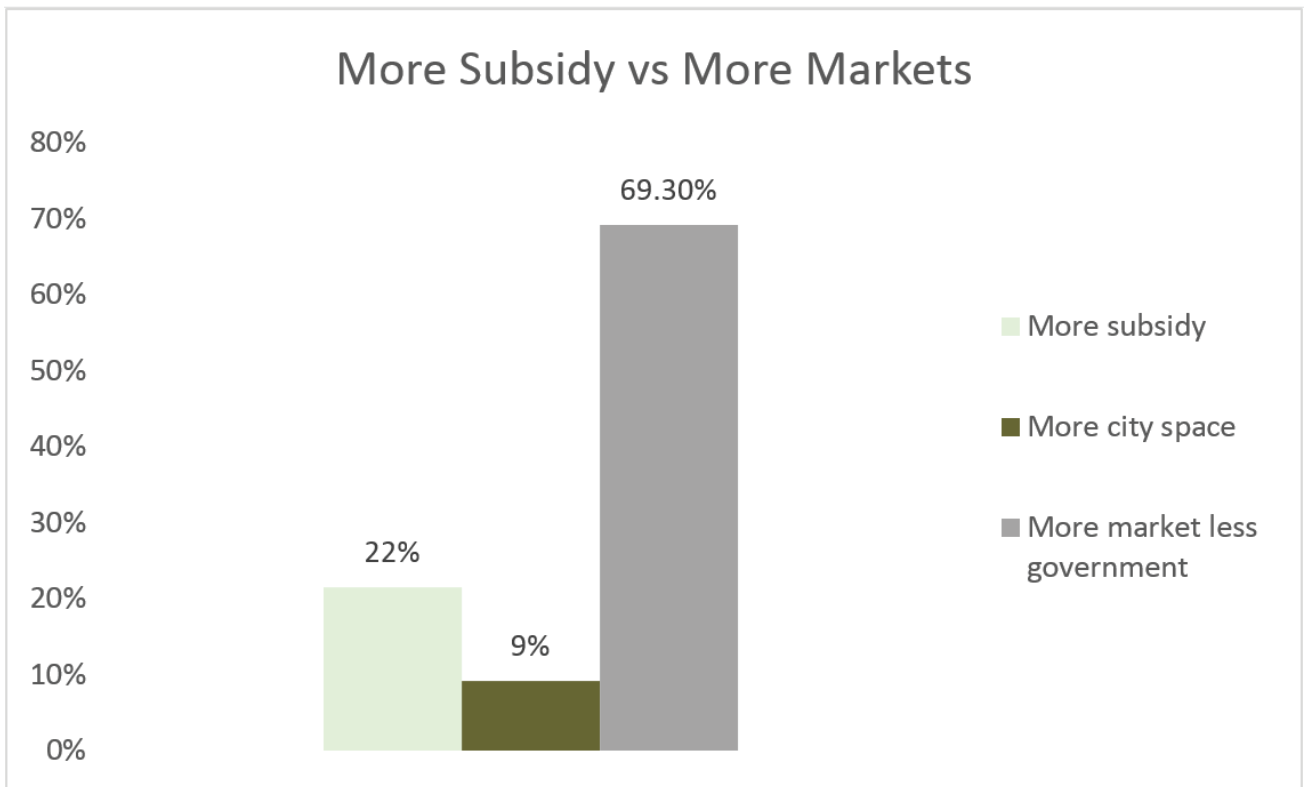
Reliance on charity and relief not only fosters dependency but also strains the government's budget, perpetuating a cycle of passivity and hindrance to personal development. What if, instead of handouts, we focus on creating environments that nurture skills, foster entrepreneurship, and encourage individuals to become architects of their own futures?

The old ways of thinking must be challenged. Offering real opportunities that promote self-sufficiency could revolutionize the approach to poverty alleviation, turning the poor from recipients of aid into empowered contributors to society.

"Relief" in Pakistan evokes a vivid image of a populace gasping for breath under the oppressive legacy of colonial rule, designed to extract and stifle rather than empower. This colonial mindset has been meticulously preserved by successive governments, conditioning the people to equate government subsidies with relief. A staggering 70% still view additional subsidies as the primary form of government aid.

Question: Is the true "relief" that Pakistanis need simply more subsidies, or is it freedom from a paternalistic government system?

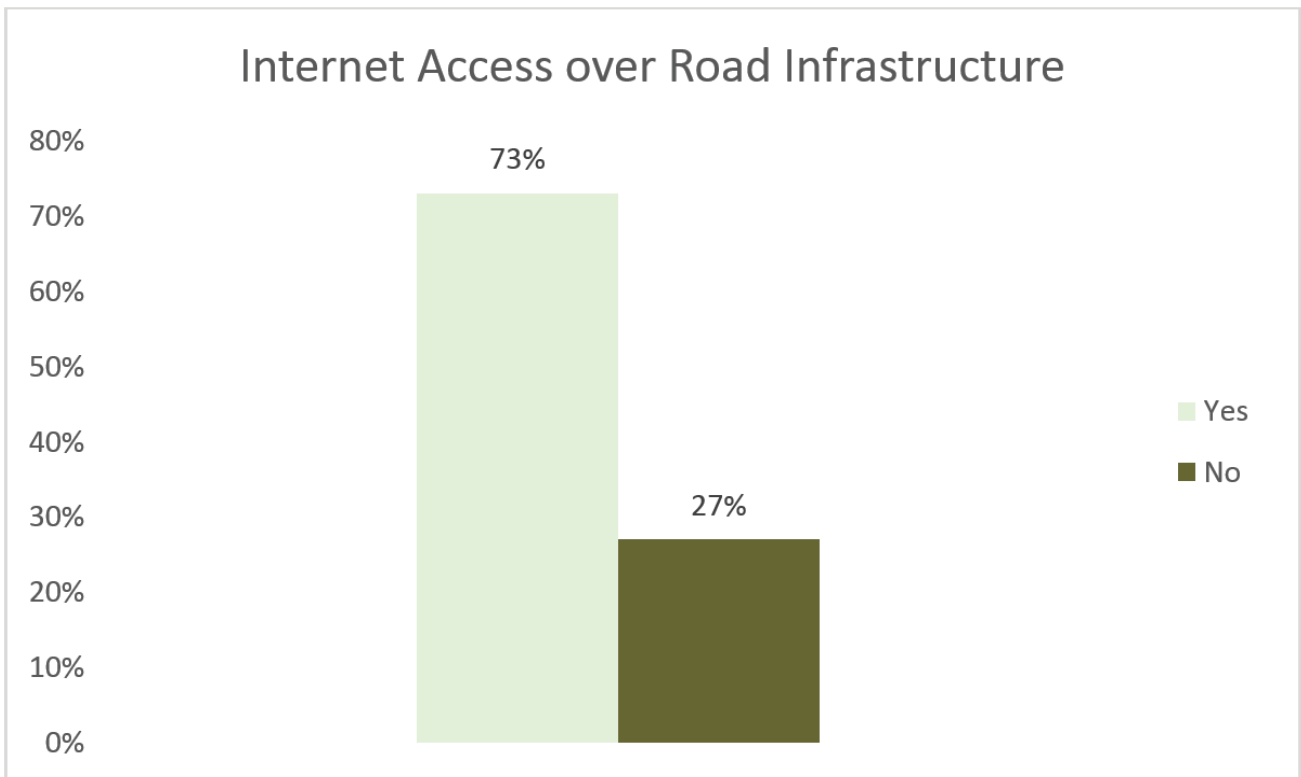




Yet, this traditional approach perpetuates a Mughal/colonial-era belief that the government acts as the 'mai/baap' (mother and father), destined to provide for its citizens. This paternalistic view supports a political system that maintains a few elite families in power and preserves a colonial spoils system.

Interestingly, the majority of Twitterati diverge sharply from this view, advocating instead for increased market access as the real solution needed by the impoverished. However, entrenched vested interests continue to resist this shift. They sponsor conferences and publications to obscure this simple truth, perpetuating myths that keep the populace dependent rather than empowered.

Question: Should prioritizing universal, affordable internet access in Pakistan eclipse the longstanding focus on road infrastructure?

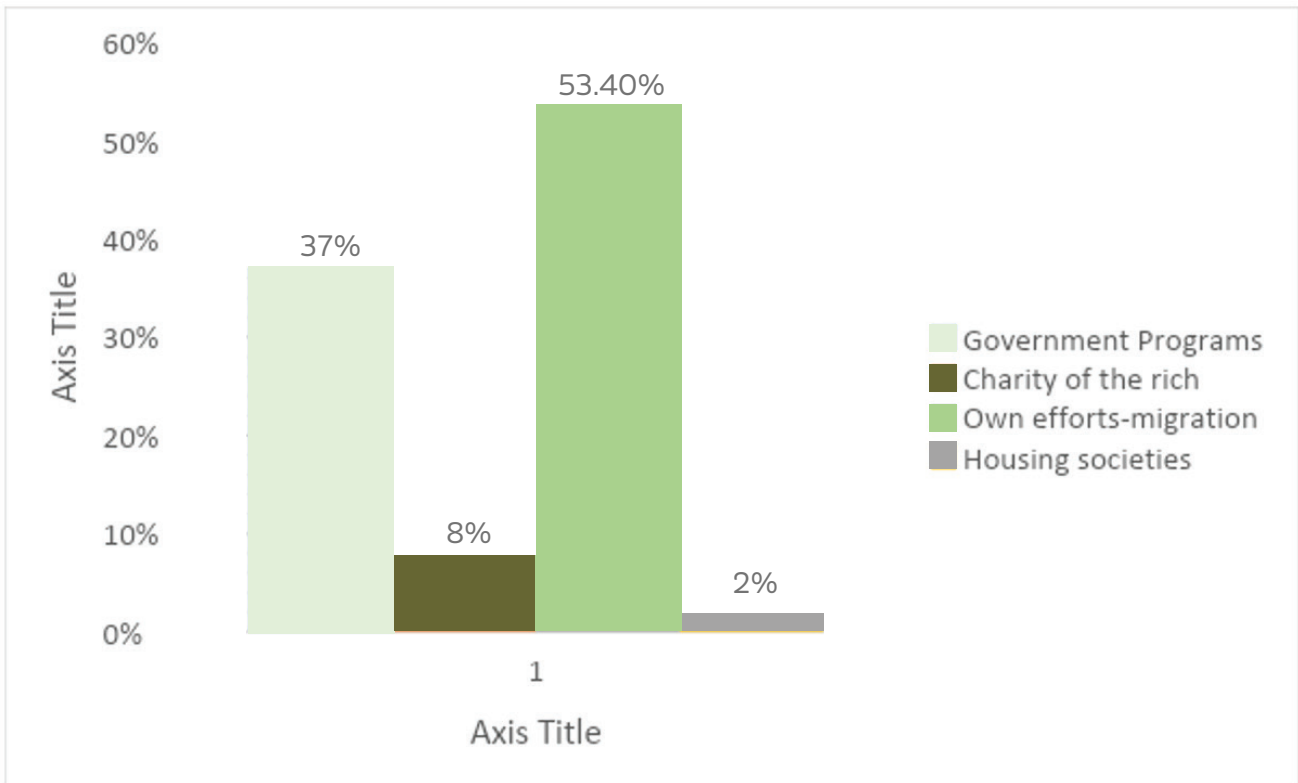


For decades, Pakistan's Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) has been fixated on building roads. However, the modern world dictates that internet access is not just a luxury but a necessity for education, work, and daily life. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly highlighted the critical need for high-speed internet, as remote work and education became the norm. Yet, many students across Pakistan were unable to participate in online classes, and countless individuals missed essential health consultations due to inadequate internet services.

In this digital age, ensuring fast, affordable internet access should be recognized as a fundamental human right. Despite this urgent need, our political leaders continue to prioritize subsidies for gasoline, expansive roads, and grand flyovers—seemingly out of touch with the realities of modern society. It's as if, in a Marie Antoinette-esque disconnect, they suggest, "Let them drive cars," to the young and educationally deprived who lack basic internet access.

Is it time for our policymakers to wake up and realign their priorities to better serve the needs of a connected, digitally empowered Pakistan?

Given the menace of poverty in Pakistan, the policies designed to ameliorate poverty in Pakistan also need to be examined. When asked what has been the most effective way in which the poor have been lifted out of poverty.

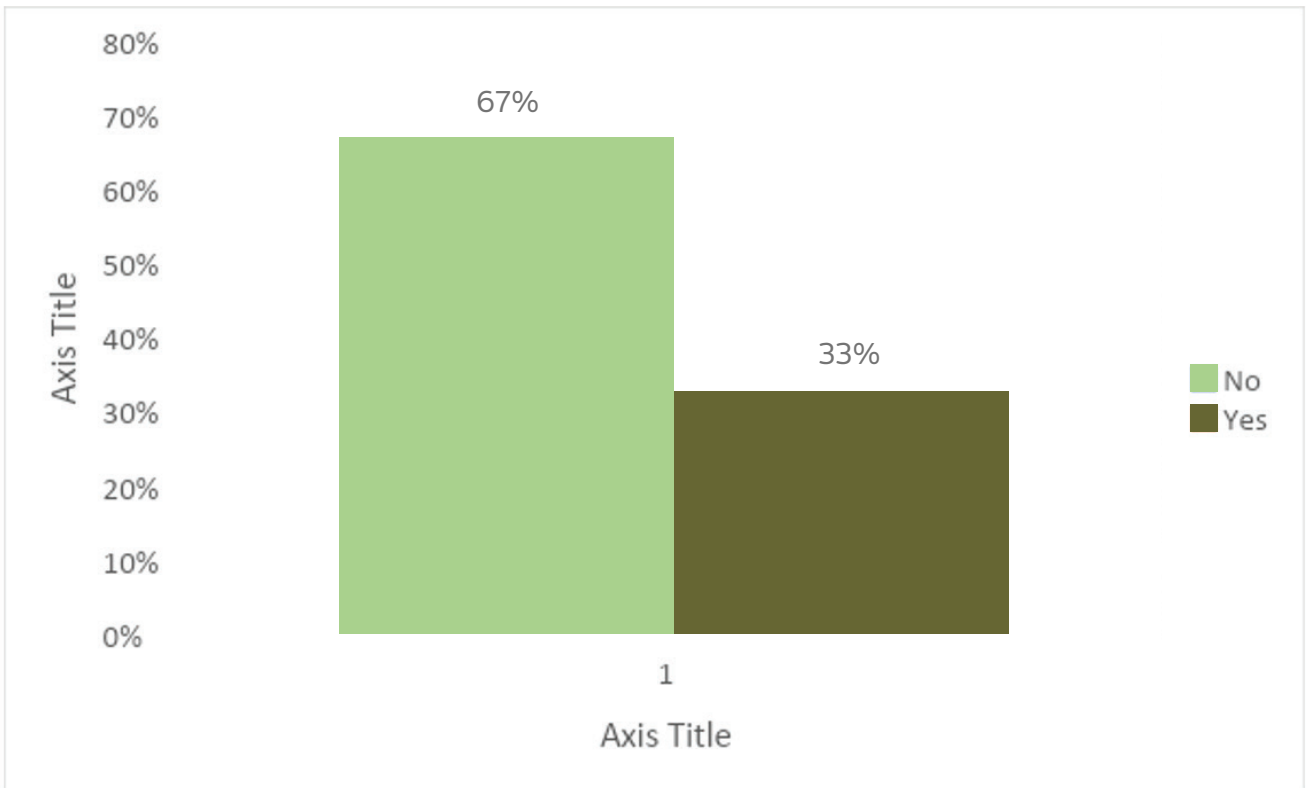


Despite prevalent media narratives, many believe that the poor primarily need opportunities to uplift themselves, rather than pity or handouts. Evidence from feedback of Twitterati indicates that self-sufficiency through personal effort and seizing opportunities is viewed as the most effective way out of poverty. Government programs, though well-intentioned, rank second in effectiveness and are often perceived as costly and inefficient compared to the potential of individual initiative.

Moreover, the traditional model of relying on charity and public-sector initiatives like housing has shown limited impact on reducing poverty. There's a growing consensus that excessive government aid can sometimes hinder the poor's ability to work and improve their own circumstances independently. This perspective challenges us to rethink how best to support the underprivileged, emphasizing empowerment over dependency.

There may be multifaceted reasons behind the low efficacy of housing in alleviating poverty as the economic landscape presents formidable challenges in providing housing for the poor. The government's ability to address this issue is constrained by several factors, including the need for additional taxation and the risk of exacerbating fiscal deficits. One significant barrier is the monopolization of potential housing land by government officials. Much of this land, ideally suited for housing projects, remains unused or underutilized, effectively becoming dormant and unavailable for development.

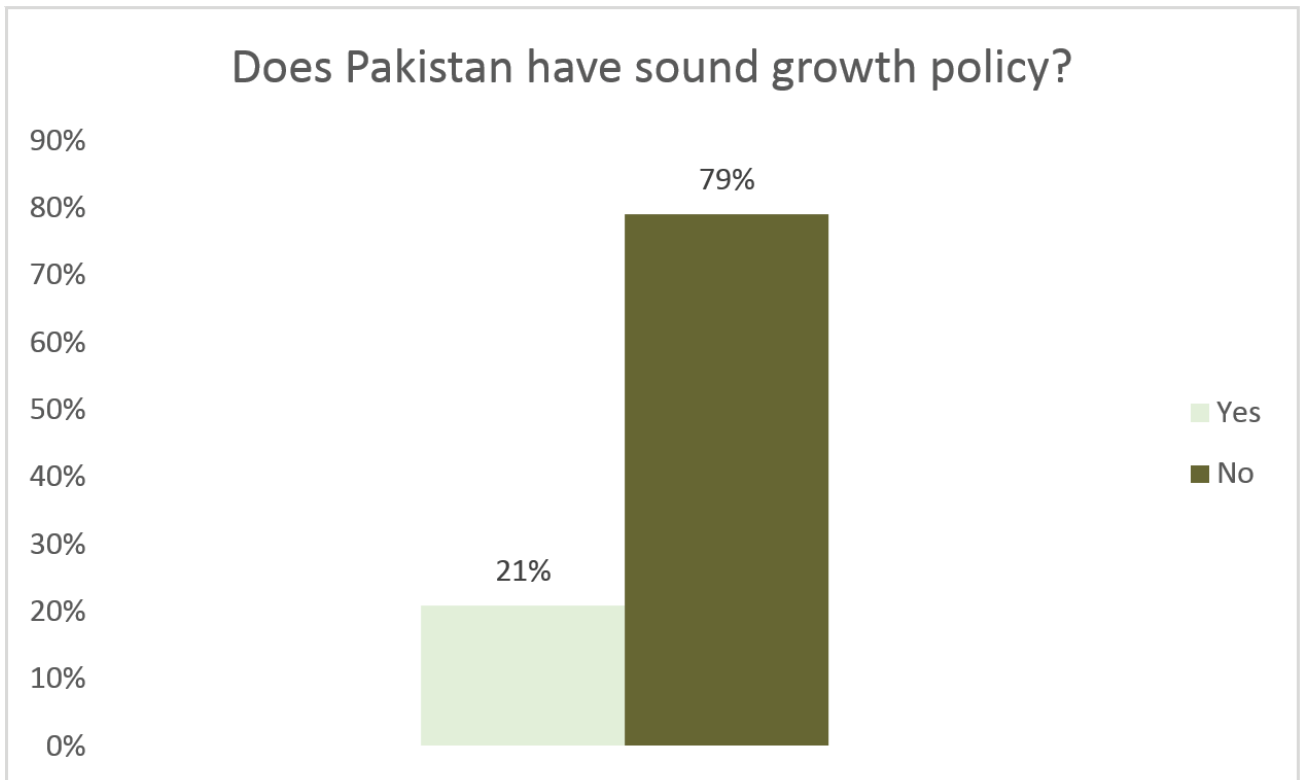
Is it feasible for the government to provide housing for the poor without resorting to additional taxation or increasing fiscal deficits?



Moreover, the government's financial constraints are compounded by the current economic conditions, limiting its capacity to invest in necessary infrastructure and construction for housing projects. The lack of adequate funding means that without resorting to new taxation measures or increasing the fiscal deficit, the government struggles to provide the necessary housing solutions for the poor. This situation underscores the need for innovative financing solutions and better management of existing resources to meet the critical housing needs without further straining the nation's finances.

It is also crucial to examine public perception regarding whether Pakistan has an effective growth policy that generates investment and employment.

### 4.3. Growth Policies

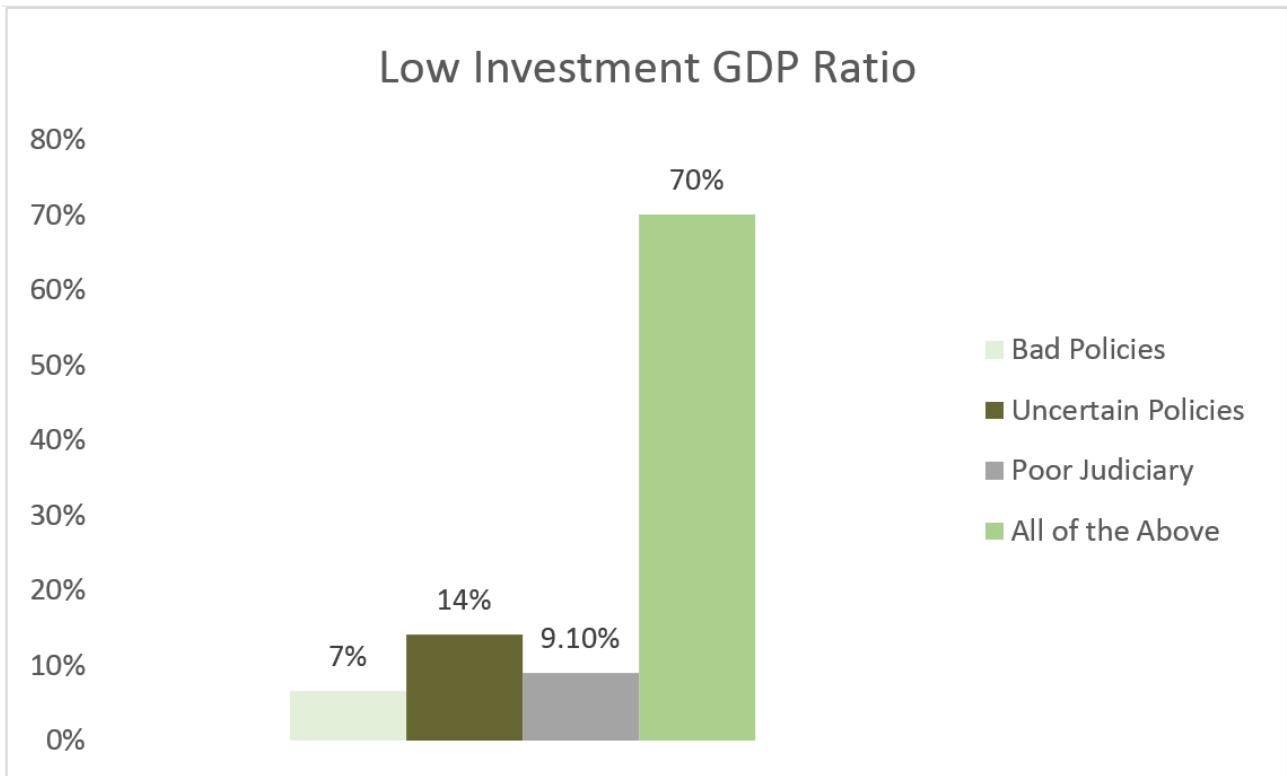


More than 3/4th of the respondents think that Pakistan doesn't have a sound growth policy.

At this crucial juncture, the need for transformative economic reforms in Pakistan is clearer than ever. A comprehensive overhaul of the institutional frameworks that directly influence growth trajectories is urgently required. Without significant structural reforms, the realms of investment and employment will likely continue to be dominated by entrenched vested interests, sidelining the crucial principles of meritocracy. Unfortunately, Pakistan currently faces a stark shortfall in policies that create a conducive environment for investment and enable robust economic growth, representing a significant obstacle to the country's development.

Incompetence breeds more incompetence. This is the harsh reality within our government, which often seems more interested in courting donor favor than in safeguarding national interests. Governed by a lack of initiative and a fear of jeopardizing financial aid, our officials are locked in a dance of subservience, eagerly aligning with donor-driven policies without a second thought.

Question: Why does Pakistan suffer from a shockingly low investment-to-GDP ratio?

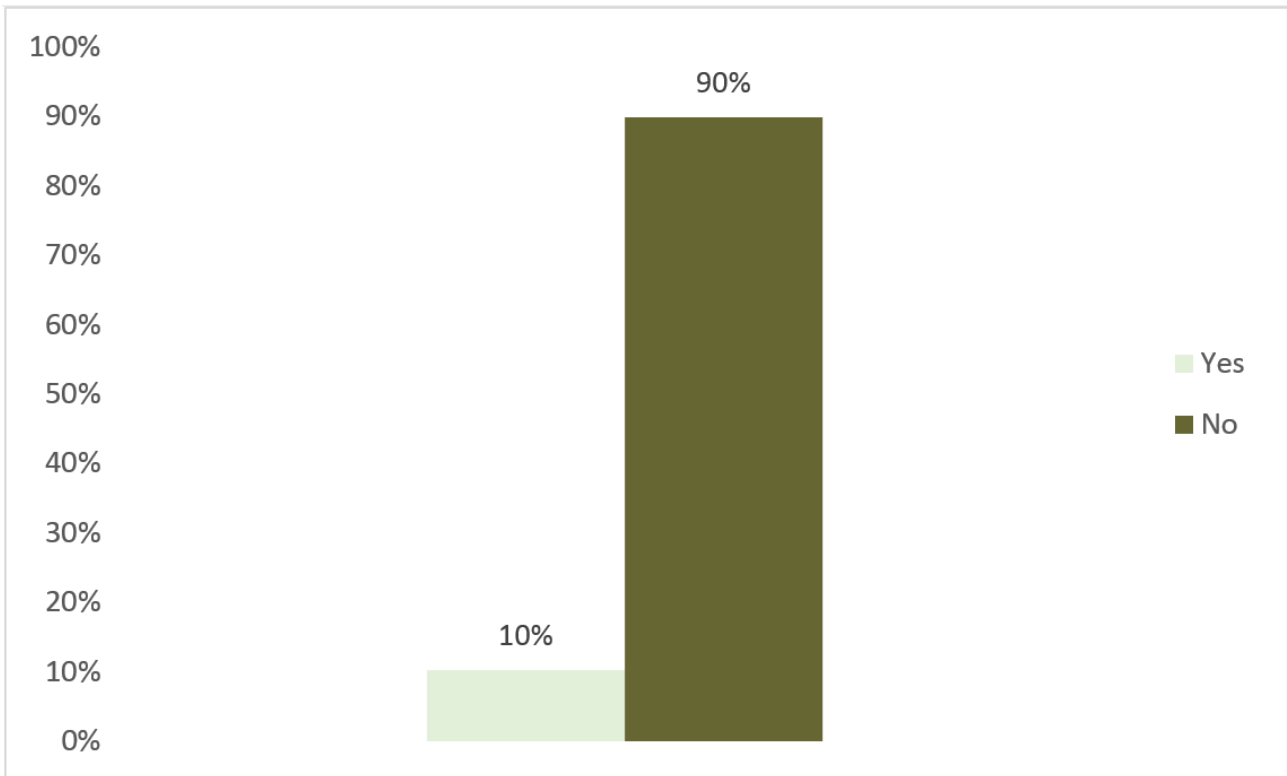


Tragically, Pakistan’s economic strategy has been myopically focused on tax collection, corruption crackdowns, and welfare schemes, blatantly ignoring the critical need for investment. This oversight strikes at the very core of our economic woes. Investors face a gauntlet of obstacles: unpredictable policies, an unreliable judicial system, and counterproductive regulations have created a hostile environment for investment. Yet, shockingly, there's scant public debate or political discourse addressing these fundamental barriers to economic prosperity.

Moreover, our national conversation is overwhelmingly dominated by politics, sidelining crucial economic discussions. It seems that Pakistan, a country hyper-fixated on political maneuvering, has little appetite for the nuanced intricacies of economic strategy that could genuinely elevate our economic landscape.

It is time for Pakistan to pivot from its political obsessions and start taking economics seriously, otherwise we will continue to ignore the glaring issues that throttle our economic potential.

Question: Would you dare to invest in a country plagued by erratic policy shifts and a sluggish, investor-hostile judiciary?

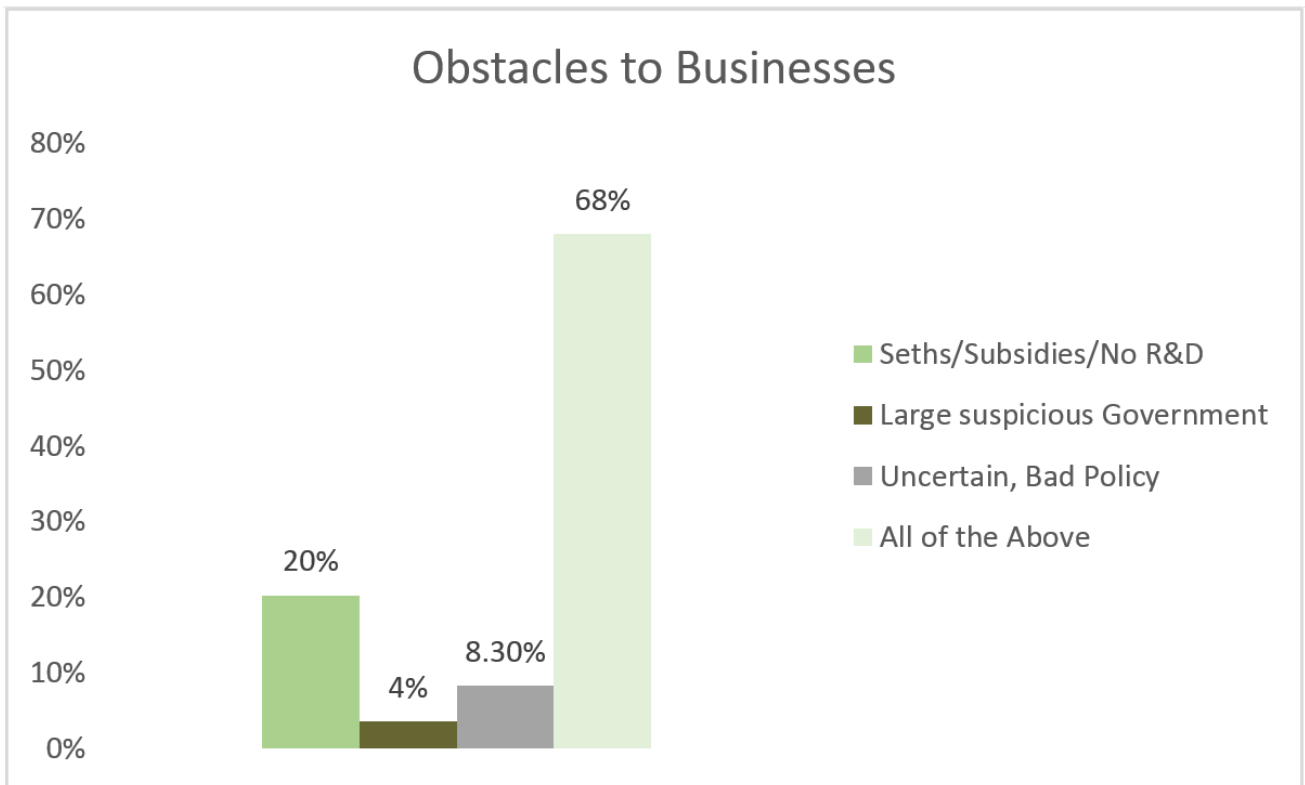


A resounding 90% of Twitterati concur: Pakistan's judicial system is notoriously unfriendly to investors. This overwhelming consensus is hardly shocking, given the frequent and whimsical changes in policy and the glacial pace of our courts, which together create a hostile environment for business.

Yet, what's truly disheartening is the deafening silence surrounding the issue of investment. Discussions on this crucial topic are virtually non-existent, both in political arenas and economic forums. Despite the existence of several Boards of Investment, investment levels remain abysmally low, signaling that the problem transcends bureaucratic inefficiency and points to deeper, systemic flaws within the country.

Is it time for Pakistan to confront these profound issues head-on, or will we continue to watch potential investors turn their backs on us?

Question: Why don't businesses in Pakistan grow to their full potential?

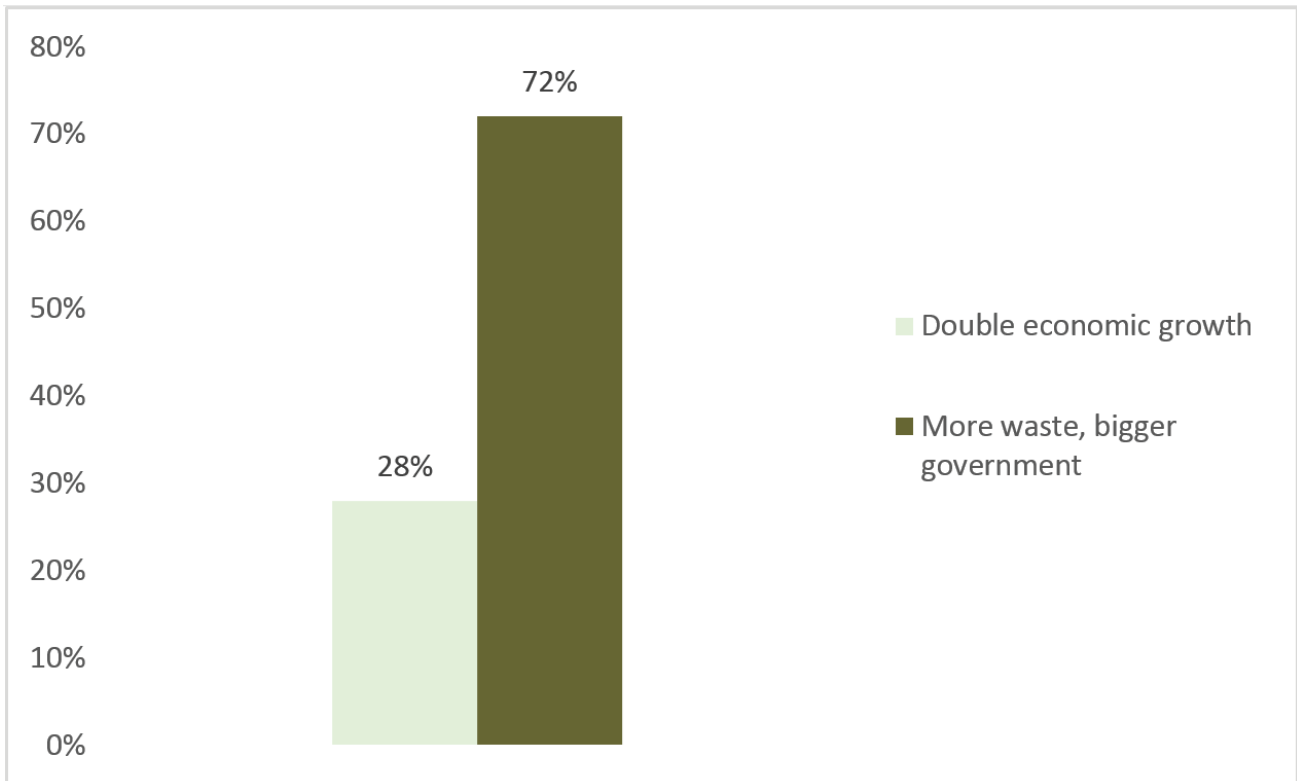


In Pakistan, businesses struggle to reach their growth potential, remaining small to medium enterprises by international standards. Research from PIDE confirms this stagnation, highlighting several critical barriers. Notably, 20% of experts believe that entrenched business owners ('seths') avoid competition and shun research and development as well as professionalism, which stifles their own growth. Furthermore, government regulations are often seen as overbearing and suspicious, actively hindering firm expansion and making investment challenging.

Compounding these issues, the government's whimsical policy-making and poor implementation contribute to a climate of uncertainty that paralyzes potential growth. A significant 68% attribute this stagnation to a toxic combination of market dominance by seths, unpredictable government actions, and a pervasive uncertainty in policy direction. Essentially, the root cause is identified as an incompetent policy process—a problem that PIDE has repeatedly emphasized.

Question: If Pakistan's revenue were to double, would this lead to enhanced economic growth, or simply result in more waste and an expanded government bureaucracy?

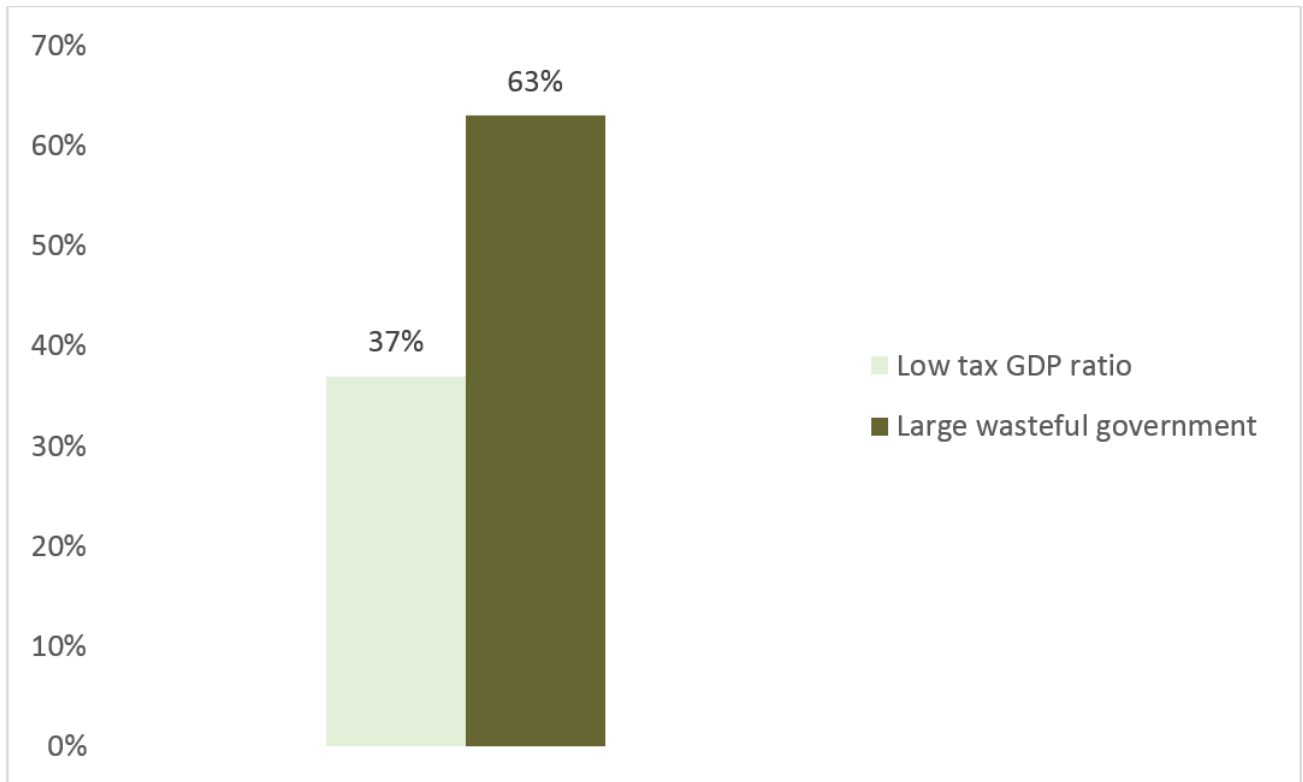




The prevailing wisdom, heavily influenced by donor organizations, positions increased revenue generation as the highest policy priority in Pakistan. However, contrary to this official stance, a significant majority of informed citizens (72% according to a recent poll) believe that such increases in revenue typically fuel government waste and expansion rather than driving actual economic growth.

Research by PIDE in 2021 supports this public sentiment, arguing that fostering growth and investment should be the foremost policy objectives, not merely enhancing taxation. Despite these insights, Pakistan continues to adhere rigidly to donor directives, imposing more taxes and further constraining economic vitality. This approach raises critical questions about the real benefits of increased revenue collection under the current policy framework.

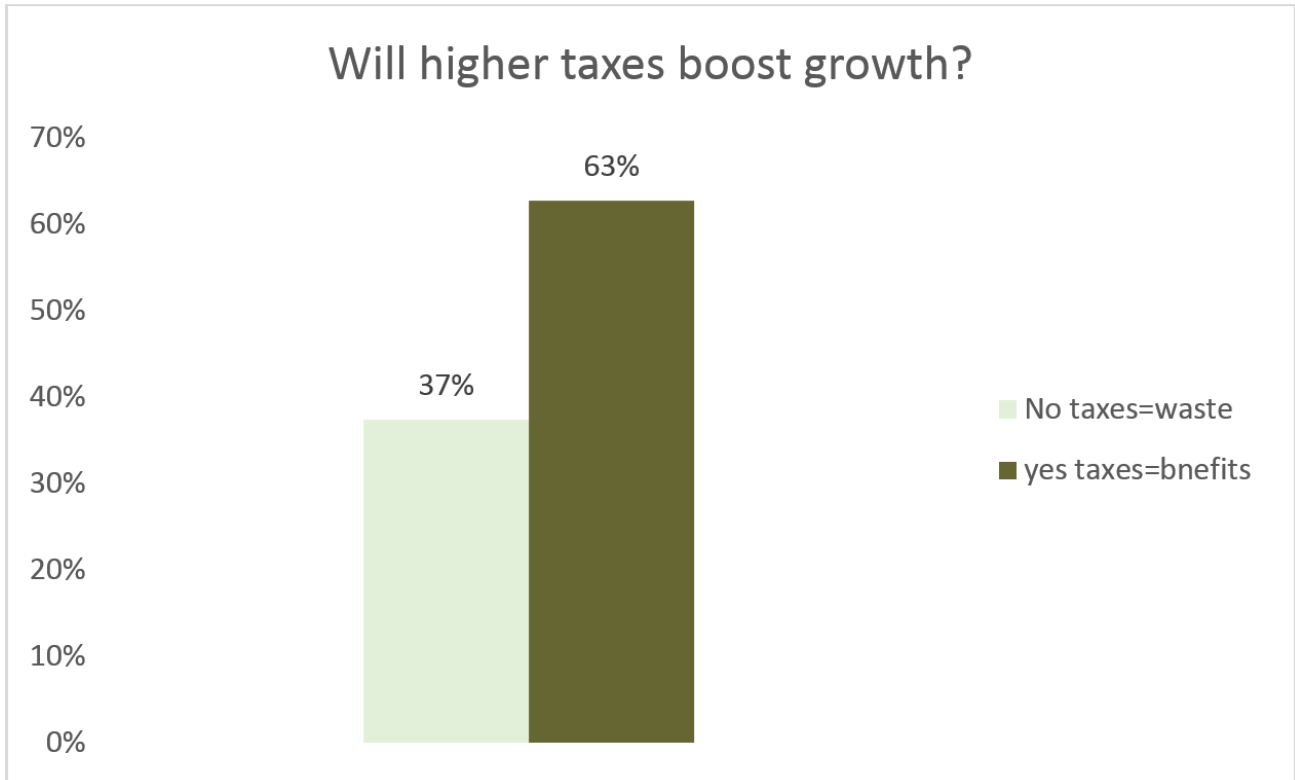
Question: Which is the more significant issue for Pakistan's economy: the low tax-to-GDP ratio or the large, wasteful government bureaucracy?



Experts like the IMF and international donors often highlight our low tax-to-GDP ratio as a critical problem, but they miss what the informed Twitterati clearly understand: the real issue is not the need for more taxes but rather the inefficiency of a bloated government. This cumbersome bureaucracy stifles investment and growth, acting as a far greater barrier to economic progress than our tax rates.

Increasing taxes under the current system would only exacerbate the slowdown in investment and growth. It's time for the donors to take a page from the people who experience these policies first-hand and focus on cutting back governmental waste rather than taxing an already strained economy to its breaking point.

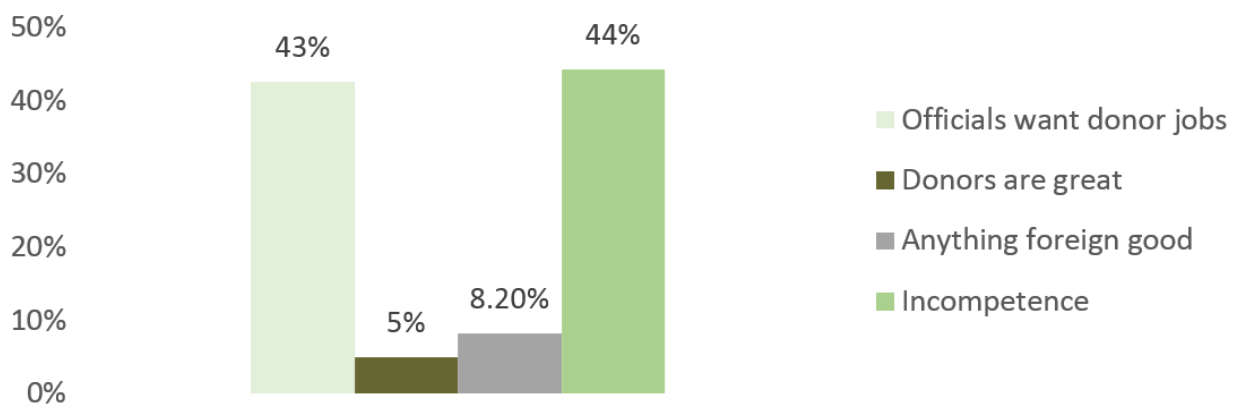
Question: Pakistani economists preach that higher taxation will lead to growth. Do you buy into this widely endorsed mantra?



Despite a previous poll revealing skepticism about taxation's impact on growth, our leading economists and policymakers, backed by international donors, continue to champion increased taxation as the gateway to economic prosperity. This perspective is overwhelmingly accepted among many who, influenced by the strong narrative pushed by donors, now believe that higher taxes will indeed benefit the populace.

However, this shift in public opinion starkly contrasts with earlier sentiments where the majority did not see taxation as a catalyst for growth. Rather than being a genuine shift in belief, this may be merely the result of relentless advocacy for higher taxes as the top policy priority by influential donors.

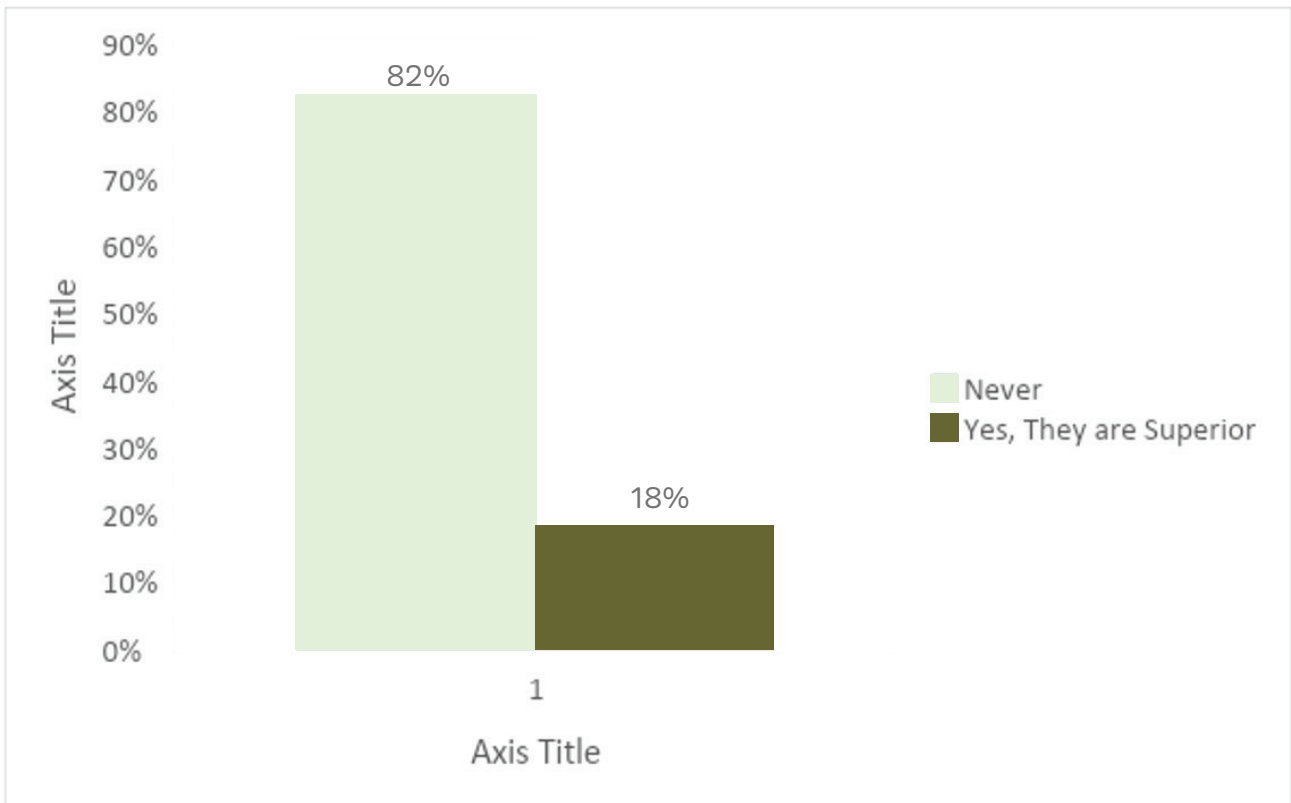
## Why does the government turn a blind eye to the control donors wield over policy?



This servile attitude has not gone unnoticed. A substantial number of respondents to a recent survey accused government officials of metaphorically 'shoe licking' donors, driven by a deep-seated intellectual incompetence. This raises a critical and uncomfortable question: Are our leaders merely puppet agents serving foreign agendas under the guise of aid?

Such dynamics expose a troubling lack of independence in our policymaking processes, suggesting that our sovereignty is compromised not by force, but by financial allure and bureaucratic cowardice.

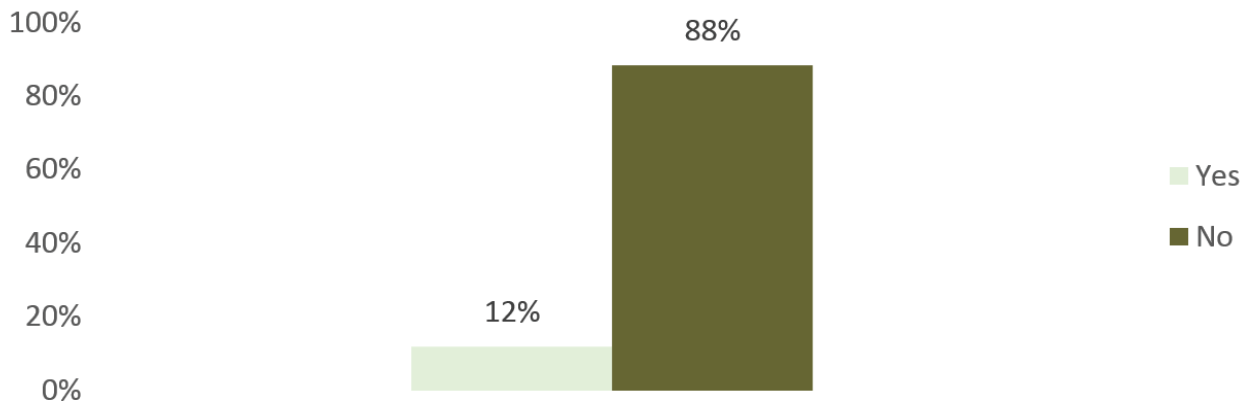
Should donor policies be implemented in Pakistan without local scrutiny by universities and think tanks?



It's a critical misstep to automatically assume that donor-funded initiatives, particularly those influenced by Western ideologies, are intrinsically beneficial for Pakistan. There is a pressing need for these donor policies to undergo thorough examination by local universities and think tanks. This scrutiny is vital to prevent donors from advancing their agendas at the expense of local needs and to ensure that the policies do not overshadow homegrown policy actions. Often, policies designed in Western contexts do not neatly align with the unique socio-economic and cultural landscape of Pakistan. Rigorous local review is essential to adapt these policies effectively, ensuring they are relevant and beneficial to Pakistan's specific conditions. This approach will help develop more inclusive and contextually appropriate policies, enhancing their effectiveness and acceptance within the local environment.

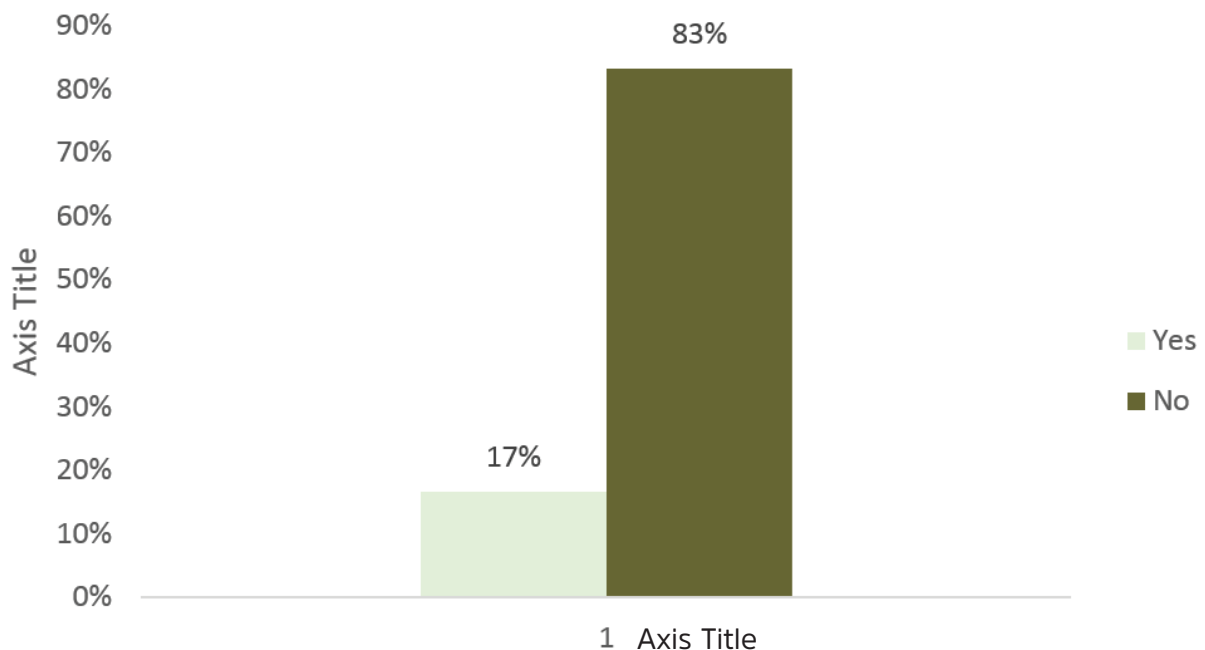
In the realm of effective communication, there is a crucial principle: one must listen before speaking and read extensively before writing. If a person avoids engaging with scholarly research, shows disinterest in attending enlightening webinars, and generally resists learning, should they really have a seat at the policymaking table where impactful decisions are made?

## Should individuals who shun research and learning be involved in policymaking?



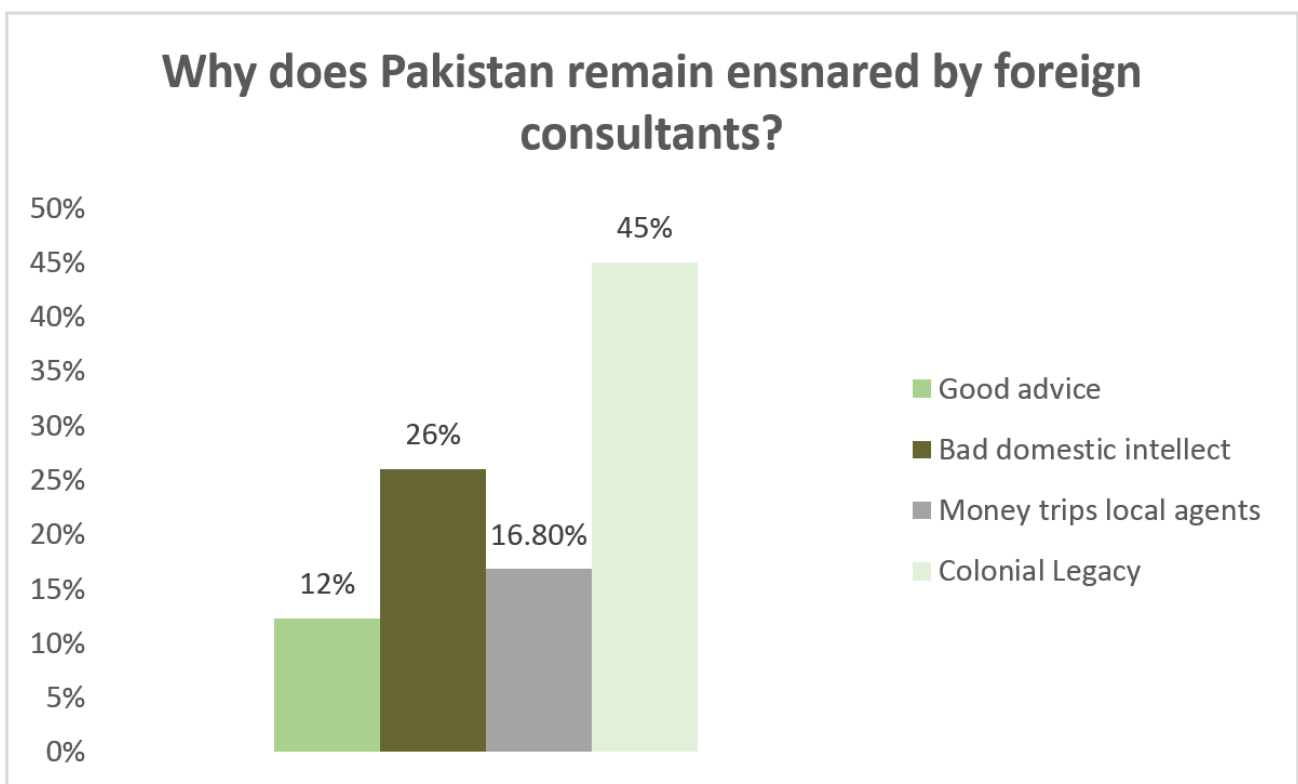
This question taps into the core of what it means to contribute meaningfully to policy. According to a Twitter poll, an overwhelming 88% of respondents share a clear view: those who do not value learning and knowledge should not participate in the critical process of policy-making. This strong consensus underscores the belief that informed decision-making is essential for effective governance.

Oftentimes, not only do our leaders enact ill-informed policies without doing adequate research and learning, but they also whims. This prompts the question of whether our leaders wield the power to enact policies as swiftly as emperors once did, building marvels like the Taj Mahal or the pyramids at a whim?



In ancient times, emperors wielded their authority to instantly turn desires into monumental policies, epitomized by grand creations like the Taj Mahal and the pyramids. Fast forward to today, and many nations have shifted towards more inclusive, democratic governance structures, moving away from such autocratic practices. Despite Pakistan's democratic framework, there remains a noticeable trend where policymaking is predominantly influenced by a few at the top. The results from Twitter polls echo a widespread disapproval of this power concentration, with a significant majority, 87%, rejecting the idea that today's leaders should have the unchecked authority to shape policy as monarchs once did.

Given the disproportionate impact of the work of foreign consultants on the policies made in Pakistan, it becomes imperative to examine the reasons behind Pakistan's continued dependency on these consultants. According to almost half of the respondents, Pakistan's present is still overshadowed by its colonial past which significantly impacts the way in which policies are formulated.



The lasting impact of colonization on Pakistan could be attributed to various factors. Could it be that we are still entangled in the remnants of our colonial past, or are we trapped in an intellectual dependency fashioned by our former colonizers? Alternatively, might it stem from a deep-seated inferiority complex that leads us to believe "If someone is fair-skinned, they must be wiser" (Gora hy to usay ziada pta hy)? While many readily blame our colonial mindset, the specter of our inferiority complex haunts us every time we need to stand on our own intellectual feet.

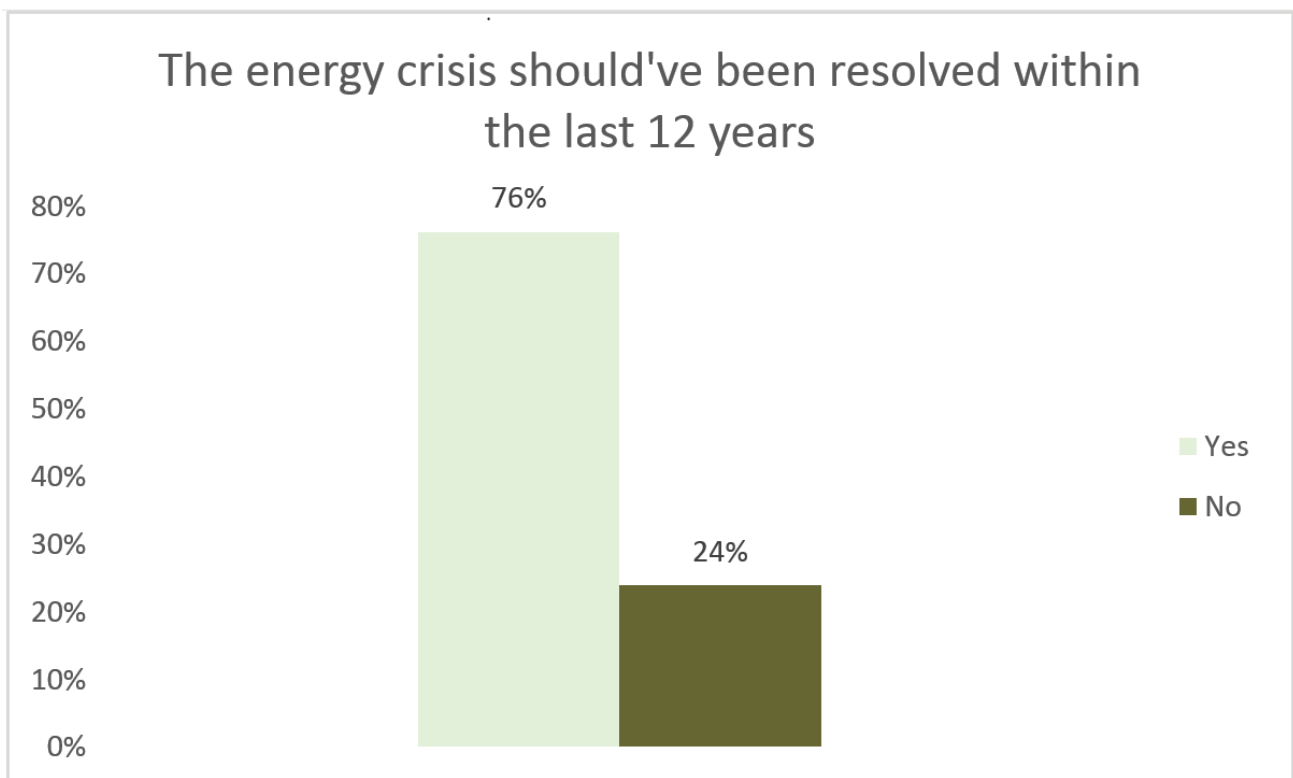
Surprisingly, over a quarter of respondents think our reliance on foreign consultancy is due to a perceived deficiency in domestic intellectual capabilities. Contrary to this, I

(Haque, 2020) argue vehemently that local challenges demand local solutions crafted by those who live with these issues daily and understand their nuances intimately. There were also those that claimed that the main reason for the prioritization of domestic advice was the incentives offered to local officials in the form of money and trips abroad. The least number of respondents said that policies put forth by foreign consultants are prioritized because they give good advice.

This dilemma exposes a critical divide in perception: Are we underestimating our own capabilities, or have we simply not done enough to elevate local expertise to the global stage?

#### 4.4. Energy Crisis

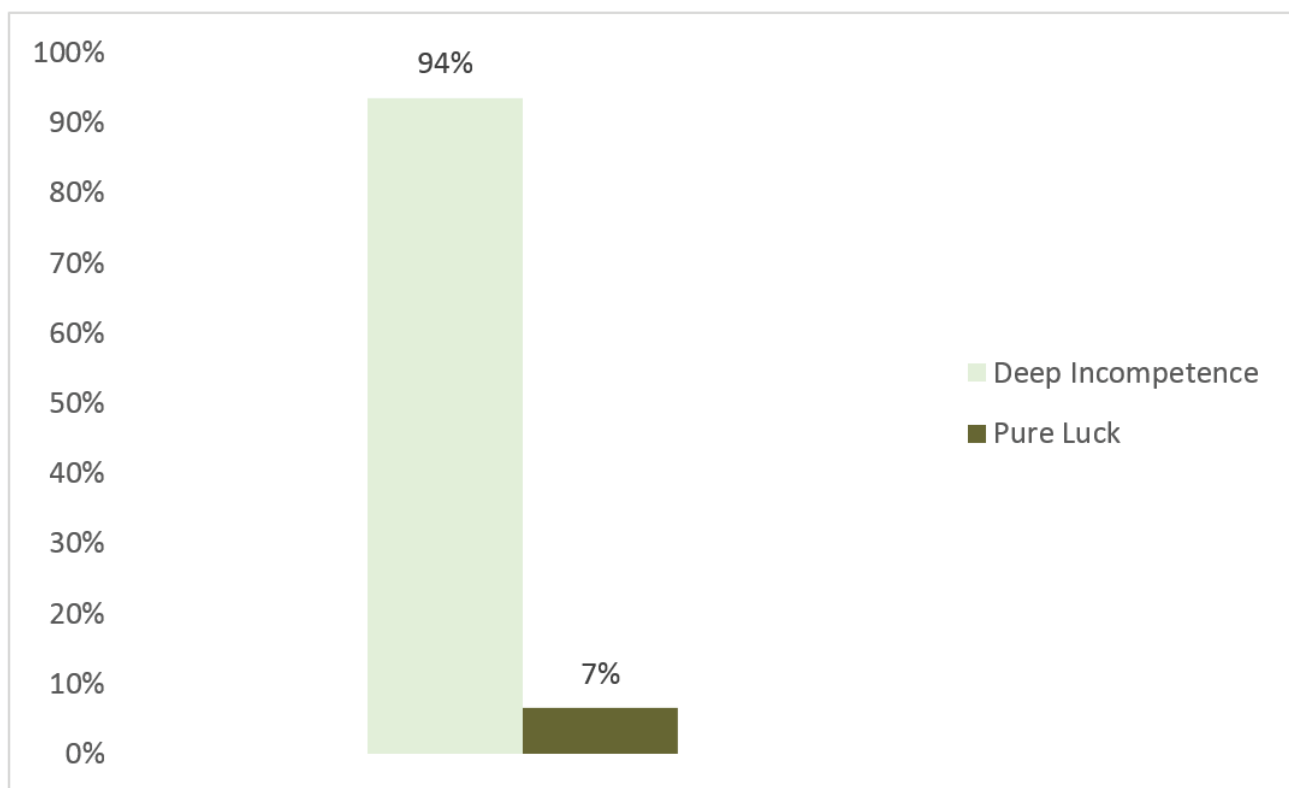
For over a decade, Pakistan has grappled with a severe energy crisis, losing billions annually due to inefficiencies and energy losses. Despite the prolonged duration and devastating impact of this issue, no government has successfully implemented effective measures to resolve the problems of energy scarcity and circular debt. Remarkably, a recent Twitter poll indicates that 76% of respondents believe the government could have resolved this crisis within a single decade.



The continuous oversight of this critical issue by successive governments is deeply troubling. The persistent energy crisis not only stifles economic growth but also inflicts ordinary citizens with frequent power outages and burdens the country with escalating circular debt. This inaction raises serious questions about the priorities and capabilities of those in power, as the nation continues to suffer from a problem that many believe could have been solved years ago.



What does the chronic mismanagement of energy across multiple governments signify for Pakistan?

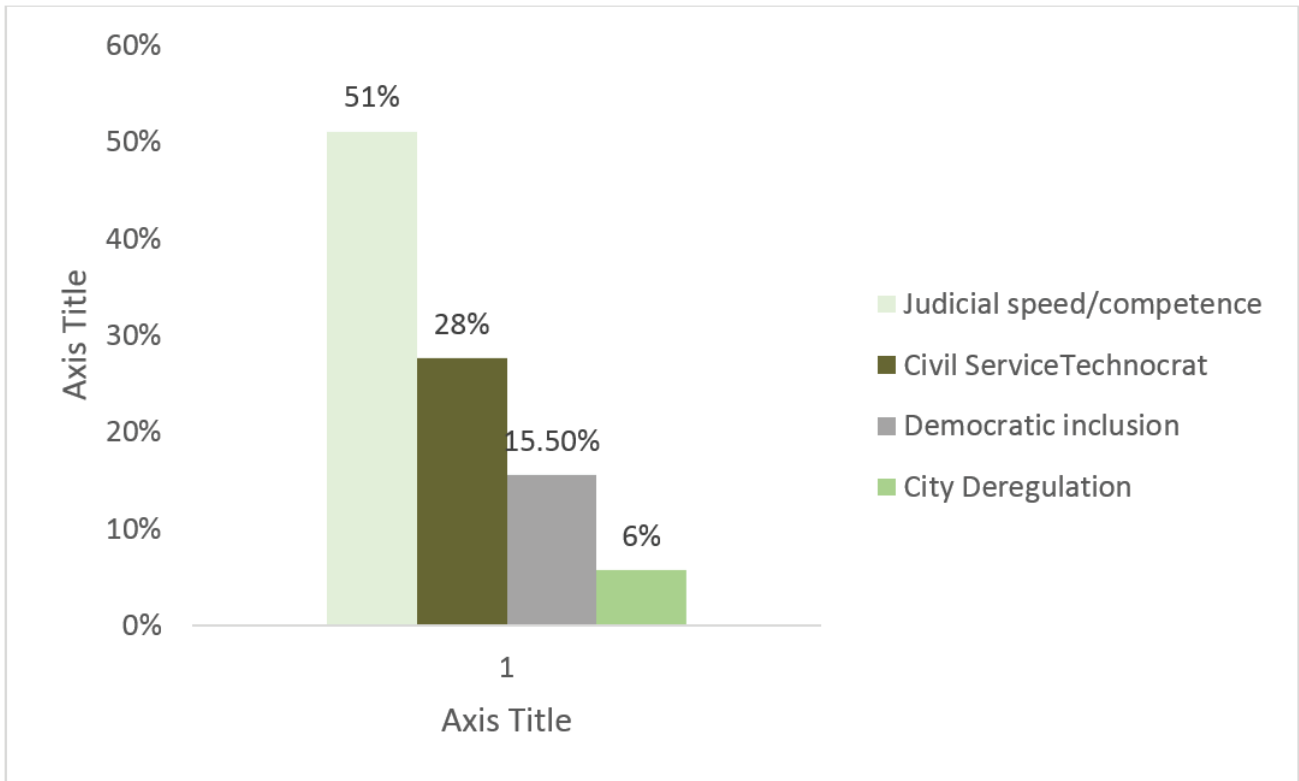


Pakistan's energy sector has been plagued by a series of mismanaged initiatives, ill-conceived projects, and poor administrative oversight, with issues persisting through four to five different administrations. This ongoing crisis points to a profound level of incompetence among all involved—from policymakers to ministers—marked by a lack of qualified professionals and a disregard for research-based decision-making. Each successive government tends to introduce new projects, often more concerned with political one-upmanship than with the judicious use of already allocated capital.

Alarmingly, a staggering 93% of people believe that our governmental bodies are riddled with incompetence. It's imperative that our leaders listen to the public's outcry and take decisive action to address the energy crisis. With ample resources at hand and strong public support for change, there is a golden opportunity for the government to steer the energy sector towards efficiency and sustainability. Embracing this challenge with effective leadership could dramatically transform Pakistan's energy landscape, ushering in a brighter and more prosperous future.

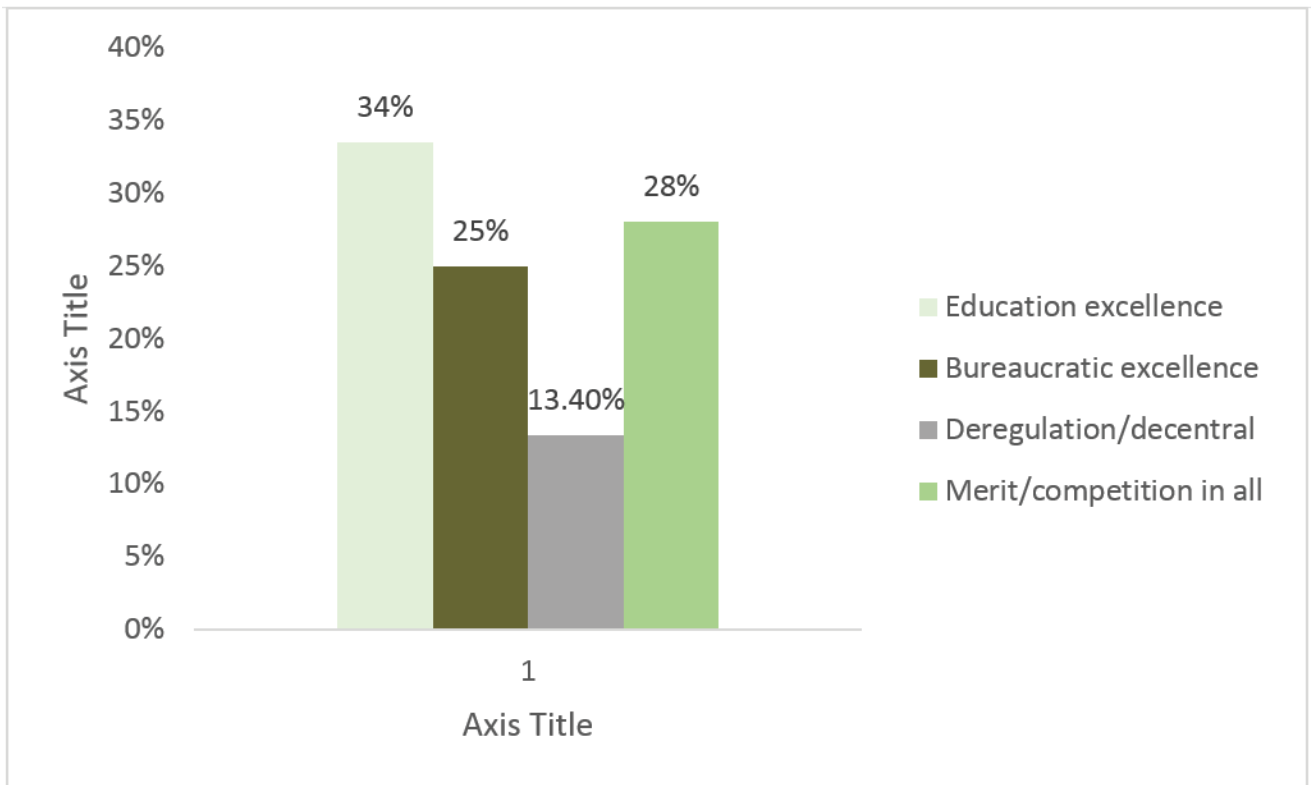
## CHAPTER 5: REFORMS

What is your most crucial reform for Pakistan?



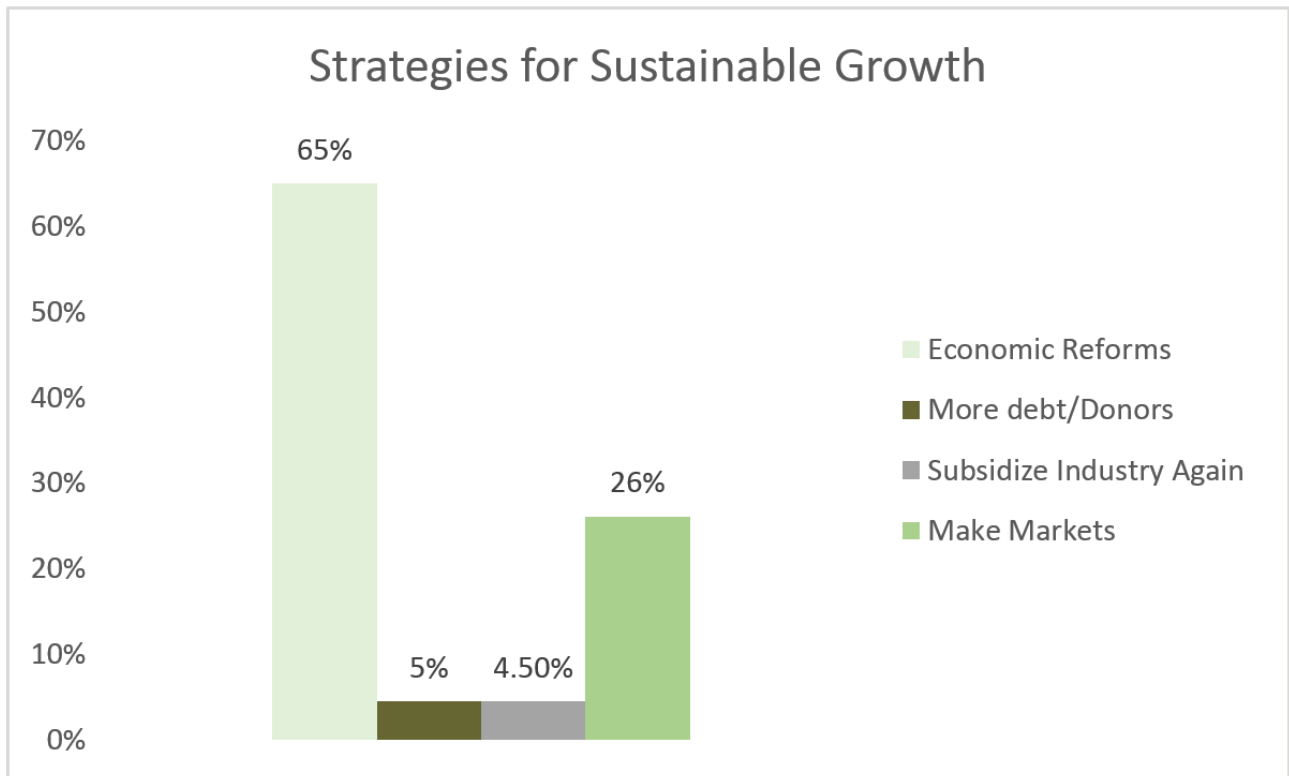
The urgent need for comprehensive reforms in Pakistan cannot be overstated. Among the various reforms proposed, judicial reforms are highlighted as the primary concern by the Twitter community, closely followed by civil service reforms, democratic enhancements, and city deregulation. Each reform, in its own right, is pivotal. To genuinely improve conditions within Pakistan, a holistic approach is essential—whether it involves top-down or bottom-up strategies. A thorough and inclusive method is the only way forward to achieve a transformative and enhanced state of affairs, embodying the collective aspirations for a better future.

What reforms should take precedence in our quest for progress?



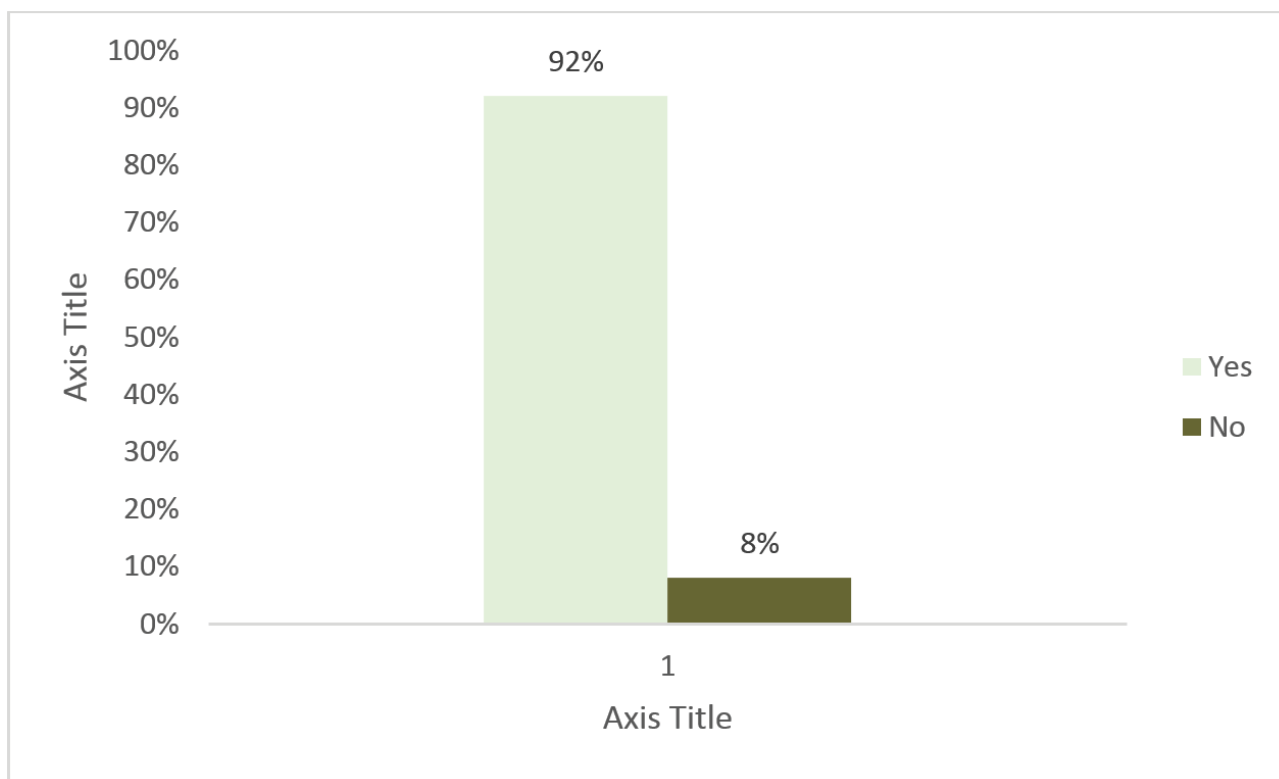
The Twitter community has spoken, and their discerning perspectives set a clear priority sequence for transformative reforms. At the forefront, there is a unanimous call for achieving educational excellence, seen as the cornerstone of future prosperity. Hot on its heels is the demand for a merit-based selection process, ensuring that talent and hard work are the only criteria for advancement. The focus then shifts to refining our bureaucracy, making it not only competent but exemplary. Finally, decentralization is identified as key to dismantling bureaucratic barriers and enhancing process efficiency. Together, these priorities echo a deep-seated recognition that education, meritocracy, administrative excellence, and streamlined governance are the essential pillars supporting the architecture of a progressive and thriving nation.

What economic strategies are essential for sustainable growth in our nation's future?



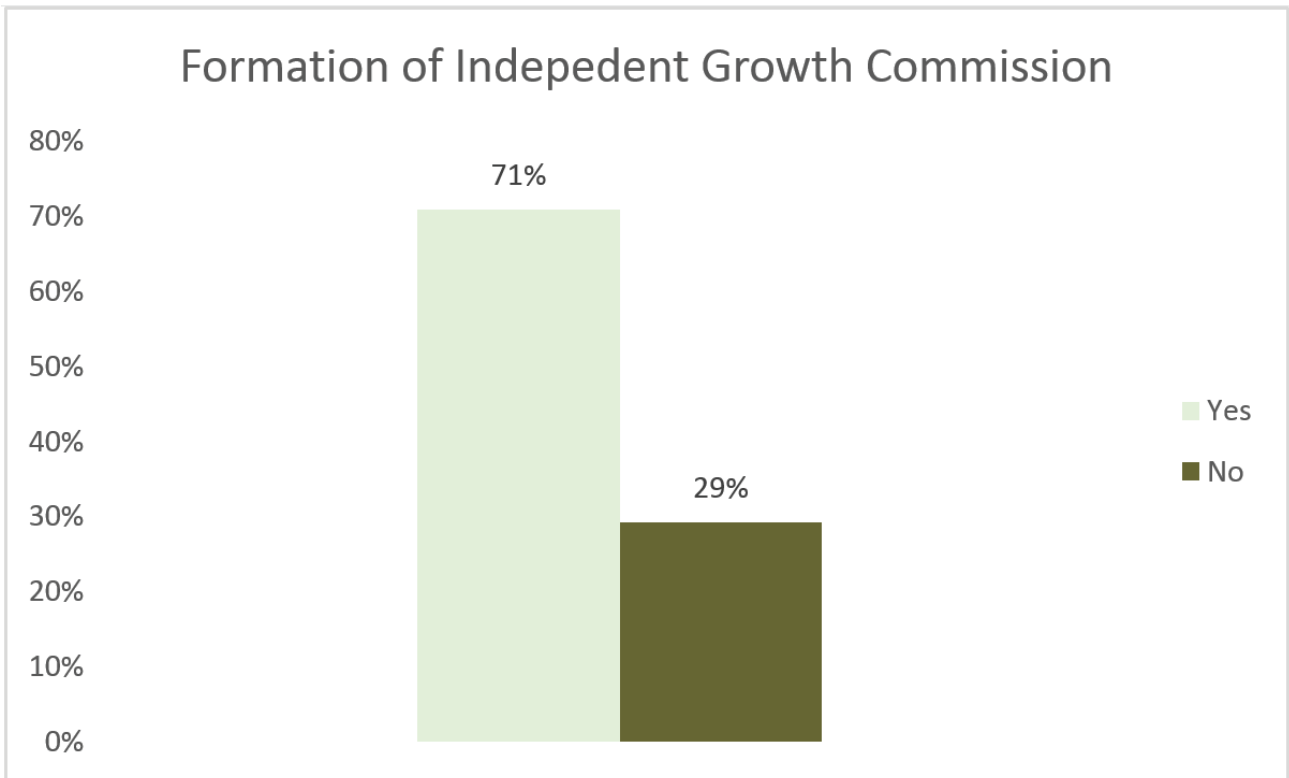
Sustainable economic prosperity demands the implementation of far-reaching, enduring reforms. It's not just about diversifying markets to spark vigorous economic activities; it's about reshaping the foundation of our economic framework. The reliance on external aid and industry subsidies, often seen as quick fixes to nurture domestic sectors, is increasingly viewed as insufficient for real economic transformation. This sentiment is strongly echoed by the Twitter community. They highlight that these conventional approaches fall short of addressing the real aspirations of our populace, who are eager for innovative and effective strategies to fuel genuine economic progress.

Is it time to radically reform PSDP procedures for a purely technical selection of strategies and projects?



The familiar promises of structural reforms by successive governments often evaporate once they attain power, obstructing the path to transformative projects. This pattern underscores the urgent need for profound reforms within the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). The focus must shift towards a rigorous, outcome-based selection of projects, moving away from the inefficient deployment of public funds without clear objectives. Implementing such a strategy requires sharp technical expertise and a strategic mindset. Impressively, a staggering 92% of respondents acknowledge the pressing necessity for these reforms in PSDP governance, recognizing it as a pivotal opportunity to implement meaningful and impactful projects with far-reaching effects.

Question: Should Pakistan establish an independent, technically-driven growth commission to oversee and manage growth policies, similar to how an independent central bank manages inflation?

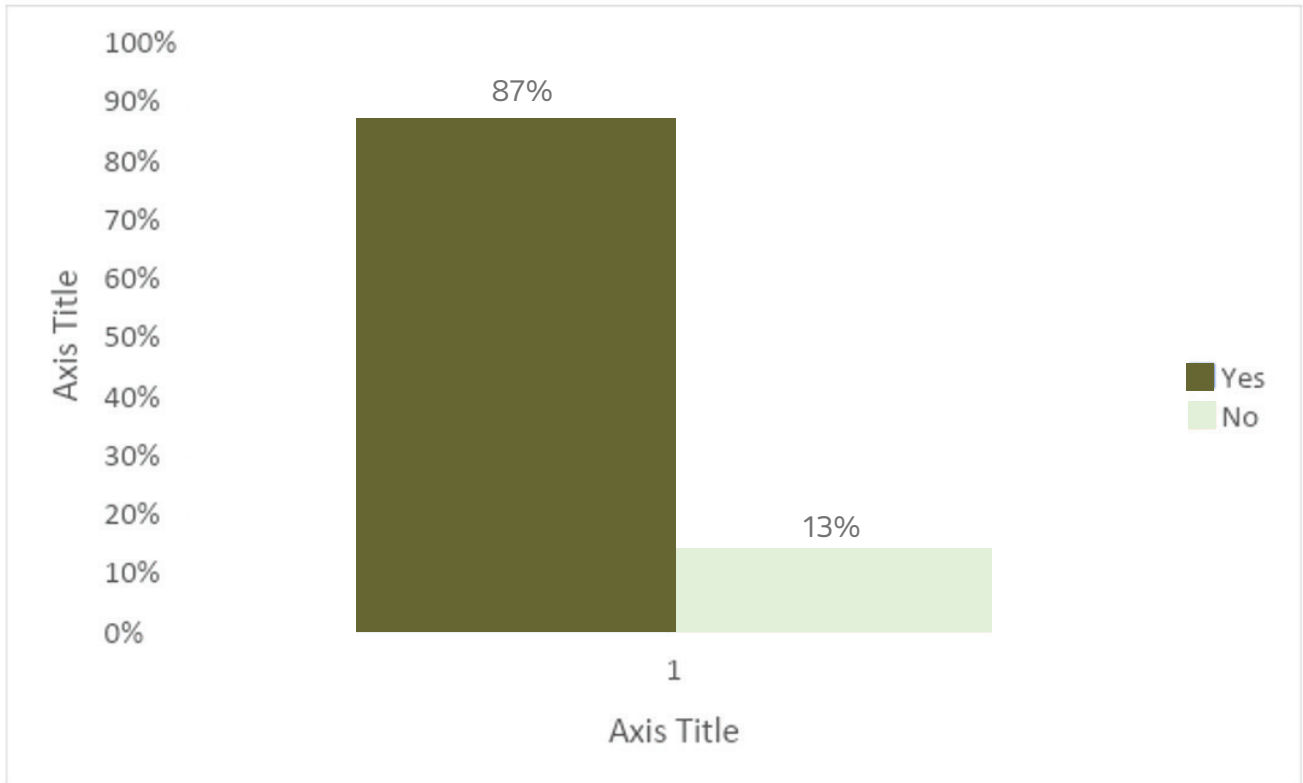


The IMF has mandated an independent central bank for Pakistan, aimed at ensuring the non-political and professional management of inflation. This has sparked a broader understanding among the public about the intricate relationship between inflation and economic growth. People now recognize that reducing inflation at low levels can constrain growth, while at high levels, growth is curtailed by escalating inflation.

This awareness of the inflation-growth trade-off has led to a significant insight: just as the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) operates independently to manage inflation, there should also be an independent body governing growth policies, free from political influence. Currently, the development budget is highly politicized, resulting in projects that often yield low returns and contribute to increased national debt.

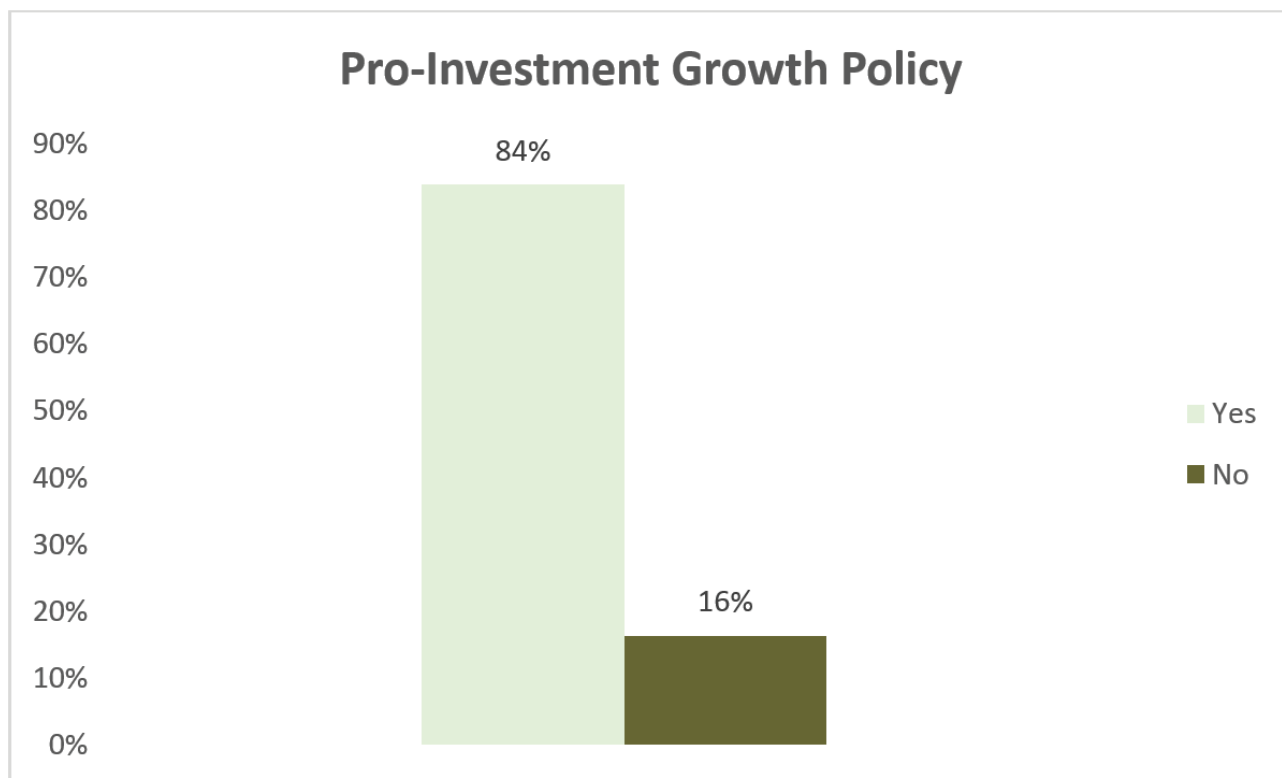
Considering this, it might be more effective for politicians to guide the economy through legislation rather than direct involvement in specific projects. This approach would ensure that economic policies are crafted and implemented based on technical expertise and evidence, rather than political agendas.

Should addressing the 'own money' issue in car transactions become a key policy priority for the government?



The phenomenon of 'own money'—a premium charged over the official price of cars in the black market—represents a significant policy challenge due to the volume of transactions it encompasses daily. Addressing this issue is crucial, not only for the health of the automotive market but also for consumer protection. Effective policy intervention should aim to eliminate such practices without imposing excessive burdens on the public or complicating business operations. The government must craft measures that balance the need to dismantle this black market activity with the necessity of maintaining an efficient, transparent market process. This approach will ensure that interventions not only curtail unethical practices but also support and streamline stakeholder activities, reducing hardships for both consumers and businesses.

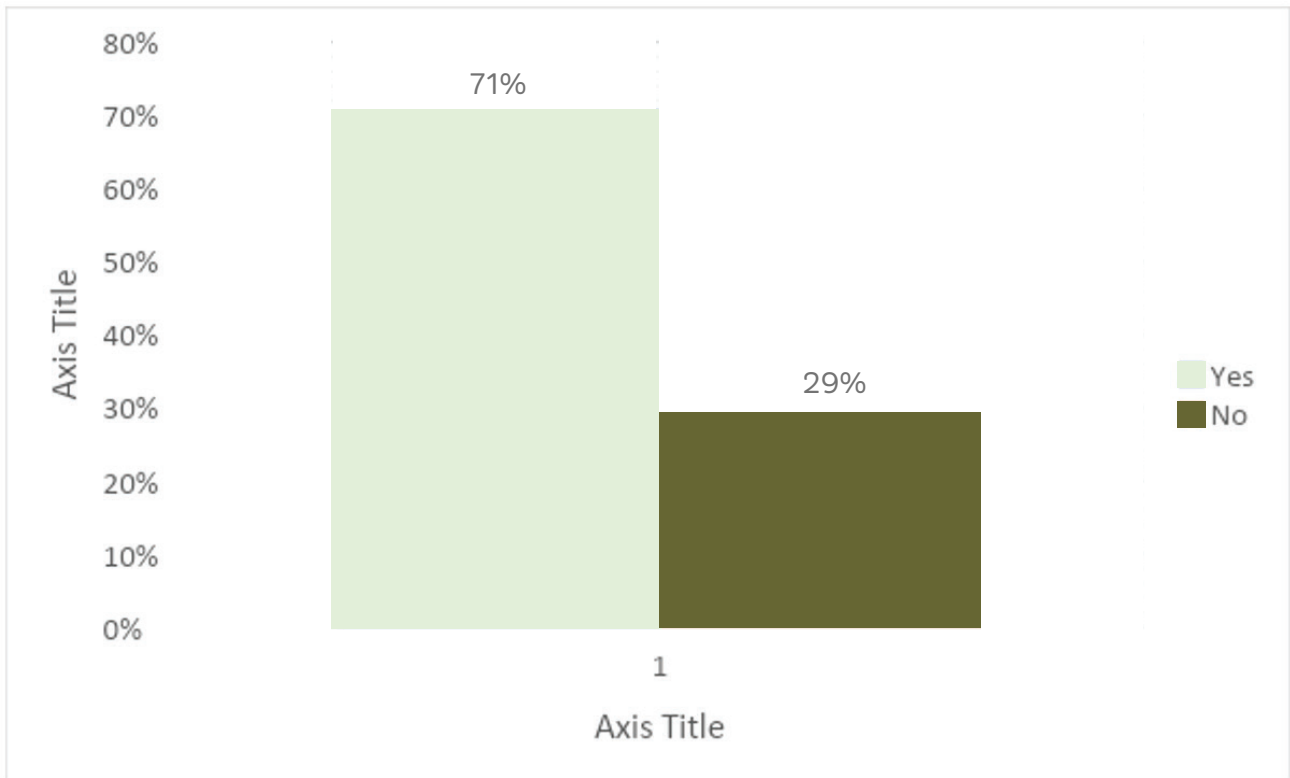
Should Pakistan adopt a growth policy that fosters investment and employment opportunities?



The cornerstone of future prosperity for any nation rests on well-designed growth policies. The collective wisdom of the Twitter community strongly supports the idea that Pakistan needs to adopt a comprehensive set of growth-oriented strategies. By learning from the experiences of successful nations like China, India, and Bangladesh, Pakistan has the potential to create an environment conducive to sustained economic growth. This approach would not only enhance investment opportunities but also significantly boost employment, driving Pakistan toward greater economic prosperity over time.

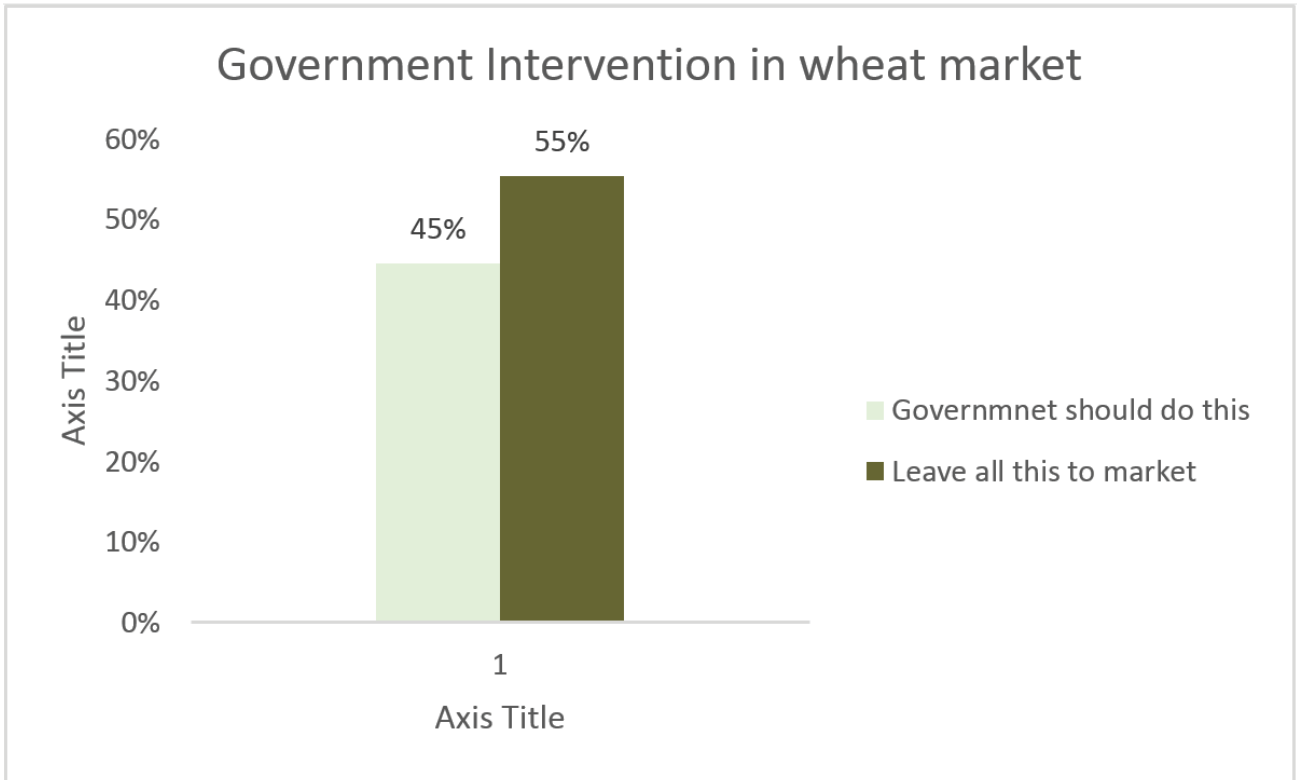
Given the discourse on policies, it becomes to dive in deep. So the Twitterati were asked about the effectiveness of sector specific policies to boost investment and growth. More than two-thirds said that it would be very effective in auguring growth and investment in the economy if policies were designed to target specific sectors.





Focusing policy efforts on specific sectors is crucial for fostering investment and driving growth. Each sector requires tailored policies that understand its unique challenges and opportunities. The main goal of these sector-specific policies should be to strategically boost future investments, enhancing their potential and creating a favorable environment for economic prosperity in Pakistan. By concentrating on particular sectors, these policies not only stimulate economic growth but also promote social development, creating a mutually beneficial relationship that supports the nation's broader welfare and progress. This targeted approach underscores the importance of comprehensive packages over general policies, ensuring that interventions are both impactful and directly relevant to the sectors they aim to develop.

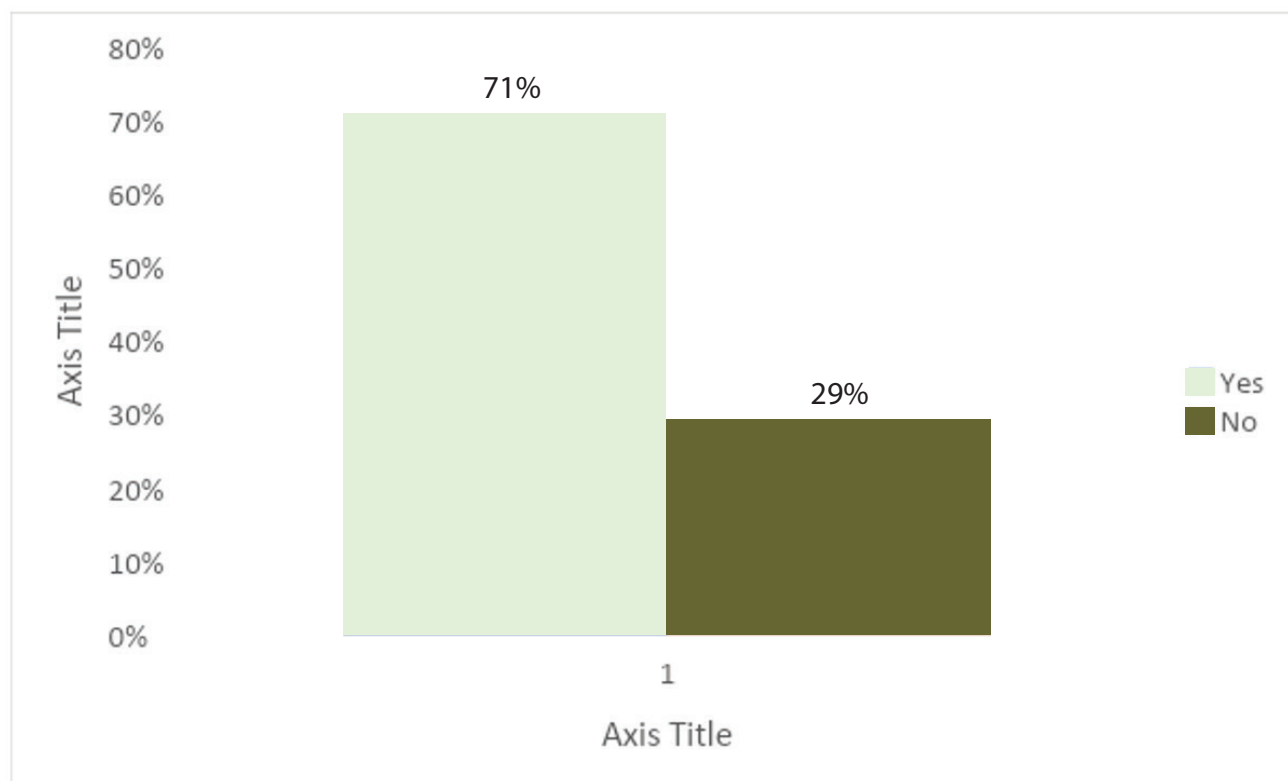
Given that distortions in the wheat market market have been a major issue in Pakkistan (Sahito, 2015), the Twitterati were asked their opinion on the governments' policy to control the wheat market and fix prices.



The government's deep involvement in the wheat market—fixing procurement prices, storing supplies, and dictating export and import policies—might stem from a lingering colonial mindset that favors big government despite its repeated failures. Surprisingly, only slightly more than half agree that this should be left to the market.

Globally, the approach to managing wheat supplies has evolved. Most countries now maintain an international reserve in dollars, sufficient to purchase emergency wheat supplies under extraordinary circumstances, rather than stockpiling physical wheat. Despite this modern approach, nearly half of Twitterati still support strong governmental control in the wheat sector: setting prices, buying, storing, and selling wheat. This is concerning, especially as the significant losses incurred from these government-controlled wheat transactions annually go largely unnoticed and unchallenged by the public.

Should the government abandon arbitrary taxation and random documentation to accelerate growth and employment?



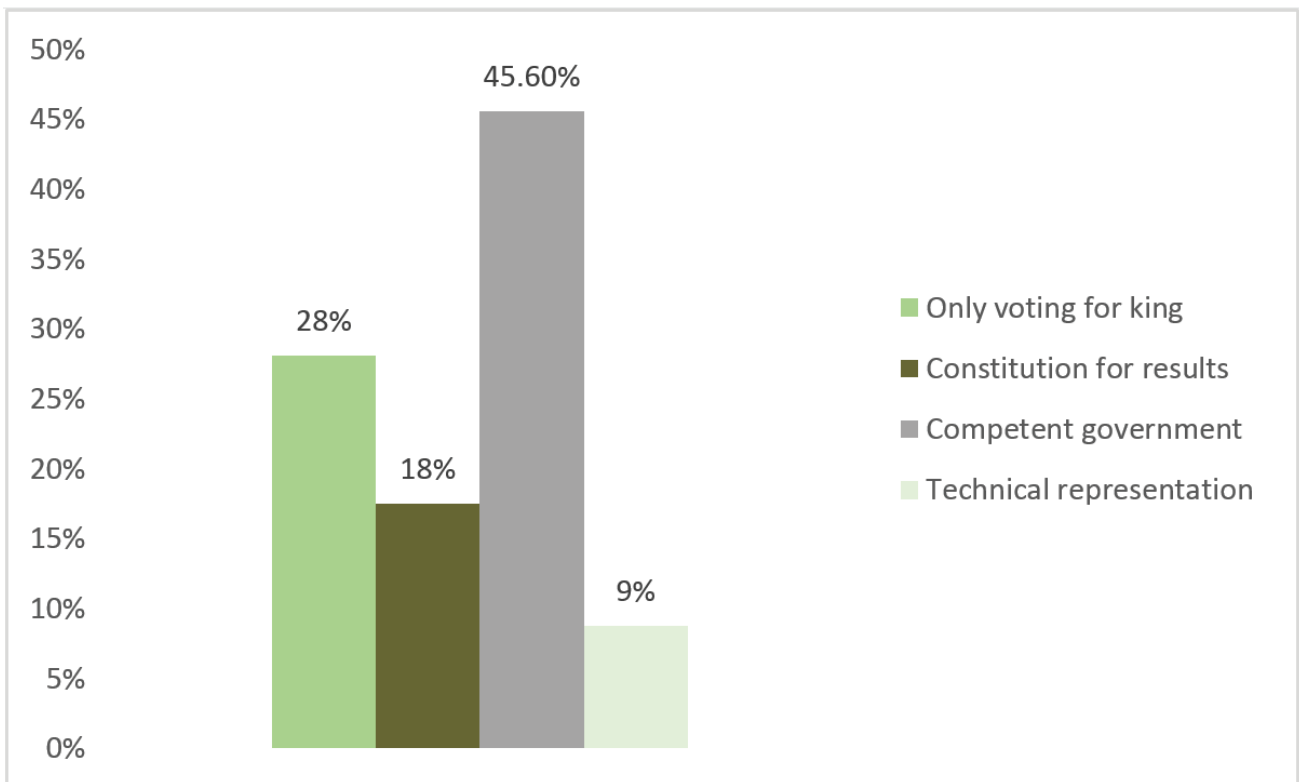
The imposition of arbitrary taxation and burdensome, haphazard documentation practices severely dampens economic growth and employment. Such policies create a climate of uncertainty around taxation, which disrupts market dynamics and hinders business operations. Additionally, excessive documentation requirements add unnecessary transaction costs and bureaucratic sludge, further stifling economic activity and job creation.

This sentiment is strongly supported by public opinion, with more than three-fourths of respondents agreeing that arbitrary and unnecessary taxation significantly impedes economic growth in Pakistan. The clear consensus suggests a need for a more streamlined and development-focused approach to taxation and documentation, one that supports rather than hampers economic progress.

# CHAPTER 6: DEMOCRACY, STATE & GOVERNMENT

## 6.1. Democracy

Question: What does democracy truly mean to you (as a citizen)?

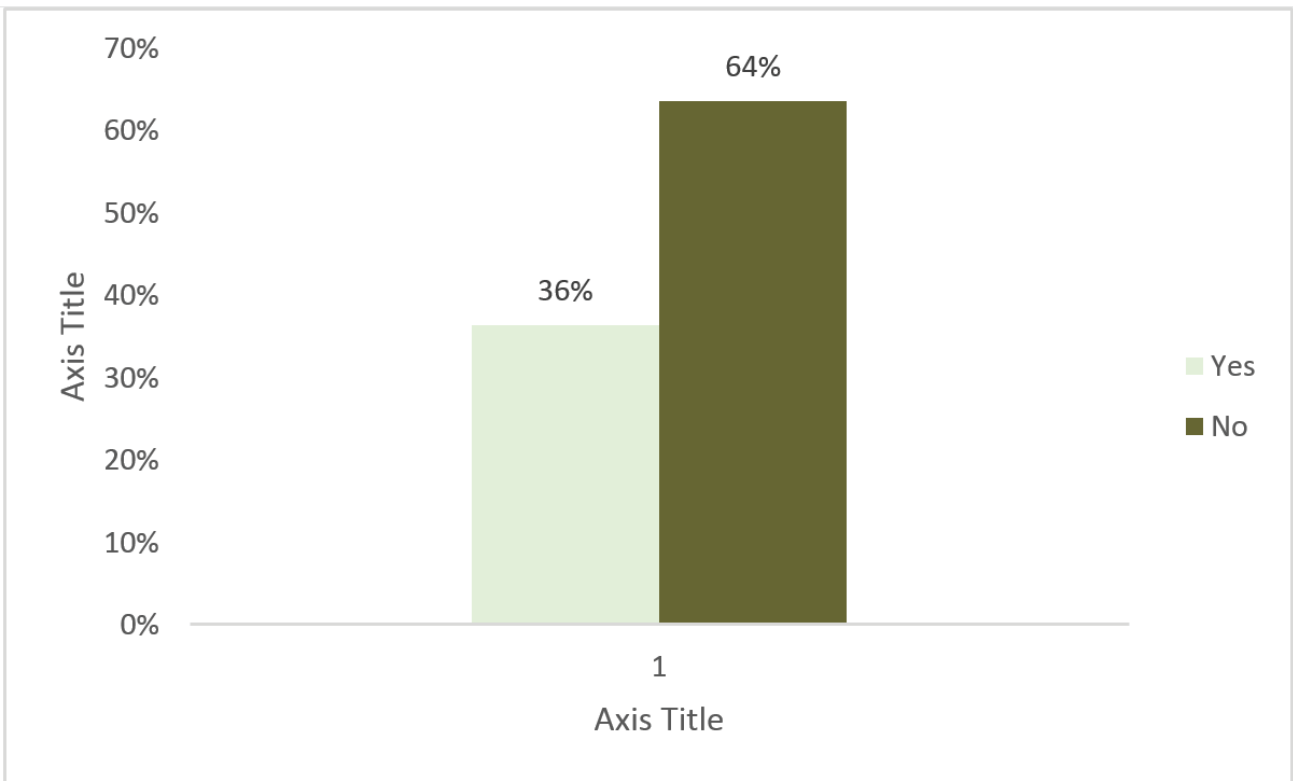


Our understanding of democracy appears to be quite limited. Surprisingly, 28% of people still view democracy merely as a process of voting in a leader, similar to appointing a king. The national conversation is dominated by discussions about who will lead next, with media coverage fixated on potential leaders' public gatherings and personal attacks against their rivals, rather than their policies or ideas.

However, survey results reveal some intriguing perspectives:

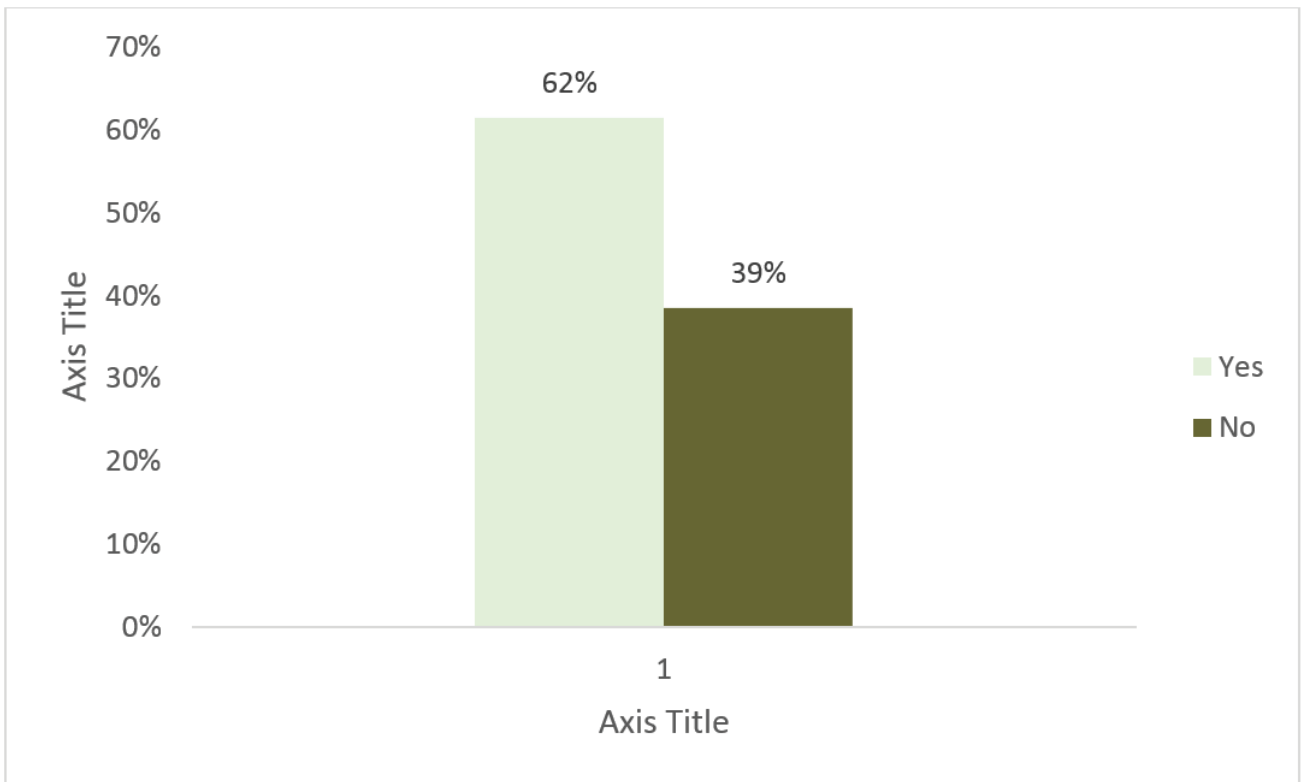
1. **Technical Expertise:** Alarming, only 9% of respondents believe that democracy should incorporate technical skills in government, indicating a disconnection between governance needs and public expectations.
2. **Constitutional Importance:** About 18% recognize that constitutions are fundamental to democracy and should be crafted to yield better governance outcomes, suggesting a minority appreciates the stabilizing role of a well-designed constitution.
3. **Competence in Governance:** Encouragingly, 45% prioritize the need for competent governance, indicating a significant portion of the populace desires effective administration over mere representation.

Is it acceptable to have a democracy where the parliament seldom functions and all power resides with the executive, as seen in Pakistan?



Ziauddin Sardar poignantly notes, "The parliament is the supreme decision-making and legislative body in any democracy. It reflects the collective desires of the citizens and makes laws." Yet, let's examine Pakistan's reality, where parliamentary proceedings often do not represent the diverse interests of its people, instead yielding to the subtle encroachment of autocratic dominance masquerading as democratic governance. In such a context, a significant voice within the Twitter community questions the very purpose of a parliament when it fails to fulfill its essential duties. This sentiment underscores a critical debate: does the existence of a parliament still hold value if it cannot execute its fundamental responsibilities effectively?

Question: How essential is it to properly configure democracy to prevent its degeneration into dictatorship?



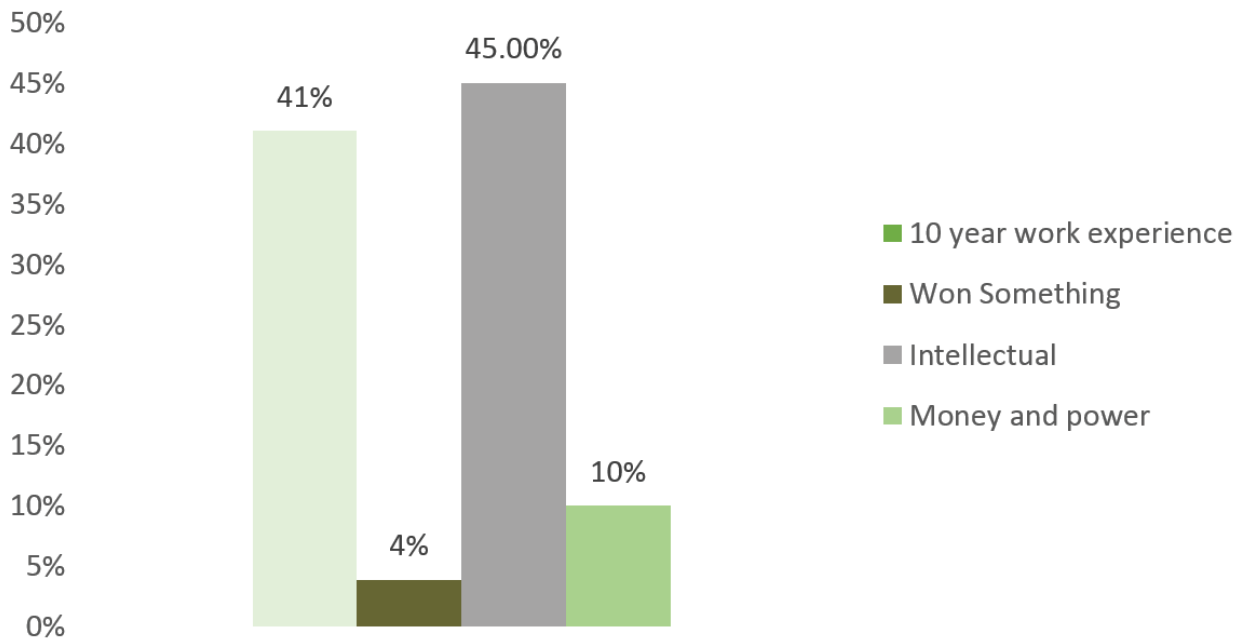
The idea that democracy should simply be allowed to run its course, regardless of its configuration, is a widely held misconception in Pakistan. Historians from Gibbon to contemporary scholars have emphasized that democracy is inherently fragile and requires careful maintenance. Without regular reforms to its checks and balances, and without ensuring the election of capable leadership, democracy can easily devolve into more authoritarian forms of governance such as fascism or dictatorship.

This issue is highlighted by recent findings: while 62% of respondents recognize that democracy will deteriorate if not diligently maintained, 38% cling to the myth that mere participation in elections is sufficient for democracy to thrive. They believe that voters will naturally make wise choices, overlooking the complexities of democratic systems.

These perspectives underscore the need for continuous scrutiny and readiness to reform democratic systems. Democracy should not be seen merely as a popularity contest but as a framework designed to facilitate effective governance.

Question: What qualifications should candidates for election in Pakistan possess to effectively govern?

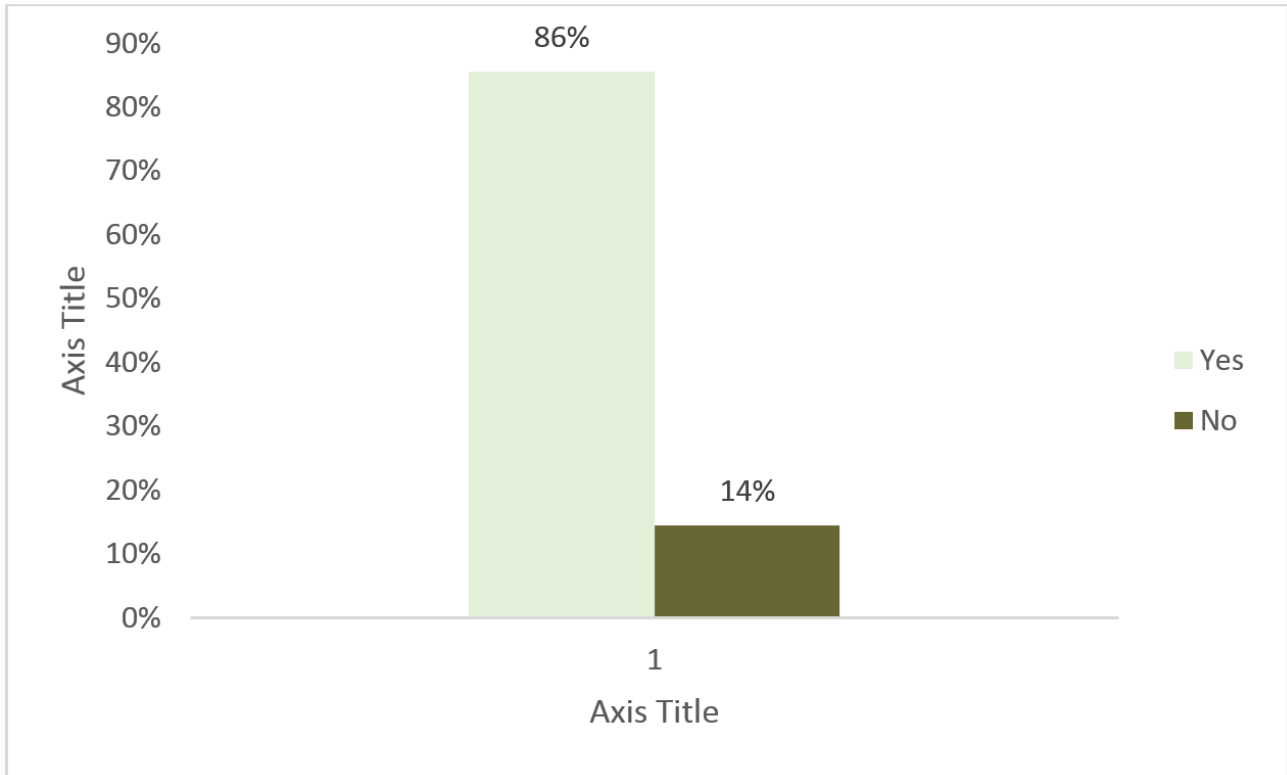
## Qualification for Electoral Candidates



In Pakistan, the political arena is rife with corruption, mediocrity, and entrenched hierarchies. The influence of nepotism, favoritism through the "Seth" system, and pervasive family politics often undermine academic reasoning and intellectual acumen. Positions of authority are commonly allocated based on the strength of voter banks rather than meritocratic evaluations of qualifications, sidelining the need for expertise in relevant fields.

Recent Twitter polls reveal public expectations for electoral candidates: 45% of respondents emphasize the necessity of intellectual prowess, underscoring the importance of critical thinking and strategic decision-making in governance. Meanwhile, 41% believe that candidates should have at least 10 years of experience in managing state affairs, highlighting a preference for seasoned individuals. In a revealing contrast, about 10% think that mere wealth and influence are sufficient qualifications for candidacy, reflecting a cynical view of the electoral process. Only a small fraction, 4%, values significant personal achievements, indicating a yearning for proven competence and success in candidates' past endeavors.

Question: Should Pakistan adopt direct Senate elections through adult franchise to eliminate the practice of seat buying?

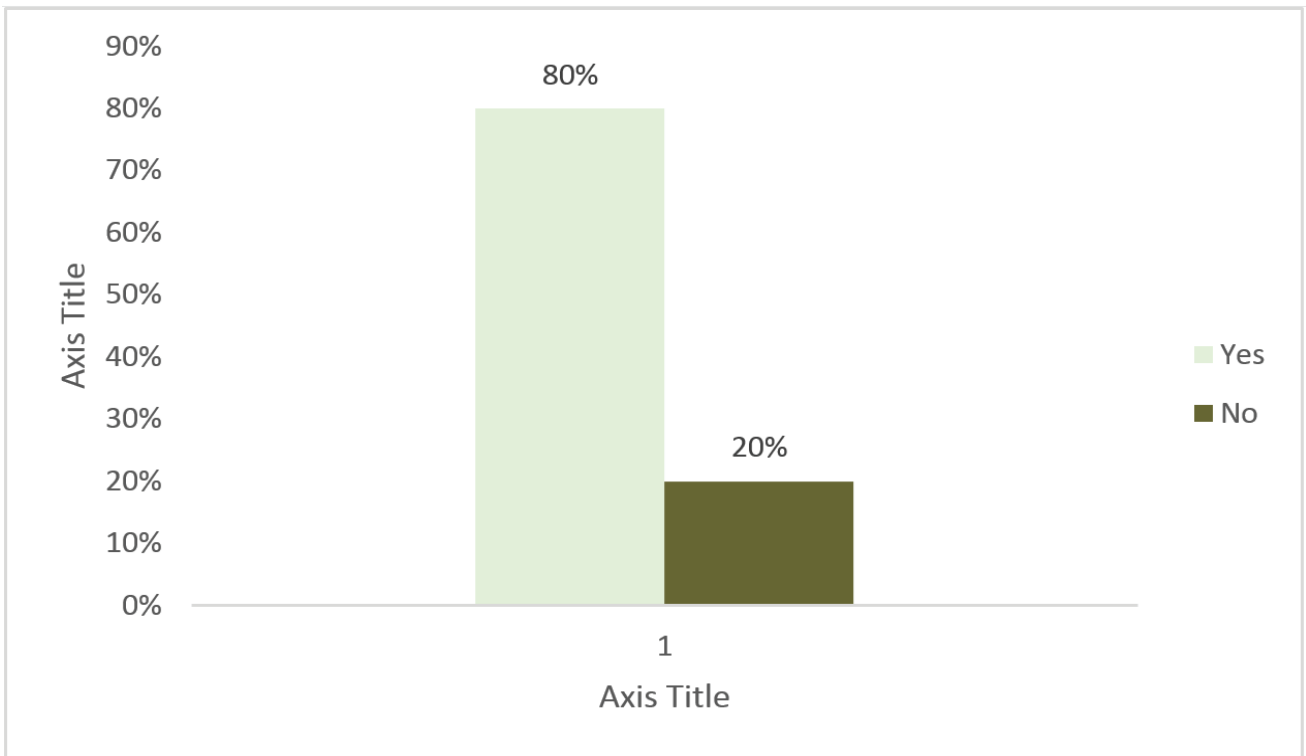


In our public discourse, crucial structural reforms such as this rarely surface, yet there is overwhelming agreement among the populace that Senate elections should be direct. Currently, the entire political fate of the nation is determined in a single day during national and provincial assembly elections, with the outcomes set for the next five years. This method leaves little room for interim evaluations of public sentiment, potentially disconnecting governance from the evolving needs and opinions of the people.

As suggested by Haque (2017), following international practices could enhance democratic responsiveness. For instance, in the United States, elections are held annually in November, with staggered terms across different government levels to continuously align political leadership with public will. Conversely, in Pakistan, political dynamics are effectively frozen to suit the convenience of the sitting government, leading to widespread dissatisfaction with the static five-year terms. Introducing more frequent elections could prevent this stagnation and provide a more dynamic and responsive governance structure.

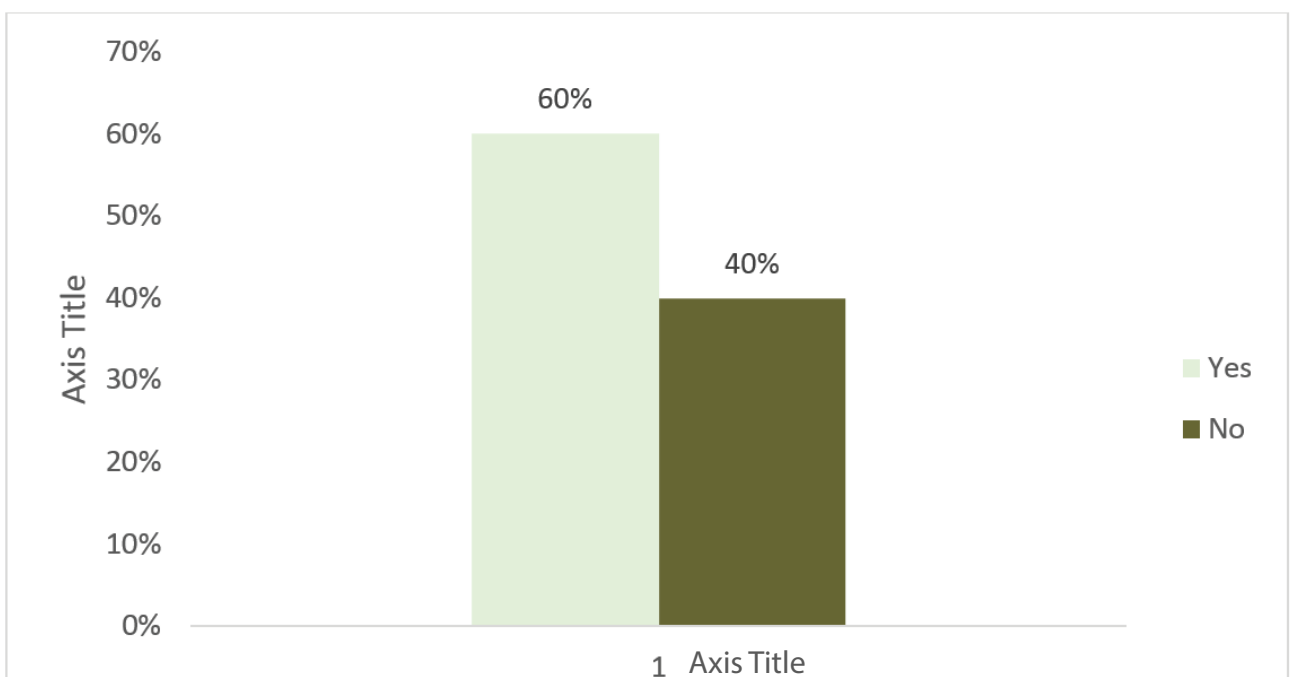
Could a two-stage electoral system redefine our governance? Consider this: In the initial phase, all candidates compete, and three months later, the top two face off, enriched by debates and educational events.





Electoral reforms are a crucial and urgent endeavor. Drawing a parallel to the private sector, where employment and retention hinge on merit and performance, it seems logical to expect similar standards in government. Thus, the idea of a government that operates primarily on demonstrated effectiveness, rather than mere political allegiance, gains traction. Reflecting this perspective, a significant portion of the Twitter community supports implementing a two-stage electoral process. This change could bring us closer to the essence of effective governance, resonating with the collective desire for a system that truly reflects our values and expectations.

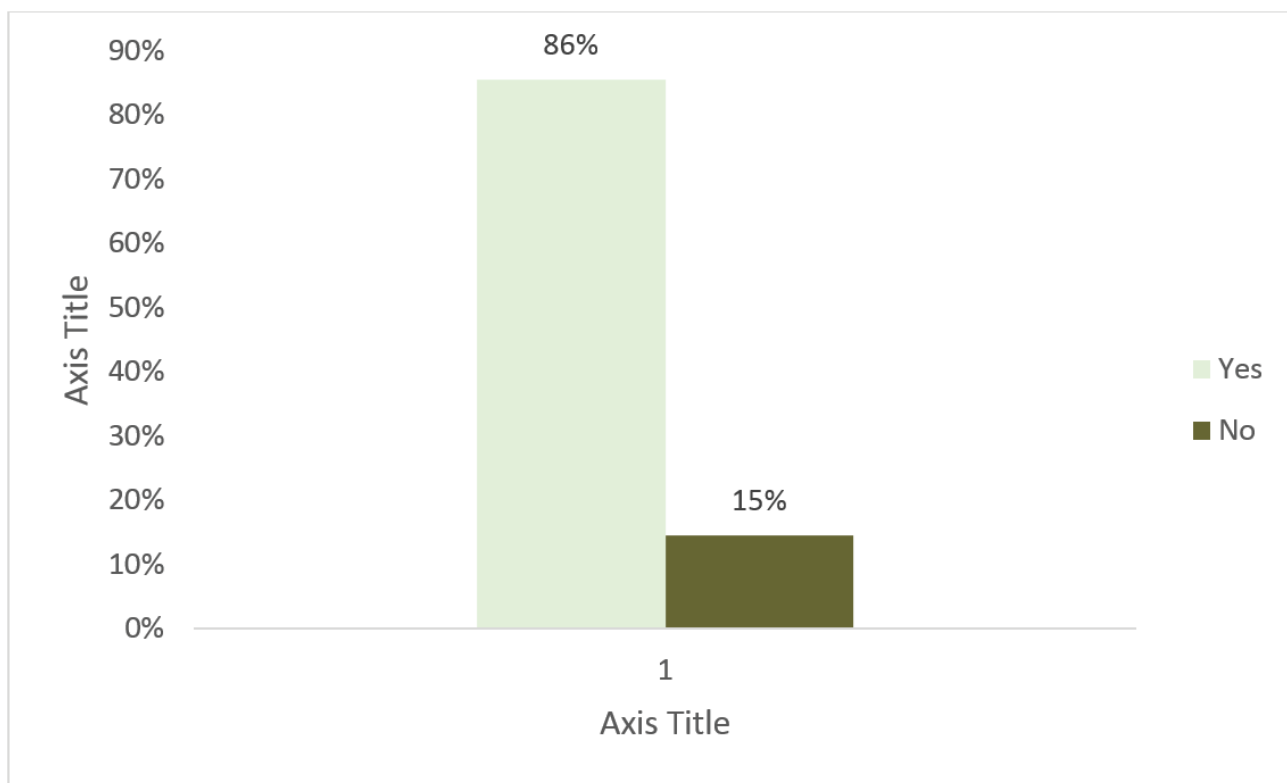
Should we limit people to standing for election only twice in their lifetime?



The Pakistan Election Commission is considering a transformative proposal: capping the number of times an individual can run for elected office at two. This bold move aims to tackle the entrenched issue of familial dynastic politics, a legacy lingering since Pakistan gained independence. By restricting candidates to two election bids, the measure promises to inject fresh energy into the political arena, ensuring a turnover of ideas and leadership that could revitalize governance. A significant majority of respondents agree that such constraints would cultivate a more diverse and dynamic political landscape, potentially leading to profound shifts in policy and governance. This revolutionary idea taps into the nation's desire for a political system that thrives on innovation and inclusivity, fostering a fertile environment for change and progress.

## 6.2. Government

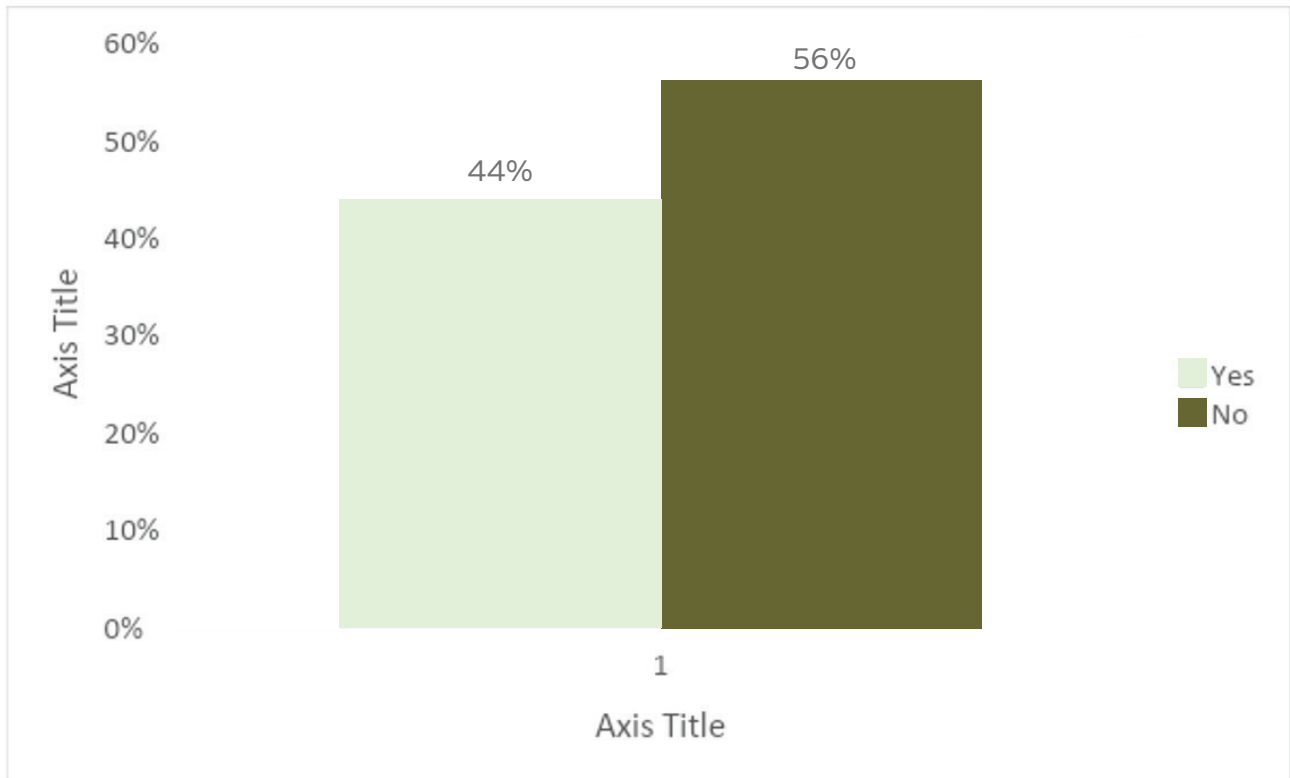
In Pakistan, are we too focused on documentation and taxes at the expense of improving our governance and democracy?



Governance is crucial, holding the potential to address myriad issues from taxes to corruption, offering a pathway to transparency and efficacy in administration. Globally, there is a strong focus on enhancing governance as a fundamental strategy to improve systems. Yet, in Pakistan, the emphasis seems trapped in ongoing issues related to documentation and tax collection. Interestingly, despite the challenges, there remains a skilled subset of the population adept at bypassing these tax and documentation norms, continuing their practices with alarming proficiency. This scenario prompts a significant concern: about 86% of people believe that improving governance and bolstering democratic processes should take precedence over the relentless focus on

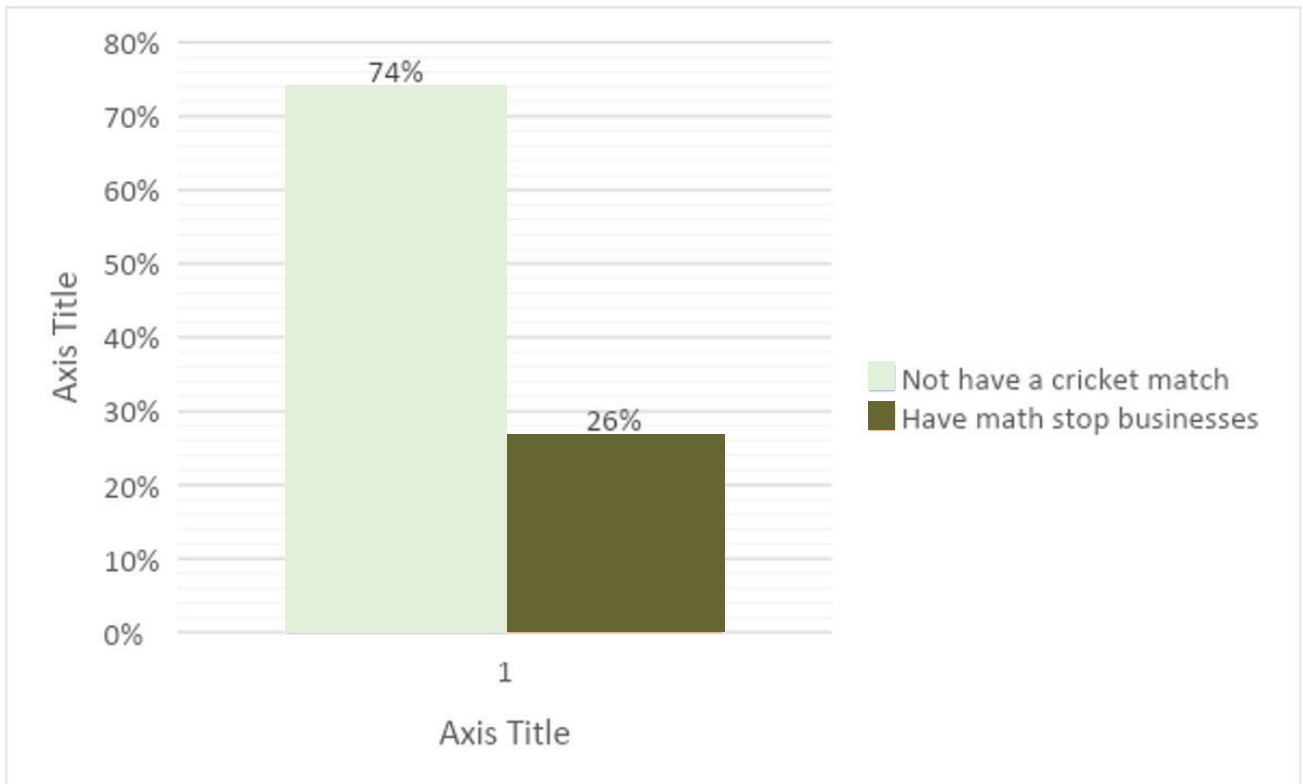
documentation and taxation. This sentiment highlights a critical need for a shift in priorities to truly enhance the structural foundations of our nation.

Should the super-rich be required to divest their wealth to hold public office and better represent the average citizen?



The prevalence of an elitist milieu within the governance system often fuels corruption and allows those with significant political and economic power to exert undue influence on decision-making processes. This is compounded by the fact that many super-rich individuals continue to expand their fortunes by exploiting governance loopholes. Public opinion on this issue is divided, as reflected in responses from the Twitter community: 56% believe that the super-rich should not be banned from public office, viewing their wealth as a result of personal achievement and hard work. Conversely, 44% argue that these affluent individuals should step down from their economic pedestals and live like ordinary citizens if they wish to hold office and genuinely represent the interests of the common man. This debate highlights the tension between acknowledging successful entrepreneurship and the need for representatives who understand and embody the everyday experiences of their constituents.

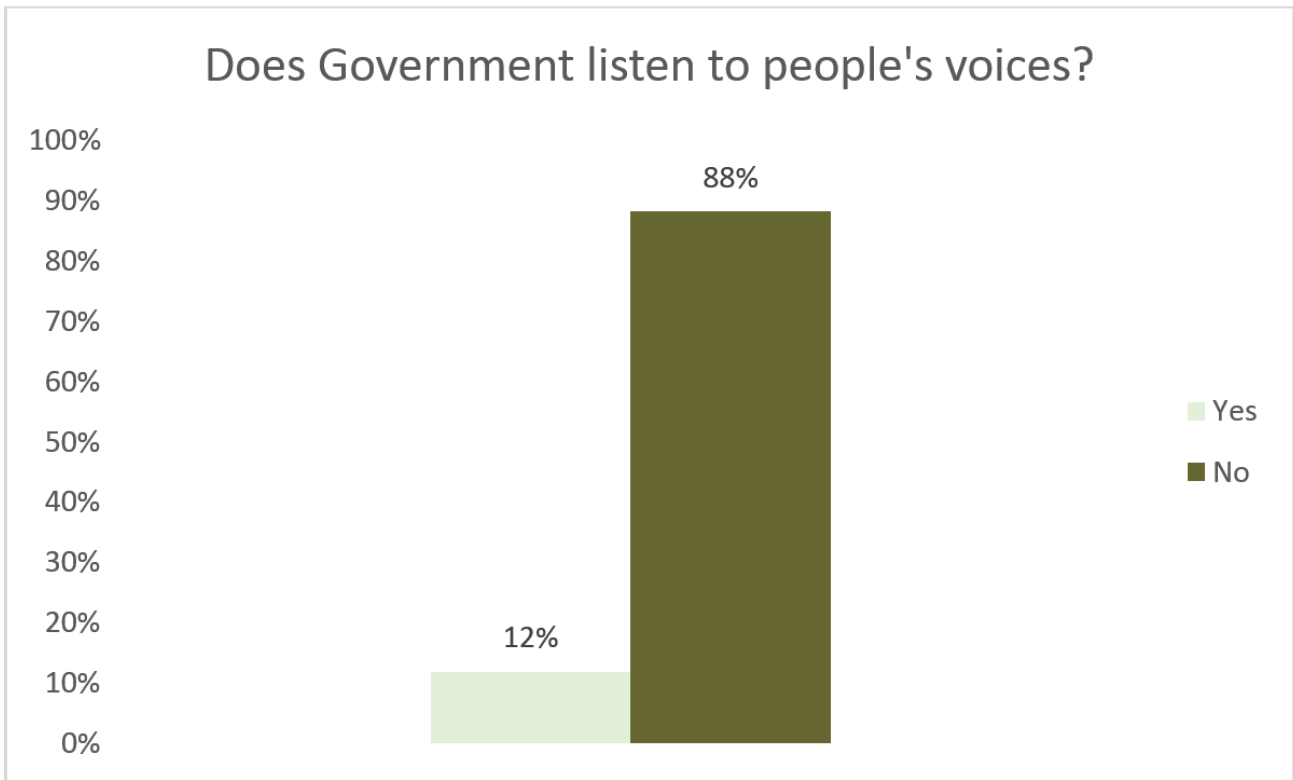
Should the state prioritize hosting cricket events if it cannot guarantee security without disrupting business and daily life?



In Pakistan, the intersection of cricket events like the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and normal business operations presents a unique challenge. Unlike most countries where sports events and business activities coexist seamlessly, in Pakistan, major cricket matches often lead to significant disruptions in business activities, intracity traffic, and the daily routines of citizens. This disruption is not merely an inconvenience but a substantial impediment, as evidenced by a survey in which a staggering 74% of the population expressed opposition to hosting cricket matches due to their negative impact on daily life.

Moreover, the inability of the government to ensure adequate security for these events further complicates the issue, suggesting a misalignment of priorities. When the government struggles to provide security that allows cricket and business to happen simultaneously, it not only affects the citizens' well-being but also amplifies their anxiety. This scenario forces a critical question: Should the state continue to host such events if it cannot manage the security risks without sacrificing the public's convenience and safety?

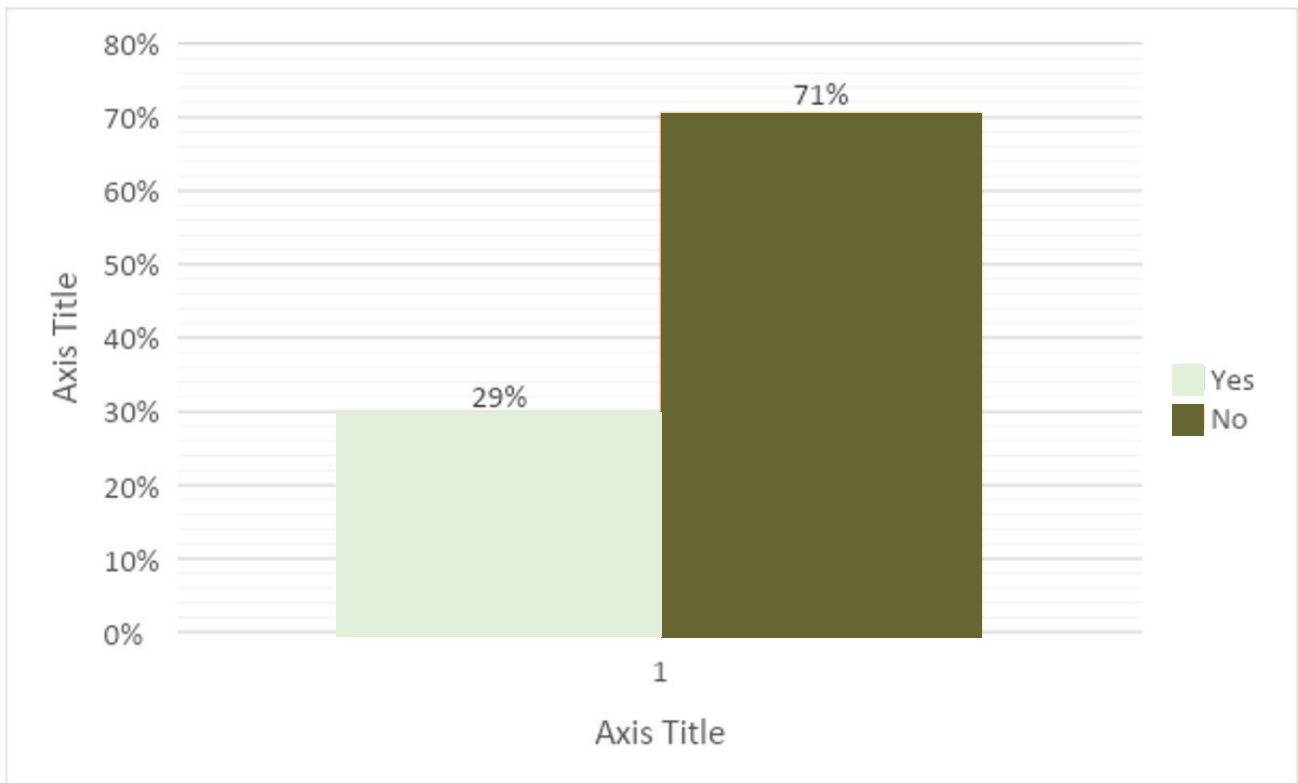
Question: Are your voices and concerns genuinely heard by the government?



Unfortunately, a robust culture of debate and open dialogue is notably absent in our governance. The landscape is barren of platforms where the public can effectively voice their opinions and be heard by those in power. The prevailing attitude within the government seems to be one of resistance to any form of critique or accountability. There is a notable disconnect in understanding the complexities and the significant impact of government decisions.

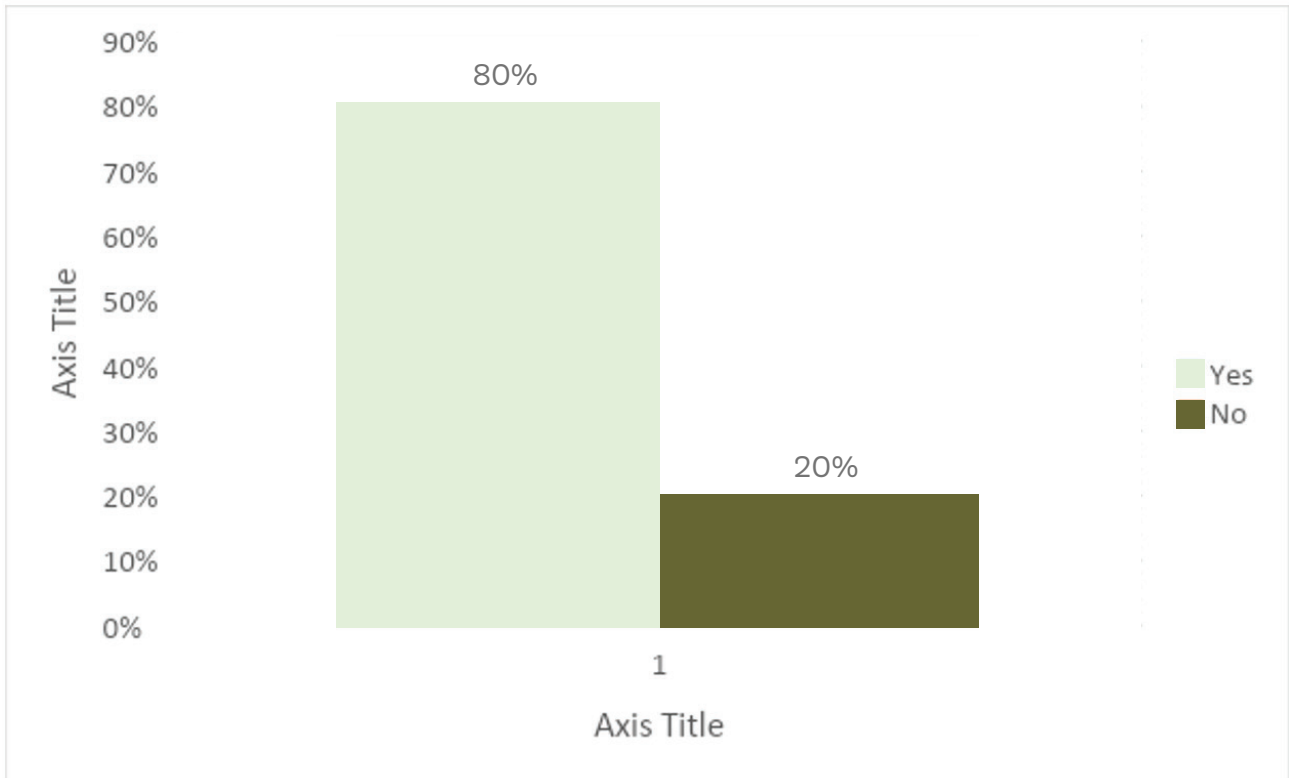
Despite occasional recognition of public issues, government actions predominantly prioritize self-interest and the crafting of policies that are superficially attractive yet lack substantial benefits. This disconnect leads to a government that appears indifferent to the actual grievances of its citizens. Consequently, a staggering 88% of respondents express a sentiment of being unheard, reinforcing the perception that their leaders are more focused on personal agendas than on the welfare of the people they serve.

Is the government genuinely open to feedback from civil society, or does it operate in a bubble removed from the public's concerns?



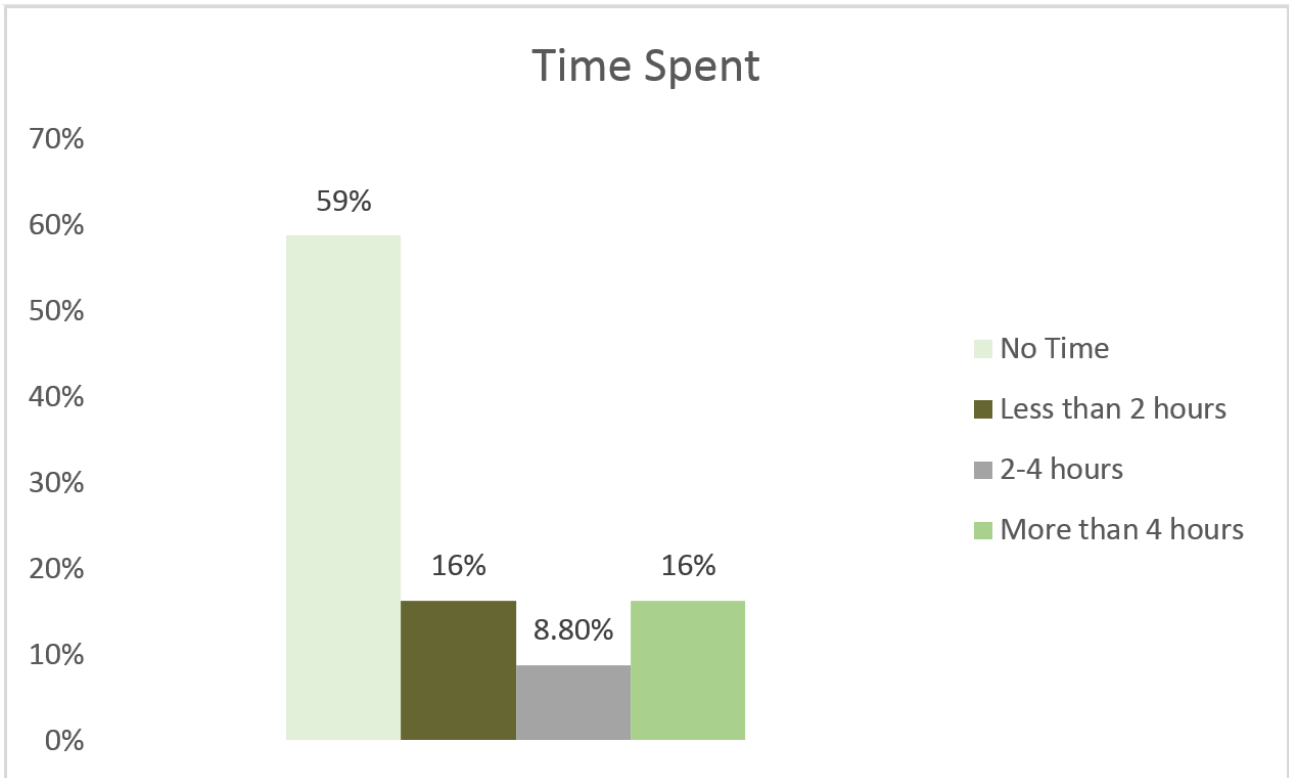
Not only do people feel that the government fails to listen to them, but many also believe it disregards the voices emanating from civil society organizations. The perception is widespread that the government operates in a realm as distant from the Pakistani populace as Mars is from Earth. When individuals ascend to government positions, they often surround themselves with sycophants and courtiers, creating an echo chamber that stifles innovative ideas and sensible policies. The focus of these officials seems to be more on securing votes for upcoming elections rather than on genuinely addressing problems and devising efficient solutions. This sentiment is strongly supported by recent survey findings, which indicate that members of think tanks, universities, and civil society organizations feel excluded, with no meaningful way to engage with the government. Here, 'access' should involve active, purposeful interaction that aims to identify and solve pressing societal issues—an area where current efforts are markedly lacking.

Can decentralizing government power minimize corruption?



Transparency, accountability, and regulatory compliance are critical components in combating corruption and establishing effective governance. To tackle corruption efficiently, it is vital that the government streamline regulations and enforce a strict code of ethics, including a solemn oath of transparency from all officials. Public opinion strongly supports this approach: a significant majority believe that by decentralizing government processes—thus distributing power more broadly rather than concentrating it at the top—corruption can be significantly reduced. This shift could lead to a more accountable and responsive administration, enhancing the overall integrity of government operations.

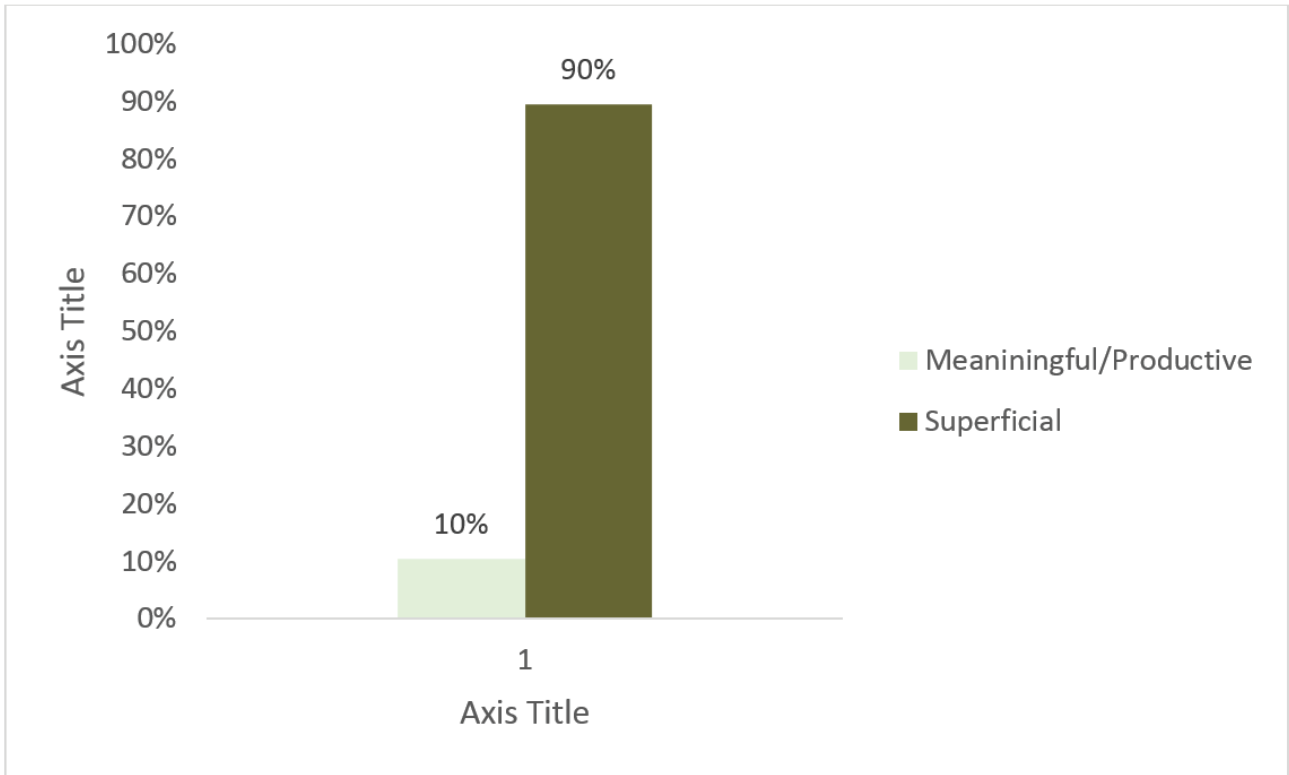
How much time do ministers and secretaries realistically spend each day reading, thinking, understanding, and analyzing?



In Pakistan, even low-ranking employees are required to meet certain educational standards, yet paradoxically, no such prerequisites exist for ministers. This discrepancy leads to a political landscape often populated by individuals who may lack the formal education necessary to fully grasp complex, long-term policies. As a result, there is little motivation among our ministers to dedicate time to contemplative reading or deep reflection on the nation's critical affairs. Observant Twitter users have also pointed out this troubling trend, highlighting a pattern of neglect that undermines the effectiveness of our government's decision-making processes.

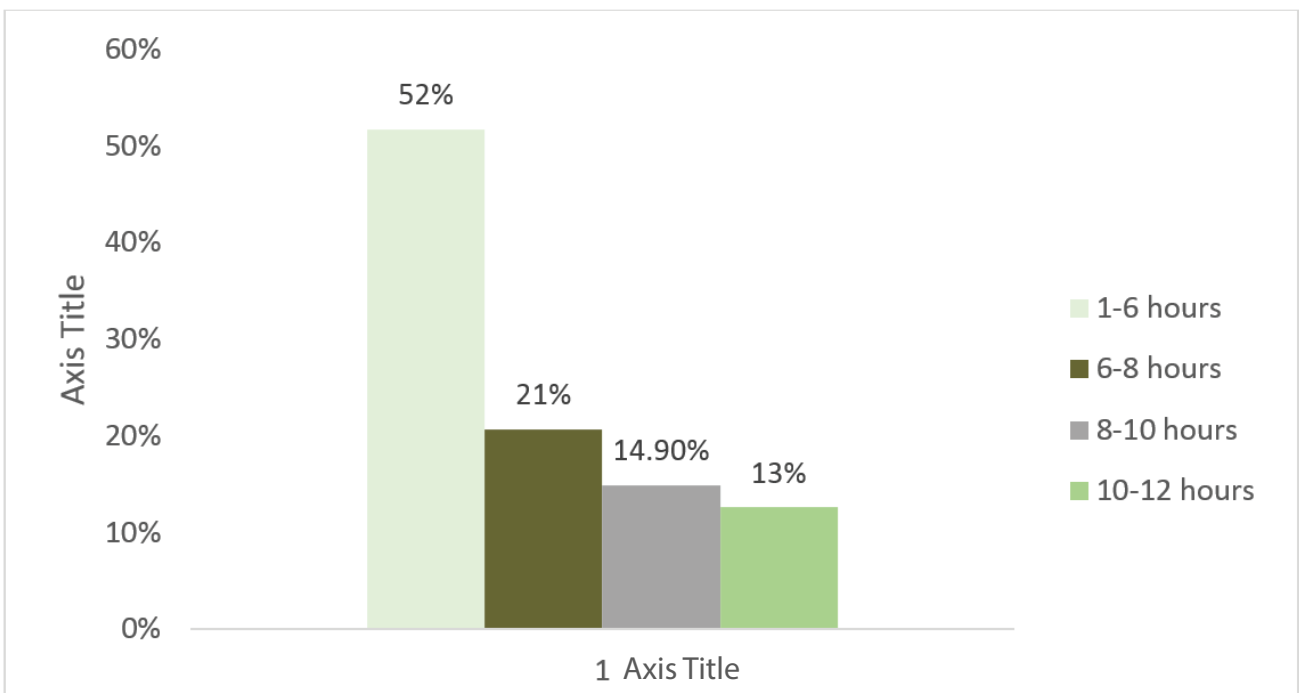
Are the seemingly endless government meetings producing tangible outcomes, or are they merely for show?





Government officials are frequently reported to be engaged in extensive meetings, yet these gatherings often lack a clear agenda and fail to yield tangible outcomes. Despite media portrayals of productivity and accomplishment, the stark reality is that many of these meetings are merely performative. This disheartening situation has not gone unnoticed; the Twitter community has also voiced concerns, identifying these meetings as superficial and devoid of substantial content. The discrepancy between the reported activities and actual progress prompts a critical examination of the effectiveness of such meetings in governance.

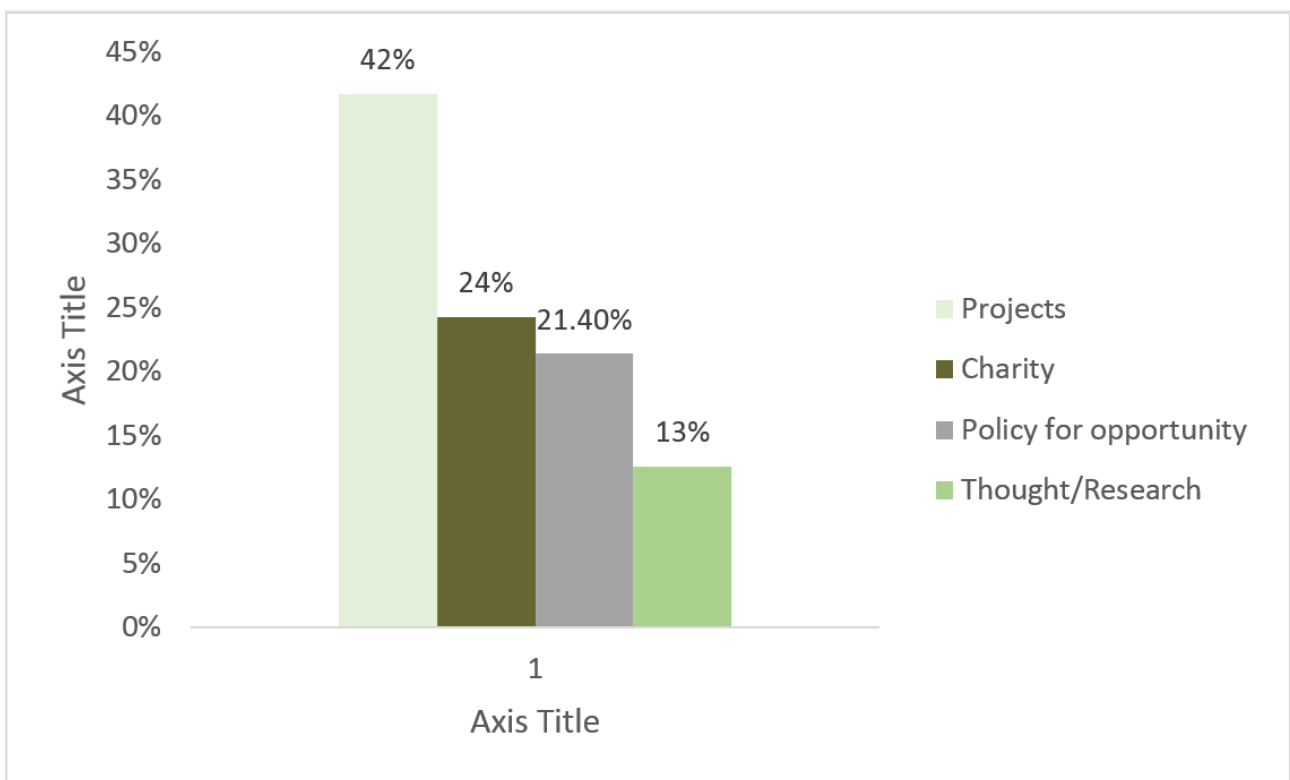
How much time do you think ministers' secretaries spend in meetings every day, and is it effectively used?



Despite the substantial hours spent in meetings, the lack of discernible progress in the system is strikingly evident. These sessions often lack well-defined policies, substantive agendas, and clear objectives. The absence of meaningful discussions on pertinent research findings further diminishes the potential of these meetings to address real-time challenges effectively. There is a crucial need for a shift in priorities among ministers and secretaries towards outcome-oriented scrums that focus on performance rather than prolonged, aimless gatherings.

Insights from the Twitter community suggest that government officials spend a significant portion of their day in meetings, with responses indicating anywhere from 1 to 6 hours daily. Some responses even stretch to 6 to 8 hours, 8 to 10 hours, and more, highlighting an intense meeting culture that may not always translate into productive outcomes.

Question: Why does the government persist in project-based development and neglect research-driven policy reforms essential for sustainable growth? – Government spends all it's time doing what?

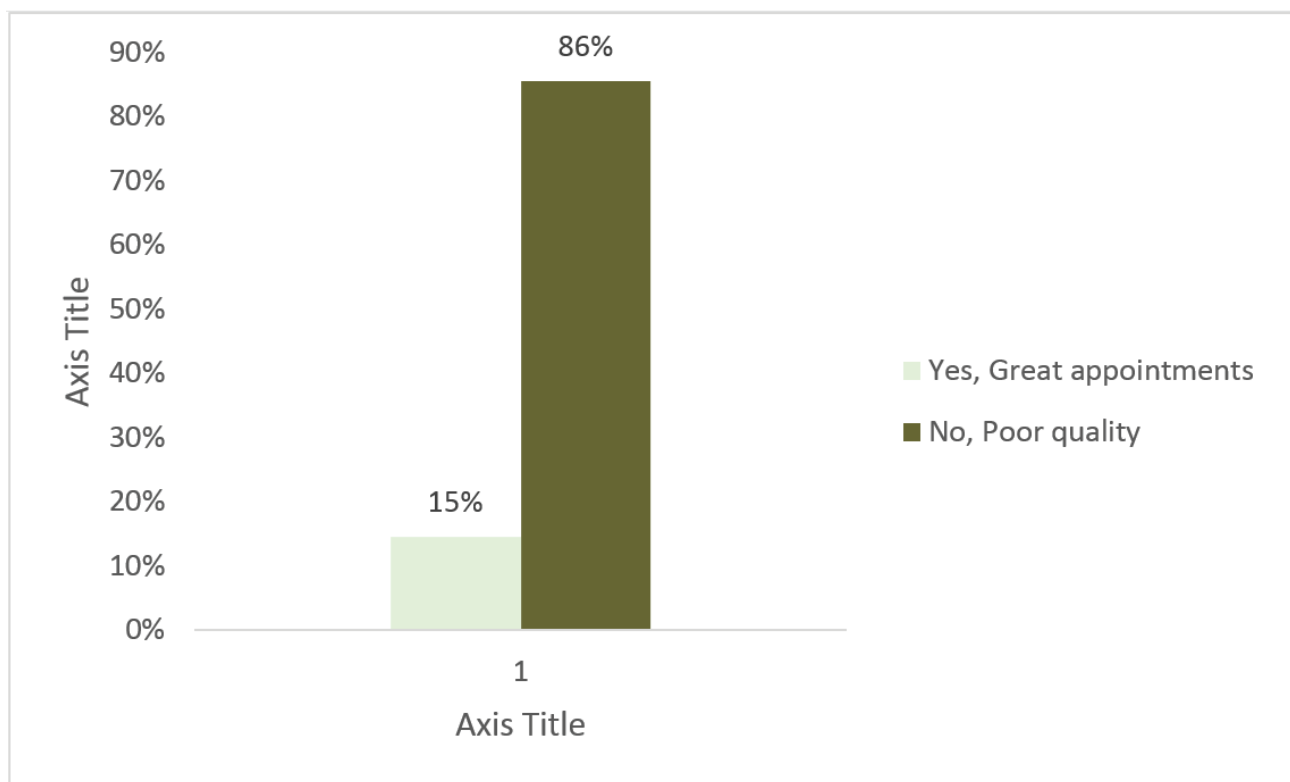


Historically, Pakistan's development model, shaped by Mahbubul Haq and the Harvard Advisory Group, has focused heavily on project execution and reliance on foreign aid. This approach has remained largely unchanged despite the global shift towards intuitive policy-making and modern, investor-friendly systems since the 1990s. As Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson illustrate in "Why Nations Fail," nations that develop policies to foster market growth, embrace modernization, and cultivate a free and creative culture tend to outpace those stuck in outdated, project-based models.

Surveys confirm that the public perceives the government as being overly focused on tangible projects such as roads, flyovers, and underpasses, often coupled with charitable giveaways as a substitute for substantive policy development. This approach not only diverts time and resources but also fails to provide long-term solutions or opportunities for societal advancement.

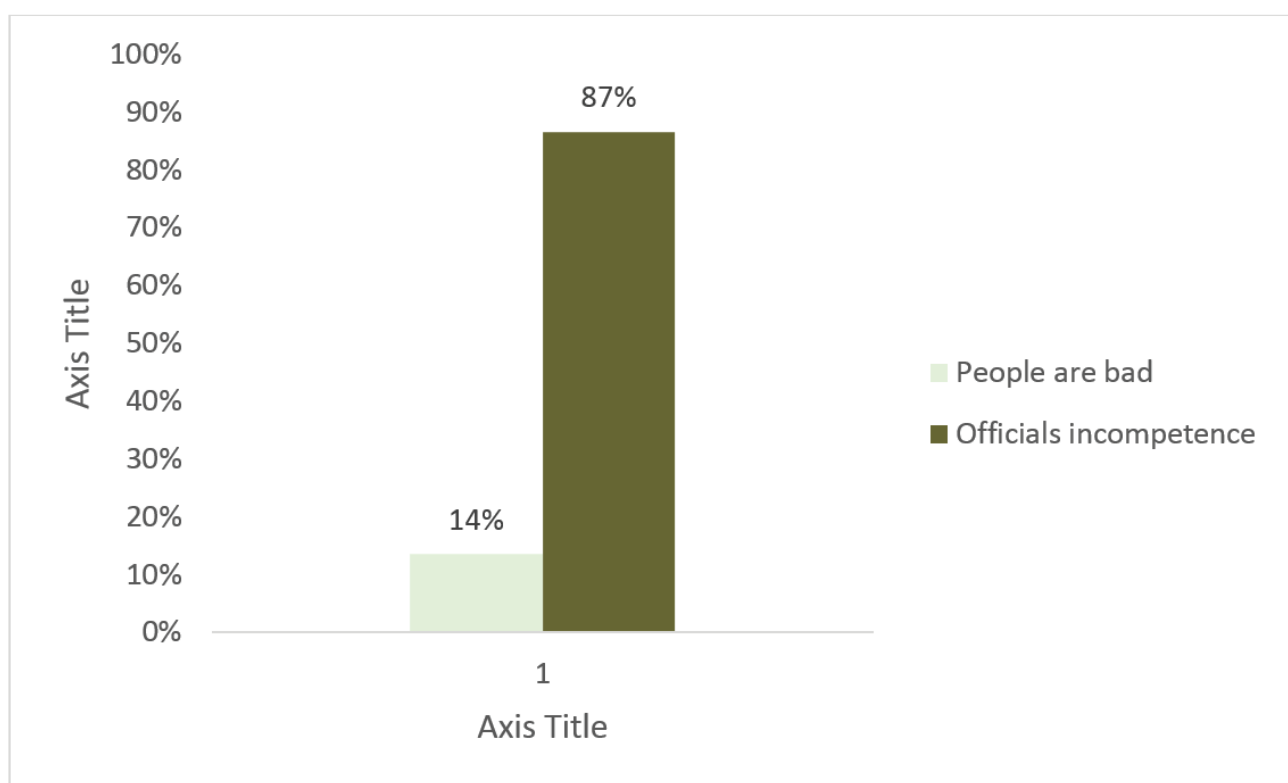
The need for research-based policy-making is evident, yet it remains a low priority for the government. Haque's extensive studies (2017, 2020, 2021) consistently point out that the lack of informed, research-driven policy formulation is a critical factor in the country's developmental shortcomings.

Is the current government appointment process, developed by the judiciary and bureaucracy, effective, where professional positions, agency CEOs, and VCs are filled through advertising and brief interviews (often just two minutes)?



A significant issue is the widespread assumption that individuals are experts across all fields, raising a critical question about the appropriateness of judges or bureaucrats in appointing Vice Chancellors or Chief Executive Officers. This method reveals a deeply flawed and subpar procedure, reflecting a society entrenched in class-consciousness and dominated by centralized powers. A thorough review of public feedback highlights a profound discontent with this process, as a substantial majority criticizes the existing approach to government appointments.

Question: Is the government's tendency to blame the public for systemic issues justified, or does the fault lie with policy failures?

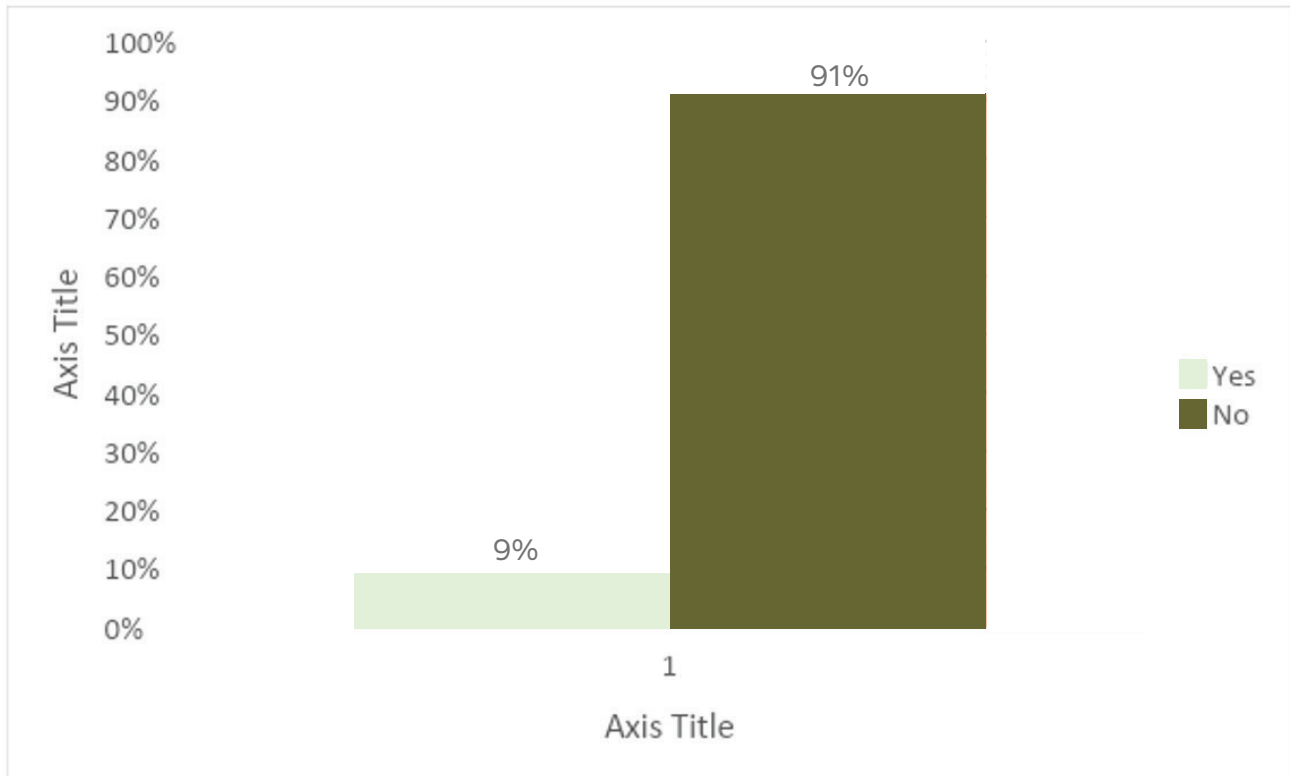


Government officials frequently claim that the failure to collect taxes and the prevalence of black money in Pakistan stem from a lack of moral fiber among the people. This narrative has become a common excuse, allowing government entities to shift the blame for various national issues onto the citizens, thus absolving themselves of responsibility.

However, the visible incompetence of the government, as perceived by the public and evidenced by research from PIDE, suggests that the root cause of many structural problems is the government's own failure to implement effective policies and reforms. Instead of focusing on policy enhancement, there appears to be a prevailing trend within the government to discredit the populace, using them as a scapegoat for deeper systemic failures.

In addition to the inefficient administration and legislature, the third arm of the government, the justice system in Pakistan also fares poorly in performing its core functions.

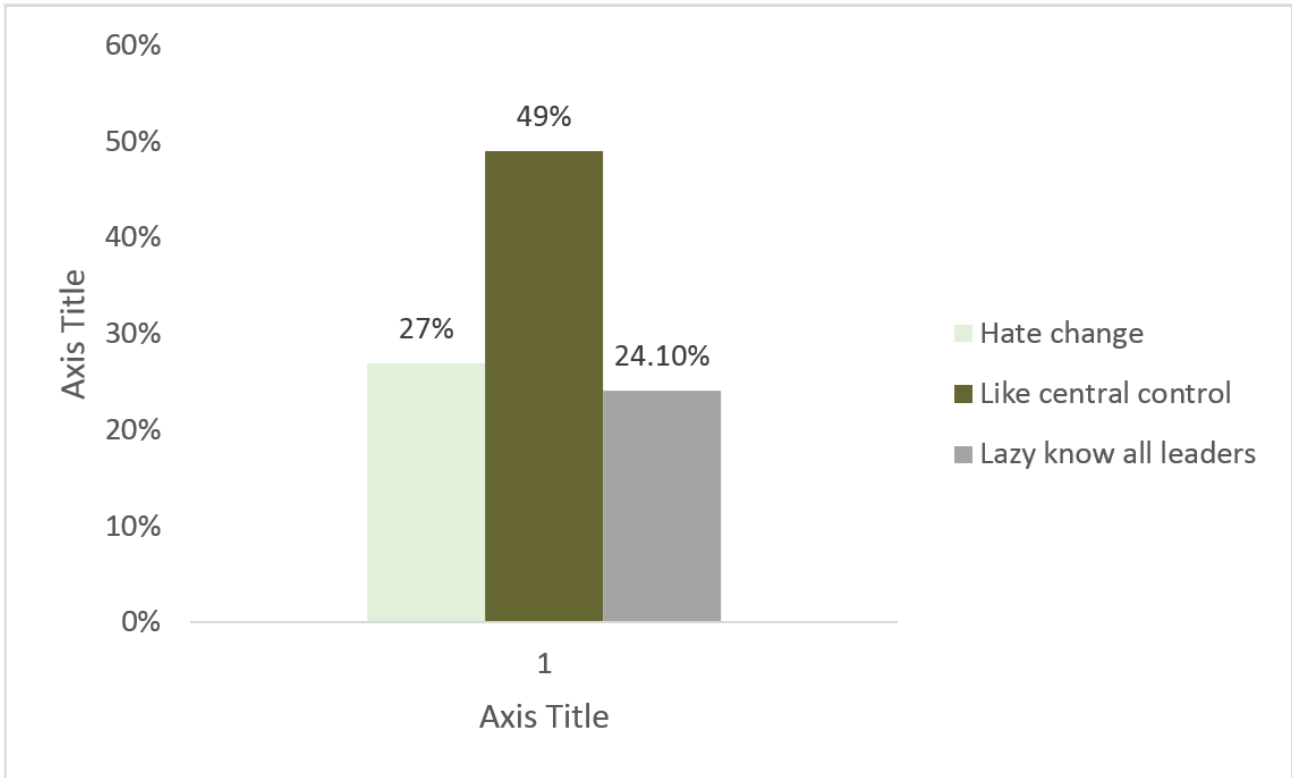
Title: (Public Expectations) regarding Provision of Justice in Pakistan



Amid a history riddled with corruption, flawed policies, and governance failures, maintaining faith in the Pakistani judicial system becomes a daunting challenge. A significant majority of the populace has grown disillusioned with the courts' ability to dispense justice, with many choosing not to pursue legal action, anticipating delays and unfair outcomes. An overwhelming 91% of respondents in a recent Twitter survey expressed doubt in the courts' effectiveness in delivering justice. This pervasive lack of trust raises pressing questions about why the judiciary continues to receive substantial perks and privileges despite failing to fulfill its fundamental duty to the public.

### 6.3. Bureaucracy

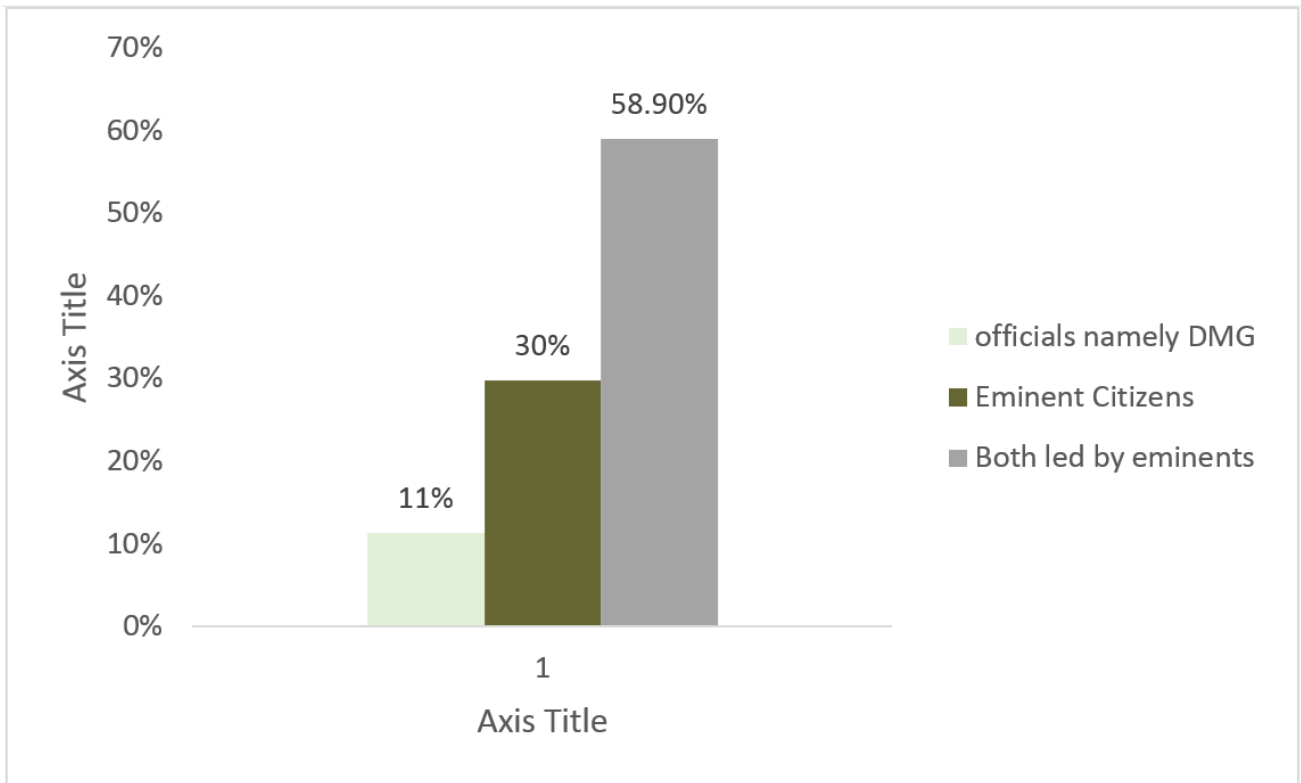
Question: Why does the centralized appointment system in Pakistan discourage the selection of independent and qualified candidates?



In Pakistan, the appointment system is highly centralized, creating a barrier that prevents genuinely competent and independent individuals from entering the fray. This system is tightly controlled by top government officials, including the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers, who are often influenced by senior civil servants. Their approach to maintaining control over significant appointments—ranging from heads of agencies to leaders of think tanks and universities—is driven by a desire to consolidate power and resources.

Such centralization not only discourages good people from applying but also systematically excludes them from selection, as the process favors insiders who align with the existing power structures. This method of appointment is viewed by many as a means to prevent the decentralization of power, which could threaten the status quo maintained by current leaders.

Question: Should public sector boards be diversified to include citizens and experts rather than being dominated solely by officials?

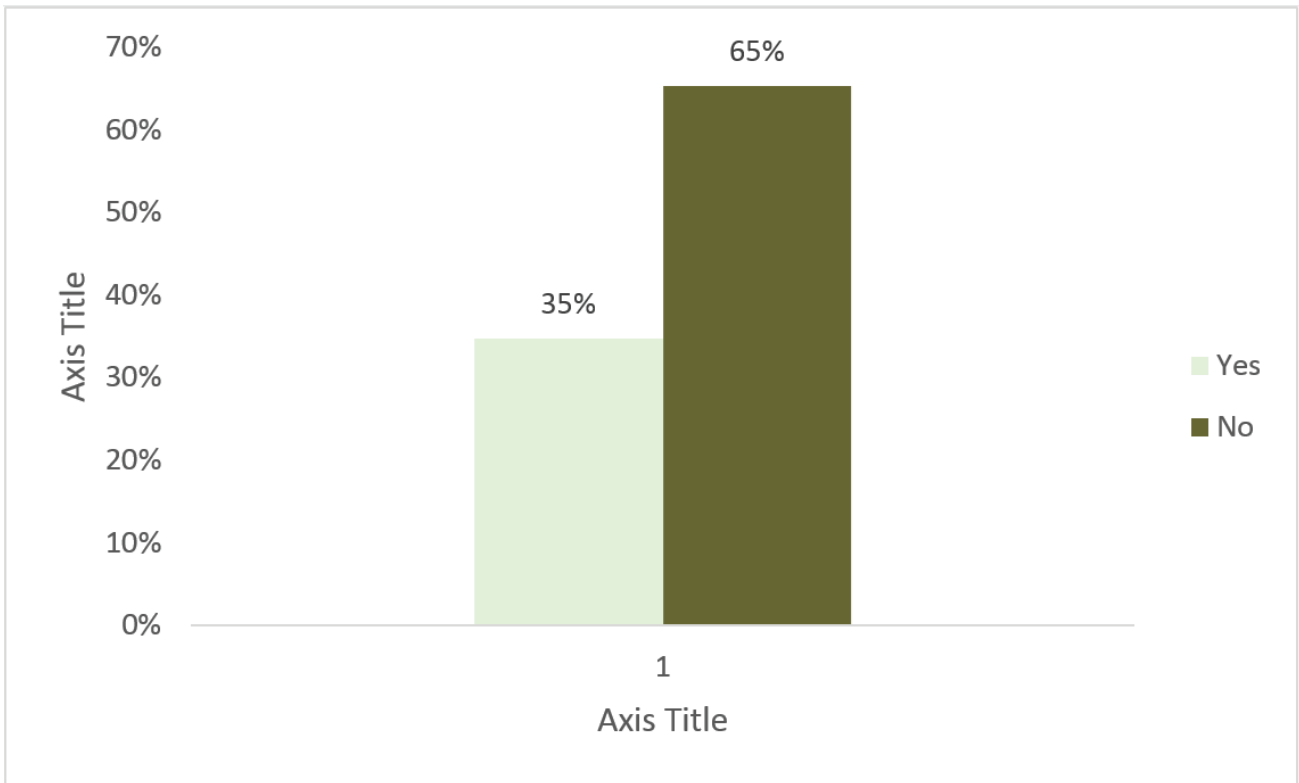


In Pakistan, the centralization of authority is pervasive across public sector entities, from universities and hospitals to commercial enterprises. These organizations are typically overseen by boards composed mainly of government officials. This over-centralization results in a lack of dedicated attention and accountability, as these officials often have multiple responsibilities and limited time to dedicate to any single board.

The tendency to maintain control over these boards has led to their use as political rewards, with appointments often made not for expertise but for loyalty. Consequently, the management of these entities is frequently inefficient and ineffective, leading to poor performance and in some cases, complete failure.

Feedback from numerous respected and innovative citizens has highlighted a significant issue: individuals with integrity and expertise are systematically excluded from these boards. The public sentiment strongly supports the idea that public sector boards should be inclusive of non-political members who can provide fresh perspectives and drive efficiency rather than merely upholding bureaucratic interests.

Question: Why are public assets not managed by the citizens they belong to, and why must oversight be exclusively bureaucratic?



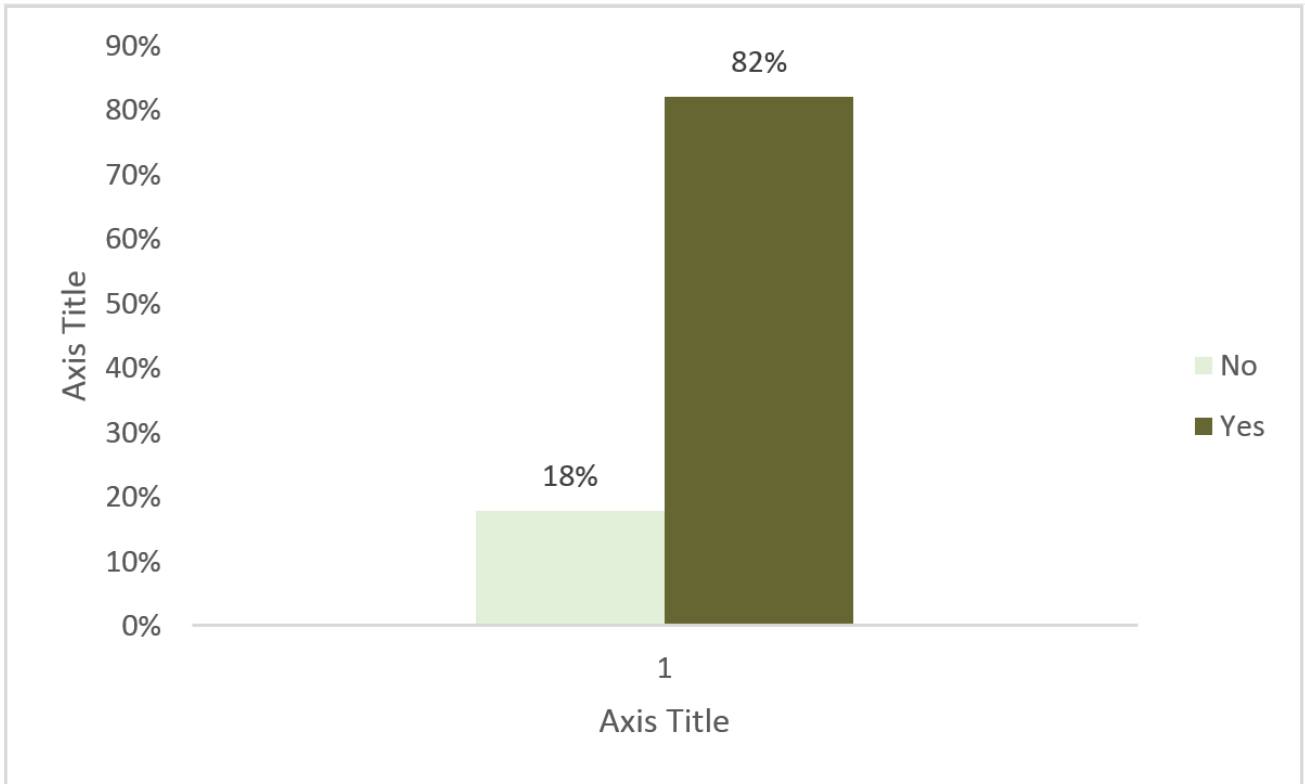
Public assets are fundamentally owned by the citizens, yet the responsibility for managing these resources is monopolized by bureaucrats rather than being shared with a broader group of capable and concerned citizens. This centralized control is a legacy of colonial bureaucracy, which continues to stifle local government initiatives and citizen participation.

In Pakistan, the problem of over-centralization is pervasive. Secretaries and other high-ranking officials, who are already stretched thin, sit on boards of public enterprises, regulatory bodies, universities, and even some NGOs. Despite their limited availability, they resist relinquishing control, often using their positions as political rewards. This approach leads to mismanagement and inefficiency, as decisions are made hastily and controls are outdated, prioritizing power over productivity. As a result, many of these entities suffer or fail entirely.

Discussions with several respected and innovative citizens have confirmed that they are systematically excluded from these boards. The general consensus among the public is that the governance of public assets would be more effective if entrusted to dedicated and upright citizens, rather than remaining under the purview of bureaucrats and politicians.

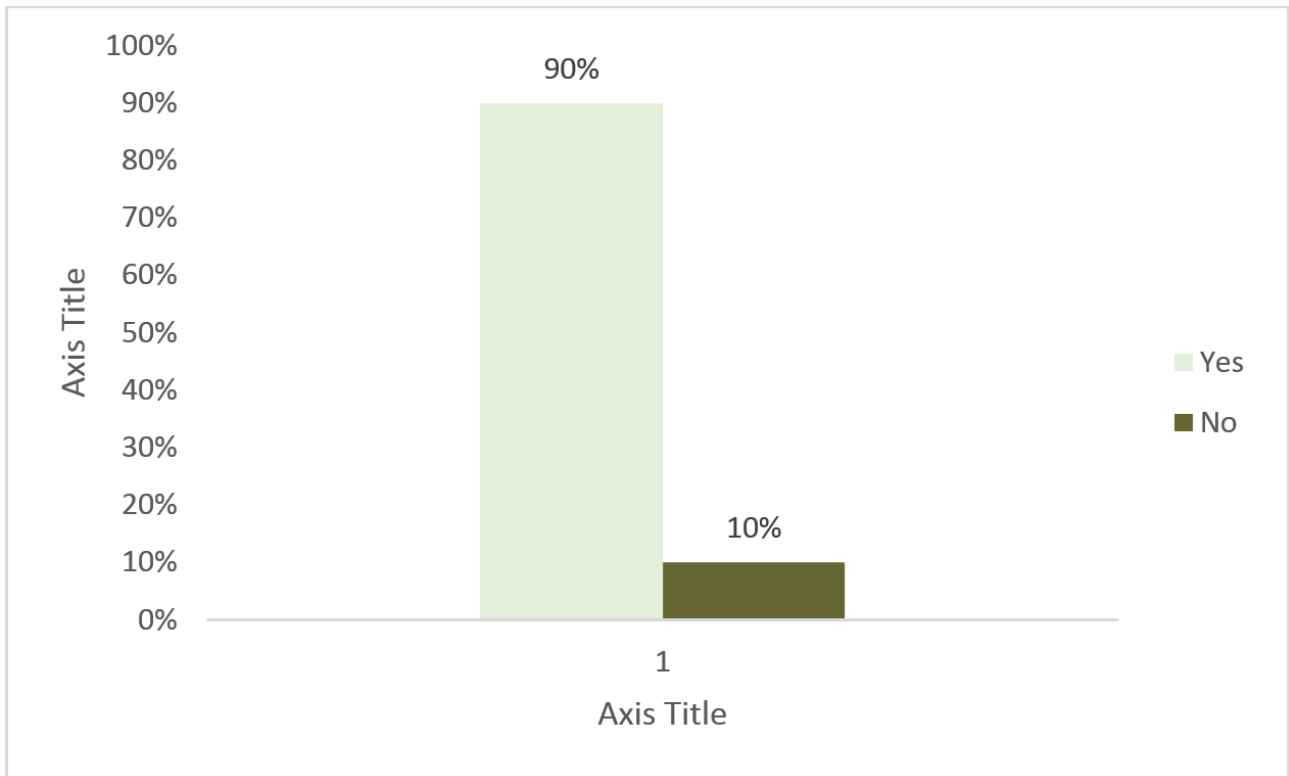
If we seek true civil service reforms, must we eliminate service groups with guaranteed positions, including the dominance of the PAS?





Civil service reform stands as a critical yet daunting challenge within the spectrum of national improvements. The journey through the ranks of civil service, often propelled by aspirations of status and security provided by government perks, tragically lacks substantial achievements based on merit. There persists a misleading assumption that civil servants are the pinnacle of intellectual prowess within the nation. Yet, the bureaucracy has not produced transformative outcomes: Pakistan lacks a postal service like TCS, a railway system on par with those in other Asian nations, or an aviation sector that rivals the likes of Qatar or Emirates Airways. Nor does it boast a model or smart city. The urgency to break free from the current civil service structure is palpable, a sentiment widely echoed across Twitter and shared by many who see the need for radical change in how the civil service operates to truly benefit the nation.

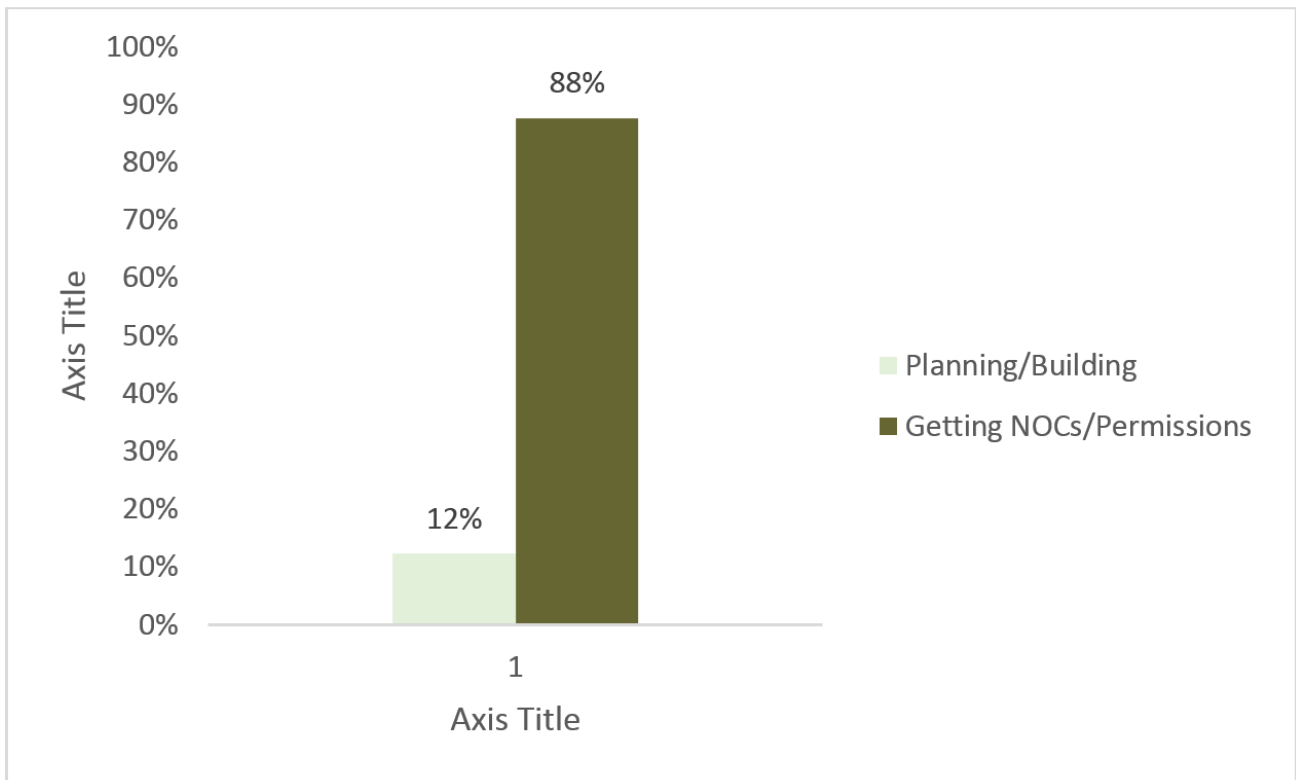
What is an NOC, and is it time for rule-based governance instead of NOC requirements?



No Objection Certificates (NOCs) are deeply entrenched in governance frameworks, encouraging centralized decision-making and fostering hierarchical structures. Unfortunately, this system significantly increases bureaucratic red tape, escalates transaction costs, and consumes excessive time—factors that deter potential investments and erode productivity. This model harks back to a bygone era reminiscent of Mughal administrative practices, where the power to obstruct or demand bribes was rampant.

A staggering 90% of respondents in a recent Twitter poll support the elimination of NOCs, advocating for a shift towards rule-based governance. Such a transformation would not only reduce administrative burdens but also streamline decision-making processes, potentially boosting economic growth and increasing efficiency across various sectors. Is it time for the government to discard the outdated NOC system and embrace a more transparent and effective governance model?

Do investors spend most of their time in building and planning or is most of their spent in navigating bureaucratic hurdles?

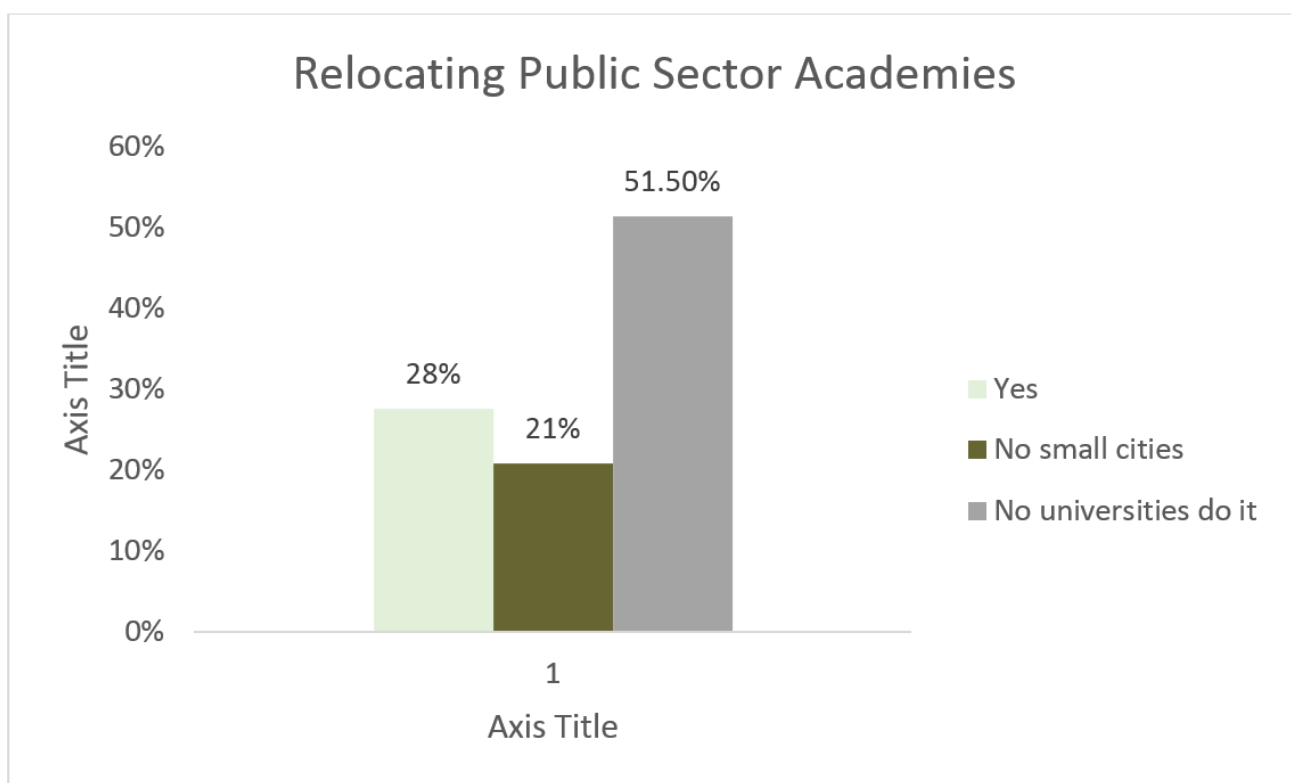


Investors are overwhelmingly bogged down by the exorbitant amount of time and resources wasted on securing unnecessary permissions and acquiring No Objection Certificates (NOCs). This significant impediment stifles productivity and halts progress, especially in an era where digital transformation defines competitive economies. A glaring example is the protracted process required to obtain a construction permit in our country, which can take an astonishing four and a half years and cost upwards of two million rupees.

This pervasive bureaucratic sludge not only slows economic growth but also drains investors' motivation. A substantial 88% of the Twitter community echoes this sentiment, agreeing that the excessive time spent on bureaucratic procedures is a major deterrent. The call to action is clear: it is crucial to adopt digital advancements, streamline processes, and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens. Such reforms would not only enhance productivity but also nurture a vibrant ecosystem of entrepreneurial growth, making our nation more attractive to both local and international investors.

Question: Should plush public sector training academies be located in the heart of big cities on large, valuable plots?

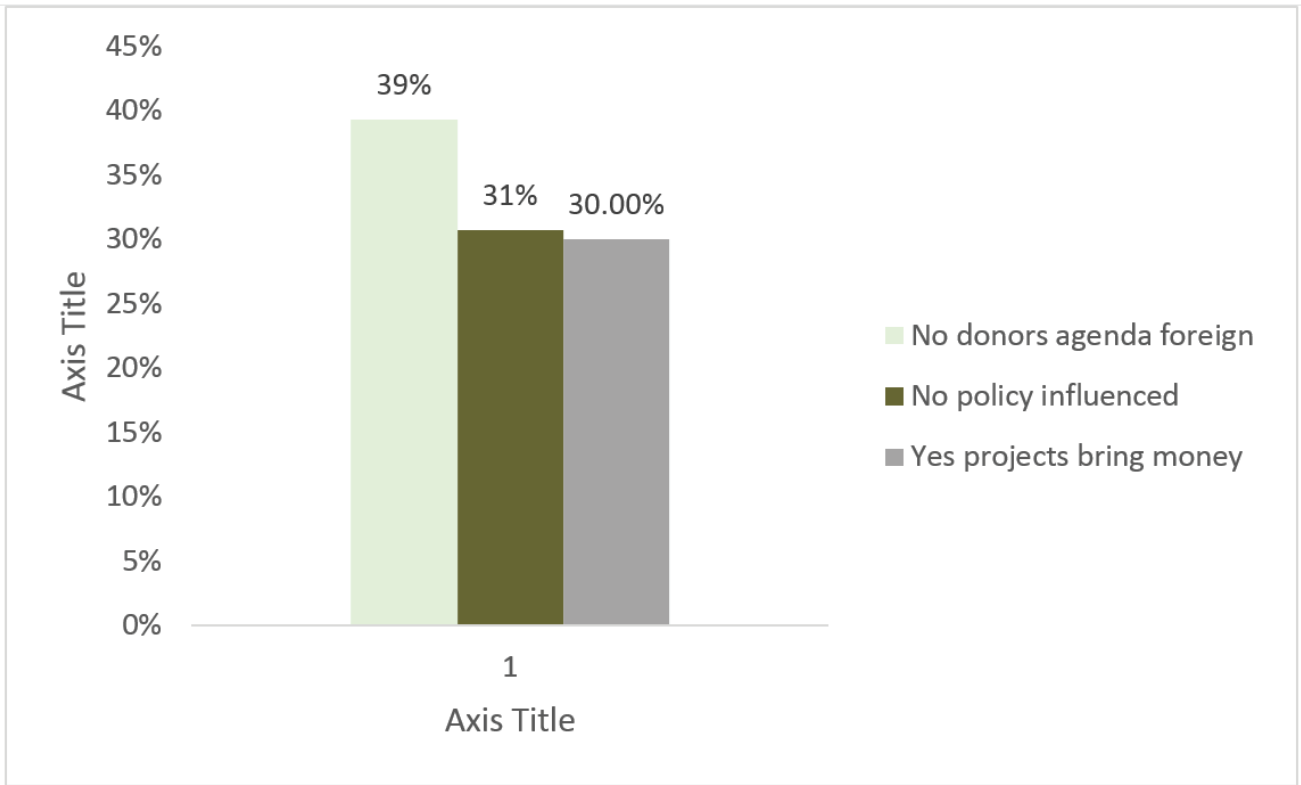
Public sector organizations frequently establish training academies in the centers of major cities, often on plots that were originally intended for rural training during colonial times. Lahore, for instance, hosts three such academies in prime city locations, where the land has become incredibly valuable. These academies are underutilized, operating at about 50% capacity annually and primarily serving a limited number of participants (roughly 50-80 officers). Moreover, these institutions often depend on retired individuals and part-time lecturers for staffing.



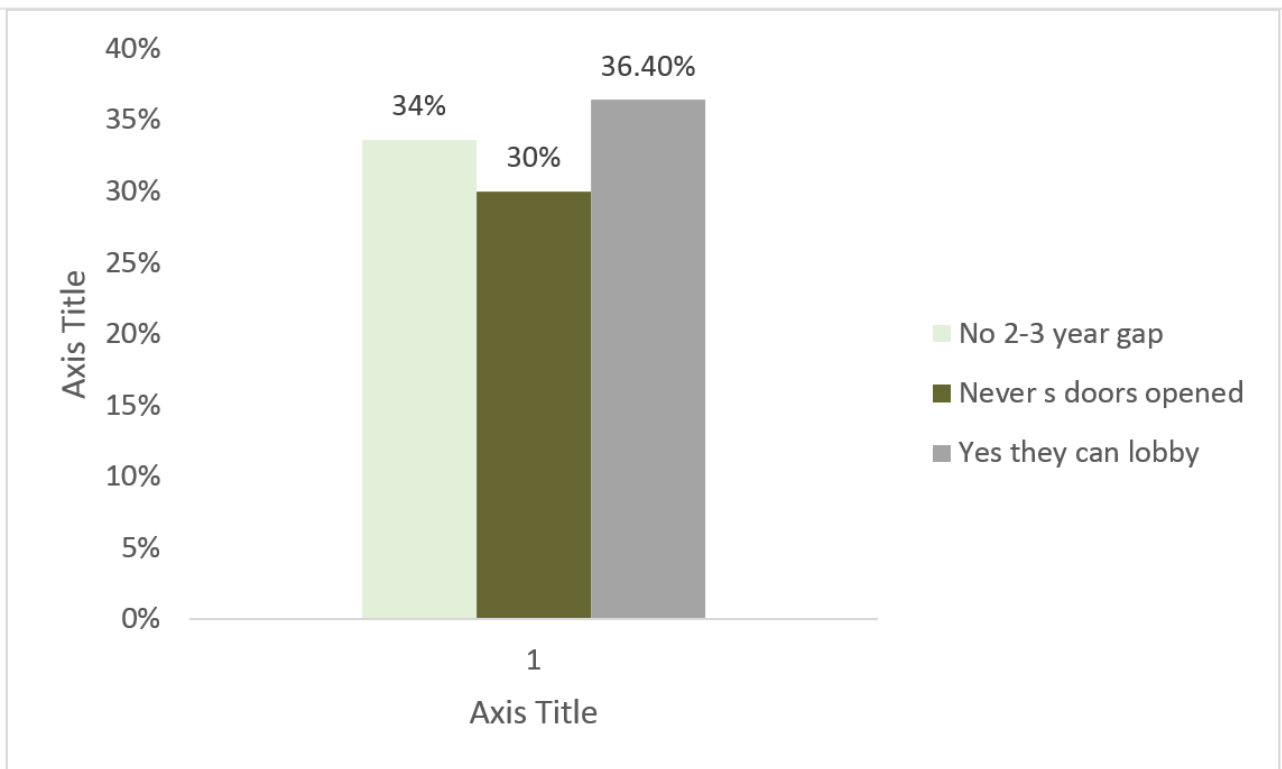
An opportunity cost analysis suggests that relocating these academies could significantly boost GDP growth and employment. A recent survey reveals that 51% of respondents support the idea of outsourcing training services to universities, which would better utilize existing educational facilities and free up central urban land for more productive uses. Additionally, 21% of voters favor relocating these academies to smaller towns, which could optimize the use of valuable urban space and potentially enhance training exposure.

Despite the clear advantages of such proposals, they rarely influence actual policy, which tends to maintain the status quo. For over two decades, PIDE has observed that much of the urban land remains dead capital, underutilized or not optimally used, exemplifying a major inefficiency that yet fails to reach the policy discussion table.

1. Should bureaucrats be allowed to take a leave of absence to work for donors, and then seamlessly return to their government roles?



2. Is it appropriate for bureaucrats to immediately transition to roles with donors upon retiring from public service?



These provocative questions touch on a deeply controversial practice. Bureaucrats, brimming with insider knowledge and expansive networks after years in public service, are hot commodities for donors seeking influence. Their transition to donor organizations can bring valuable insights to these entities but also raises alarming concerns about conflicts of interest and the erosion of public sector independence.

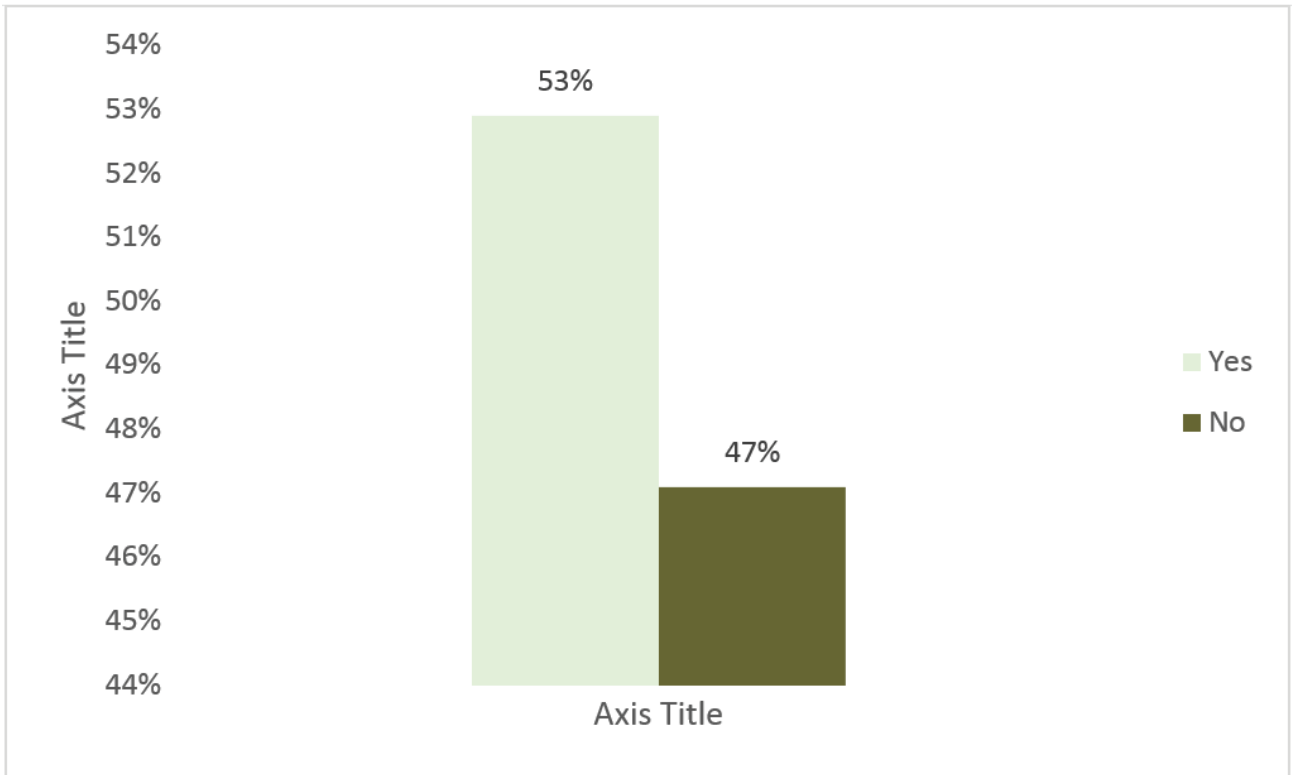
The potential for these officials to undermine the impartiality and integrity of government service is significant. Immediate employment with donors post-retirement could suggest that decisions made while in office were influenced by the prospect of a lucrative second career, damaging public trust in the bureaucracy.

Public opinion is sharply divided: some argue for a mandatory cooling-off period to prevent potential conflicts, while others believe that bureaucrats should never transition to donor roles, advocating for a strict separation to preserve the public interest over private gains. Still, others worry that such transitions encourage bureaucrats to prioritize private agendas over public welfare during their tenure

## **6.4. Accountability & Transparency**

A key component of effective governance is effective accountability and transparency mechanisms. However, prior to examine the popularity of various accountability and transparency mechanisms, it is crucial to examine public perceptions regarding the existence and extent corruption (which would necessitate the use of these mechanisms).

Pakistan is often portrayed as and considered to be one of the most corrupt nations in the world. Thus, it is crucial to examine whether this is actually the case or whether the perceptions regarding corruption are shaped by government narrative. When polled on this, the Twitterati were closely divided with slightly more than half of the respondents believing that Pakistan was truly a very corrupt nation, highlighting the potency of the government narrative. This internalized view thus necessitates a critical reassessment of how we perceive ourselves and address corruption, beyond the simplified labels provided by official rhetoric.

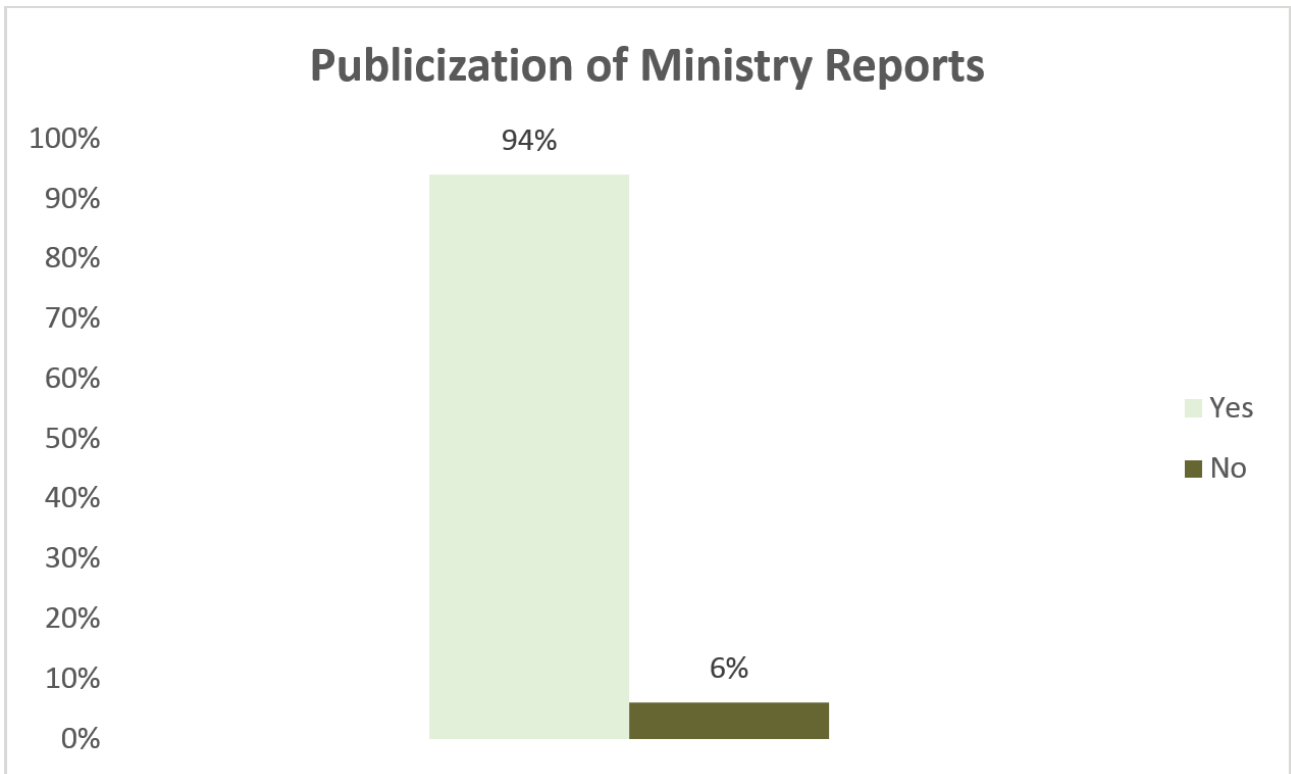


Our government often engages in extensive propaganda to portray Pakistan as a nation rife with corruption, even claiming that Pakistani citizens have secret bank accounts overseas totaling 300 billion rupees. (Source?) This narrative of widespread corruption paints a grim image both domestically and internationally, contributing to our negative portrayal in global media and scrutiny from international bodies like the FATF.

However, this perception of universal corruption may not reflect the full reality. Evidence indicates that Pakistan's levels of corruption and tax evasion are comparable to those in many other countries, including developed nations where practices like lobbying and consulting blur ethical lines. (Provide citation)

Just as it is crucial to examine the public perceptions of corruption levels in Pakistan, it is equally important to assess public opinions regarding the channels through which accountability and transparency can be enhanced in the country. One of the pivotal ways in which this can be done is to through the publicization of annual reports of ministry containing the data and analysis on their performance.

Ministries are often perceived as platforms for providing perks and protocol to political allies rather than effective management bodies. Their operational inefficacy is underscored by their limited facilitation of market activities or other practical interventions. Furthermore, not only is their performance discreet and hidden from public view, it is also uncertain and hard to determine whether they engage in any meaningful audit and appraisal of their performance.



The poll revealed an overwhelming consensus regarding the need for data on the performance of ministries to be made public. The poll findings were in congruence with conventional wisdom, which suggests that the primary role of a ministry should involve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of its sector, using this data to fine-tune policies and regulations based on empirical evidence and informed analysis. The perspective of educated Pakistanis, as reflected in recent polls, supports the integration of robust M&E systems within ministries, advocating for transparency through public reporting on these evaluations.

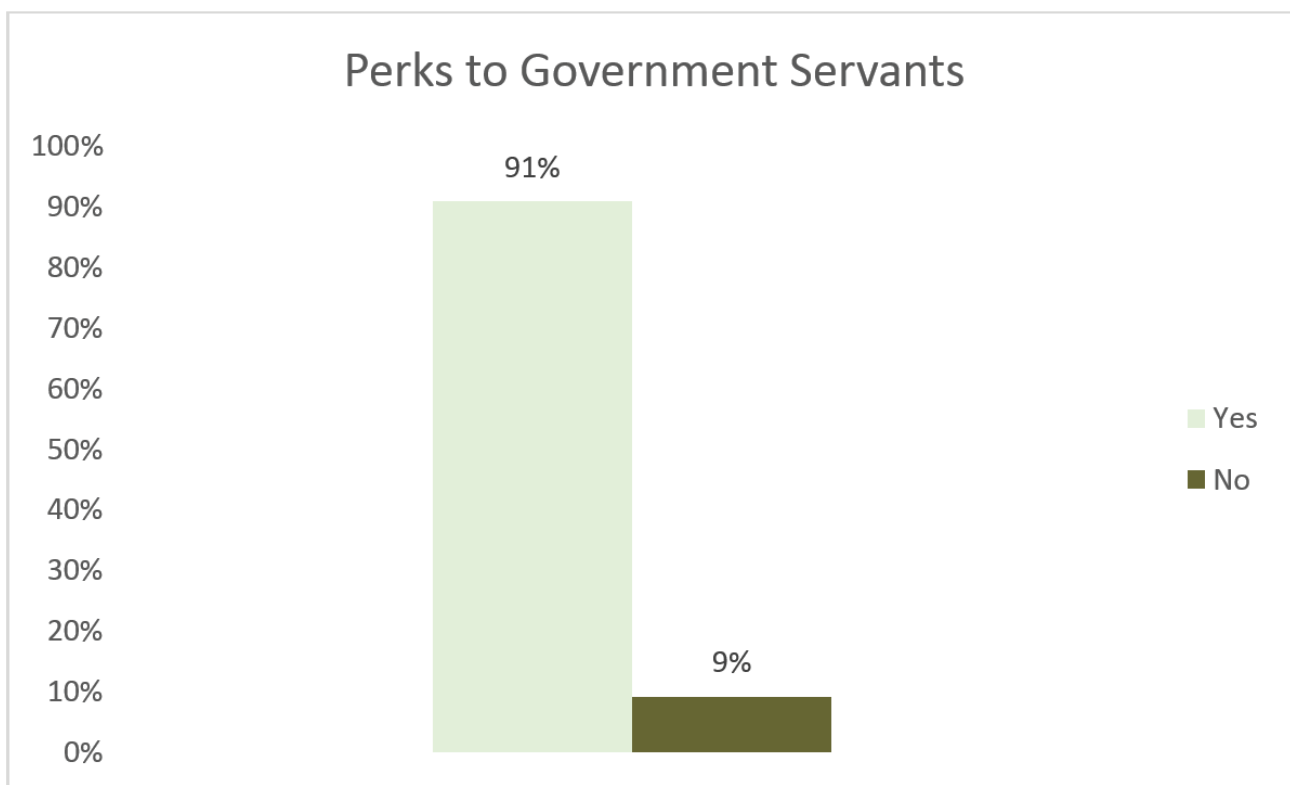
However, this enlightened viewpoint seems to be lost on our politicians, who continue to ignore such public sentiments, relying instead on the electorate's lack of information to maintain the status quo. The disconnect between the potential for informed policy-making and the current practices underscores a significant underutilization of ministerial roles in fostering public accountability and sectoral improvements.



The lackluster performance of the ministries ties into the overall inefficacy of the broader public sector in Pakistan. The public sector in Pakistan is notoriously inefficient and unproductive. Employees enjoy job security, high salaries, and generous perks without the pressure of performance evaluations or the risk of losing their positions. As a result, public sector jobs are highly coveted, offering minimal work demands alongside maximum benefits.

Despite this, there remains a significant lack of transparency and documentation concerning the extensive perks that government officials receive. These perks are often undocumented, as highlighted by PIDE (Haque et al., 2021). This situation creates a glaring double standard: while these officials themselves are insulated from any kind of scrutiny, they impose stringent documentation requirements on the broader economy. The need for assets owned by government servants to be publicized and documented was reinforced through the views of the Twitterati. 9 in 10 believed that perks including housing, vehicles, board memberships, land ownership and various amenities enjoyed by these officials should be made accessible to the public.

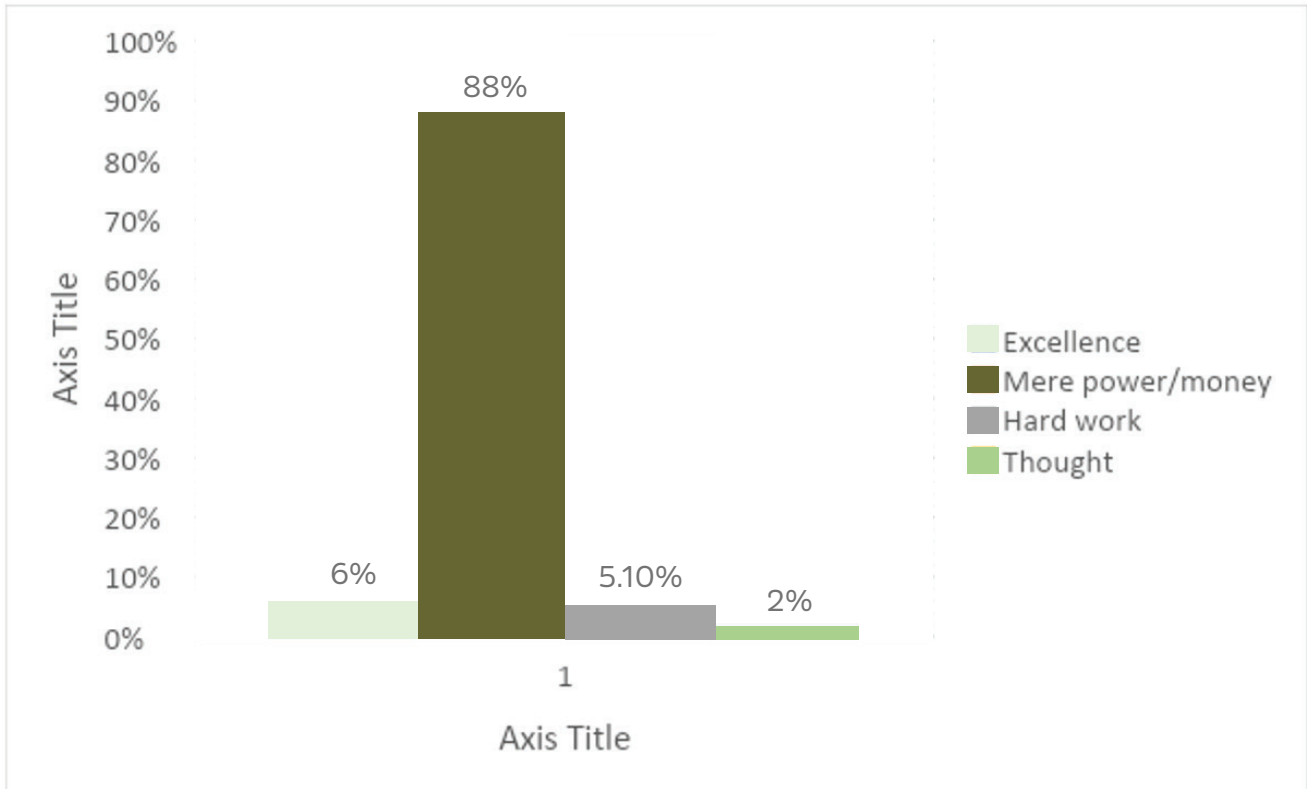
Publishing detailed data on the perks received by public servants would enhance transparency and enable citizens to better understand how public resources are being allocated and utilized. This step towards openness is imperative for building trust and ensuring accountability within the public sector.



Making information on perks given to public servants accessible will go a long way in raising accountability and transparency in the country.

## 6.5. VIP Culture

1. What would you say our culture respects the most?

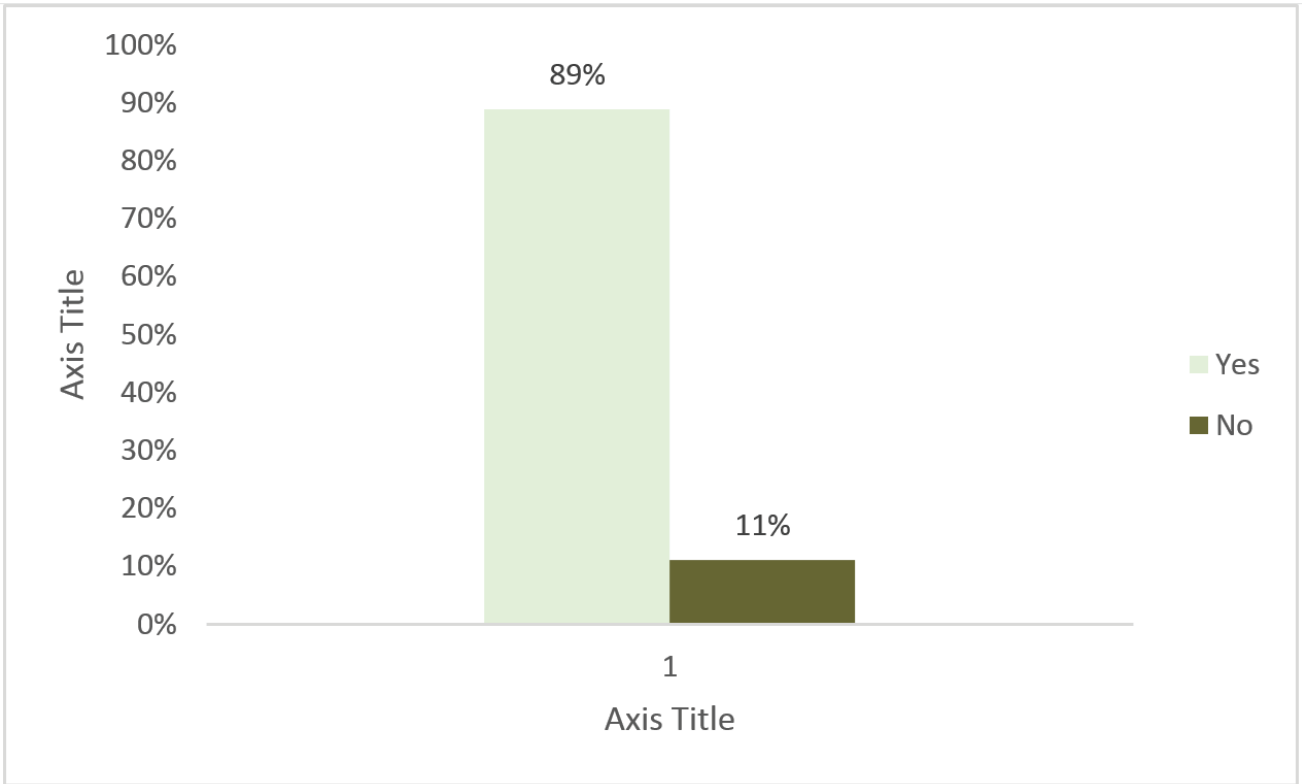


Unfortunately, respect for the values of excellence, hard work and thought are still not widespread in Pakistan. The role played by these values and principles in the rise of Europe first and later the United States has been explicated by the works of de Tocqueville and Mcloskey. However, in our culture not only is the appreciation of these values lacking but there instead is troubling reverence for the mere possession of power and wealth.

This perspective is perhaps rooted in our lingering colonial legacy, which emphasized extractive regimes over inclusive prosperity, and the melding of these practices with a medieval cultural backdrop that venerates power above all else. This fixation on authority, devoid of modern cultural virtues, might explain our lack of significant presence on global stages like the Olympics or international intellectual forums and the dearth of stars or national achievers.

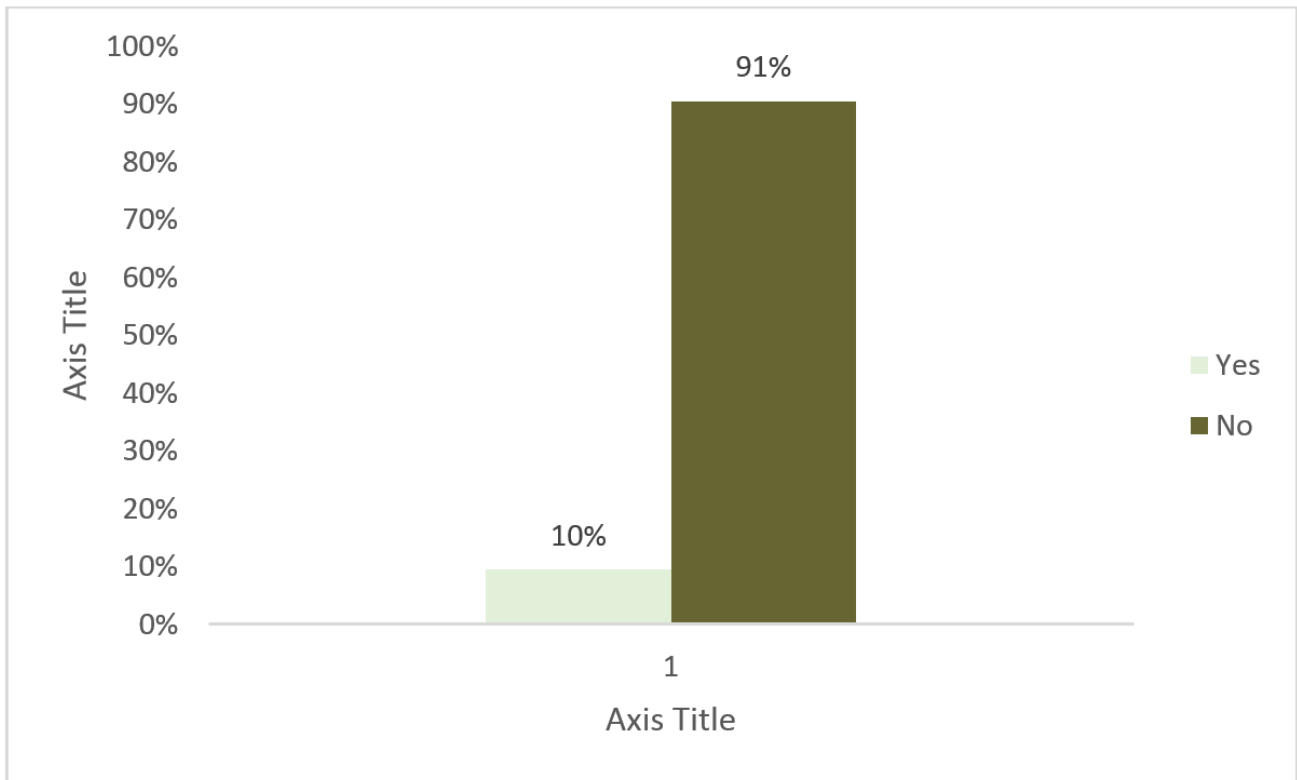
A culture that overlooks the importance of diligence and merit is ill-equipped to compete on the world stage. The minimal regard for intellectualism and excellence is not just a cultural oversight—it is a critical national shortcoming.

Should we redirect our early-retired bureaucrats from post-retirement appointments in organizations like PIA and PSE to roles in universities and think tanks? [Don't know if this question should be here or should it be grouped with "Bureaucracy"]



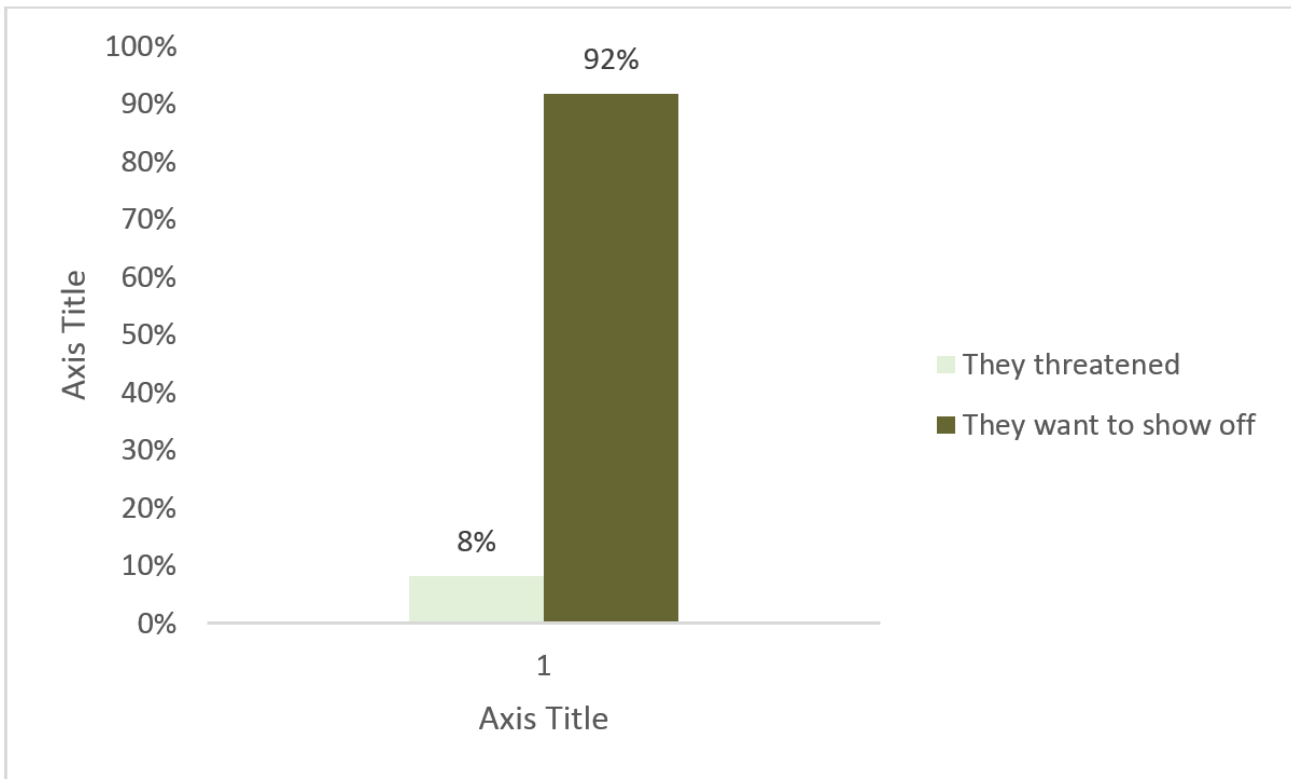
The practice of appointing retired bureaucrats to positions in regulatory bodies or state enterprises raises significant concerns about the perpetuation of a VIP culture and vested interests within governmental operations. This pattern begs the question of whether these individuals could better serve by contributing their expertise in academic and research institutions. The prospect of engaging these seasoned professionals in think tanks and universities could enhance the quality of research and education, offering them a platform to continue contributing to national development in a meaningful way. The overwhelming response from a Twitter poll supports this shift, indicating that a majority believes in the potential of these individuals to enrich academic and research communities rather than returning to the familiar corridors of power.

Should VIPs (Judges, Ministers, DMG) be allowed to occupy central city properties, disrupt traffic, and use mobile phone jammers under the guise of security?



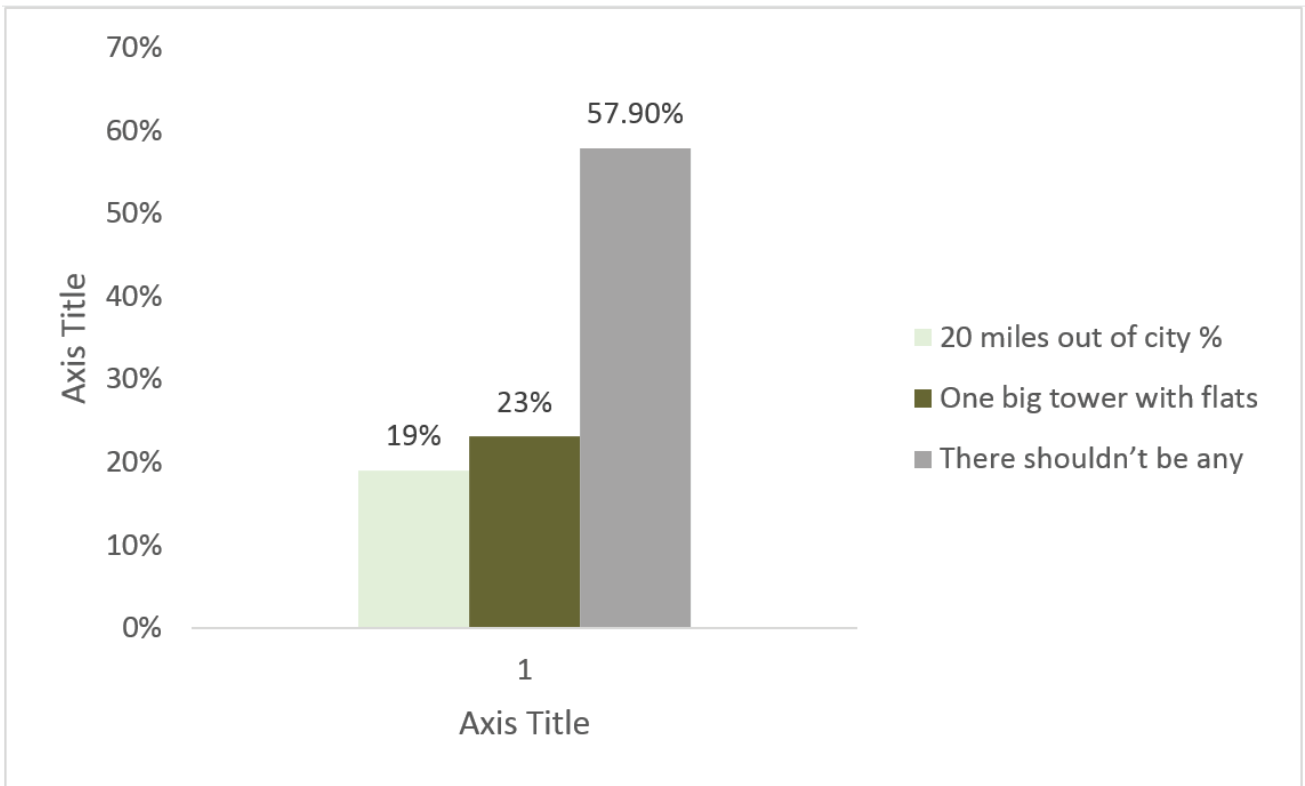
The current power dynamics establish a troubling hierarchy between the public and VIPs, leading to practices that diverge sharply from ideal democratic principles. The use of public funds and resources to enhance personal security and benefits of VIPs challenges the foundational ethics of public service. This is highlighted by the overwhelming response from a Twitter poll, where an astonishing 90% of participants express their disapproval of such practices. The utilization of excessive security measures and special privileges, including interference with everyday life and communications for "safety" reasons, underscores a system needing urgent reform to align with the public's expectations and democratic values.

Do VIPs (ministers, judges, DMG officers) require extensive security arrangements like Jeeps at the front and back, speeding cars, and gated estates?



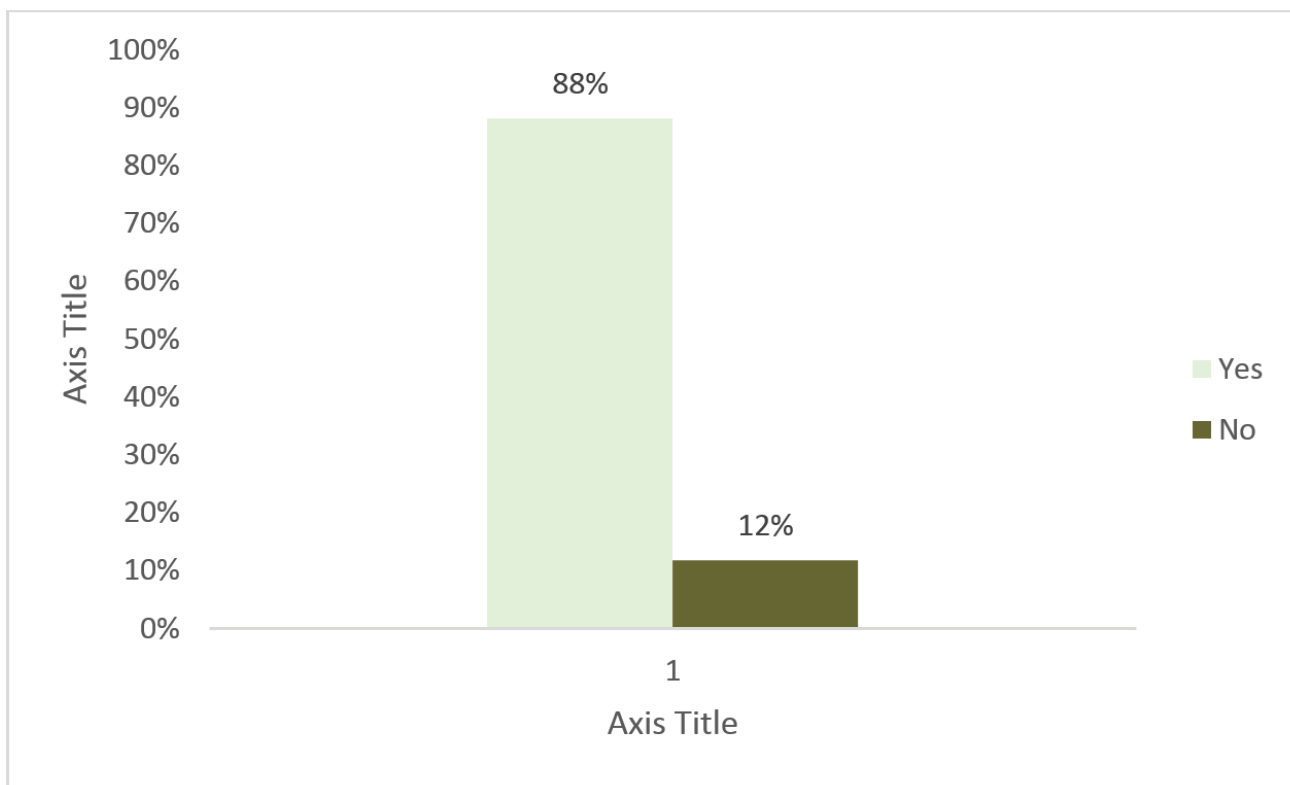
VIPs, including ministers, judges, and high-ranking civil servants, often showcase their status through conspicuous security details that emphasize their influence and power. Recent Twitter poll findings reflect a public perception that VIPs tend to surround themselves with extensive security measures. However, the necessity of such elaborate protection is debatable, as only a select few actually face significant life-threatening risks. This disparity raises questions about the appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of such security protocols for all VIPs, suggesting a potential reevaluation of who really needs this level of protection. [As the economic condition of Pakistan continues to deteriorate, it becomes disconcerting to witness influential VIPs further burdening the government's treasury through the acquisition of numerous allowances under the guise of security requirements. Furthermore, the extensive practice of closing roads in the name of security appears unwarranted. It is perplexing to fathom how public servants can perceive a threat from the very public they are meant to serve, unless their own dereliction of duties has led to such sentiments.]

## Should VIP gated estates continue to exist?



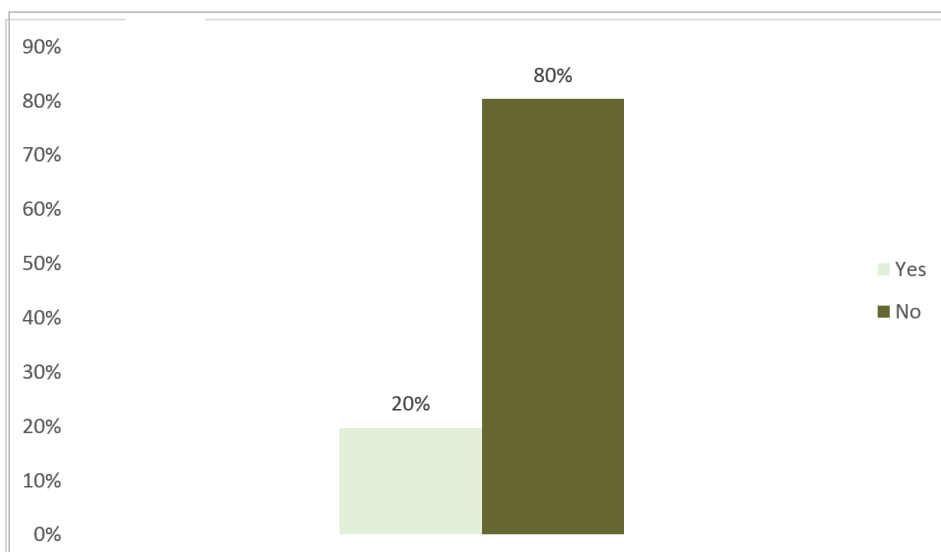
The entrenched VIP culture and its self-indulgent norms have sparked significant animosity among the general public. This is reflected in the responses from a recent Twitter poll, where approximately 57% of respondents oppose the existence of VIP gated estates, arguing that VIPs should share the same daily life conditions as other citizens in Pakistan. In contrast, 23% of respondents propose consolidating the elites within a single, towering structure to promote a communal living experience among VIPs. Meanwhile, 19% believe that elite gated communities should be located at least 20 miles away from urban centers, symbolically and physically distancing the privileged class from the heart of the city.

If VIPs desire separation from ordinary citizens, they should opt to live outside urban centers?



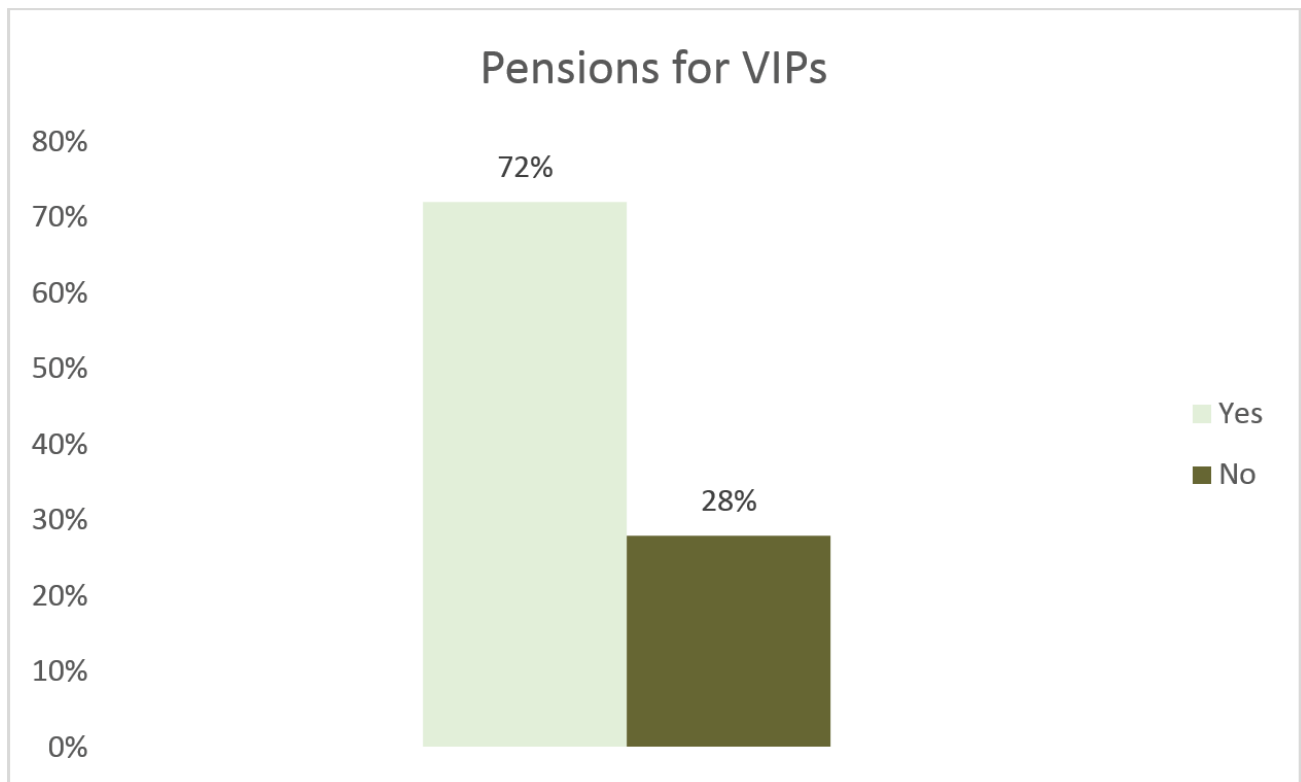
The growing divide between the common populace and the elites is starkly evident. Intriguingly, while elites often express discomfort at the presence of less privileged individuals in their vicinity, they continue to rely on them for various services and tasks. If the elites truly wish to segregate themselves, relocating to areas outside cities seems a more appropriate solution. This approach aligns with the sentiments echoed in recent Twitter polls, where a substantial portion of respondents support the idea of VIPs living away from central urban areas, thus affirming the public's desire for less disruptive coexistence.

Would you want to live next to a VIP?



More than 4 in 5 people said that they would not want to live next to VIP. This shows that contrary to widespread perception the Twitterati aren't interested in living with the VIP

Building upon earlier feedback, our latest survey shows widespread reluctance among the general public to coexist with VIPs due to perceived security risks. Should the government decide against providing pensions to those who receive land or housing benefits?



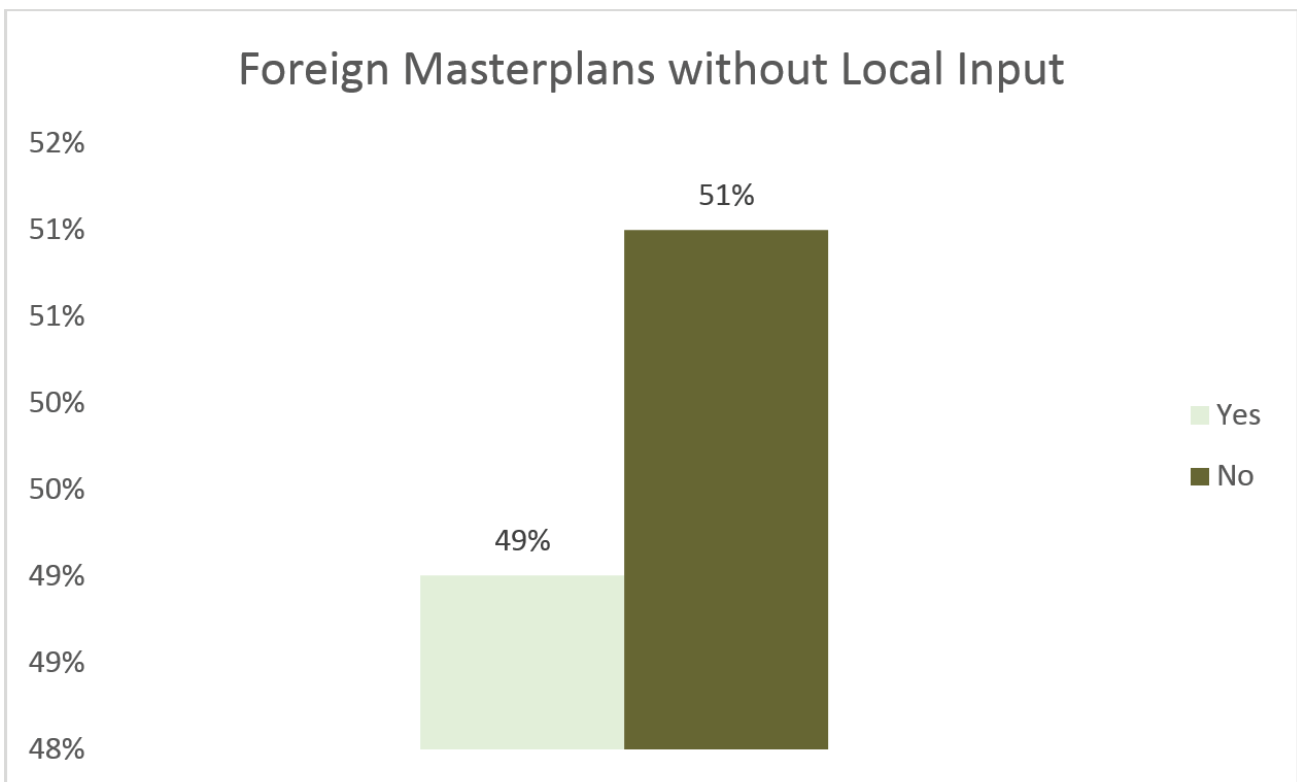
Just as a deceased elephant continues to be valuable, a retired government official often becomes a financial burden through extensive post-retirement benefits. Given the costly nature of pensions combined with land or housing benefits, it is worth considering whether these should be mutually exclusive. This idea is supported by approximately 72% of respondents in a recent Twitter poll, who agree that government should reconsider its approach to disbursing pensions to those already receiving substantial property benefits. This shift could lead to more equitable resource distribution and lessen the public's burden of supporting retired officials in such a lavish manner.



## CHAPTER 7: CITIES & URBANIZATION

Local planners possess an intrinsic understanding of these cities' complex layouts and cultural nuances, yet their expertise is often overlooked in favor of foreign consultants. These external experts bring generic solutions that might not align with the unique urban and cultural dynamics of places steeped in rich history like Lahore. This approach risks alienating residents and erasing the cities' unique identities.

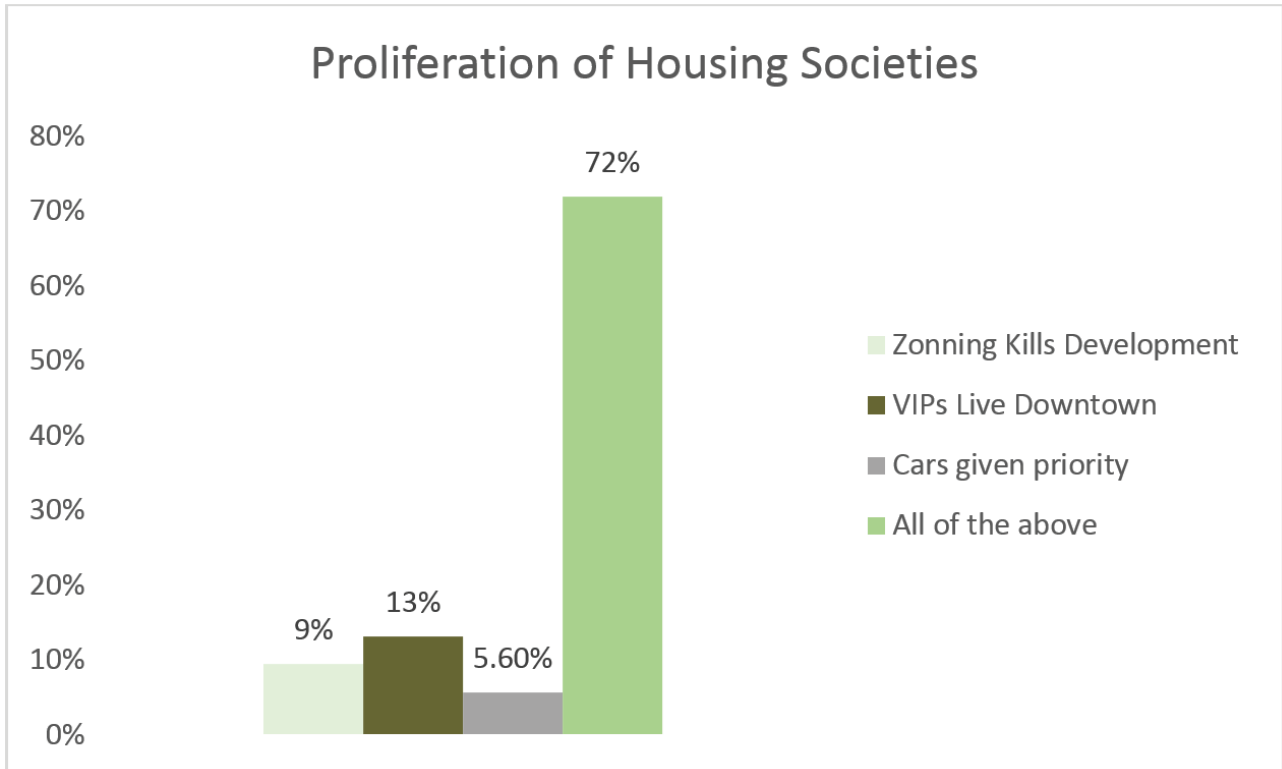
Question: Should old, historic cities like Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Faisalabad still be governed by masterplans designed by foreign consultants without local input?



Survey responses indicate that a significant majority of locals feel disenfranchised by this process. They criticize the existing masterplans as impractical, arguing that they seem more like theoretical exercises rather than actionable, lived-in urban blueprints. There is a strong belief that these masterplans fail to meet the actual needs and spirit of the cities.

The need for local empowerment in urban planning is evident. Residents of Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Faisalabad deserve to have a substantial role in shaping the future of their cities. There is a growing call for the voices of city dwellers to be heard and prioritized in the planning process, ensuring that the development reflects the true essence and needs of the communities.

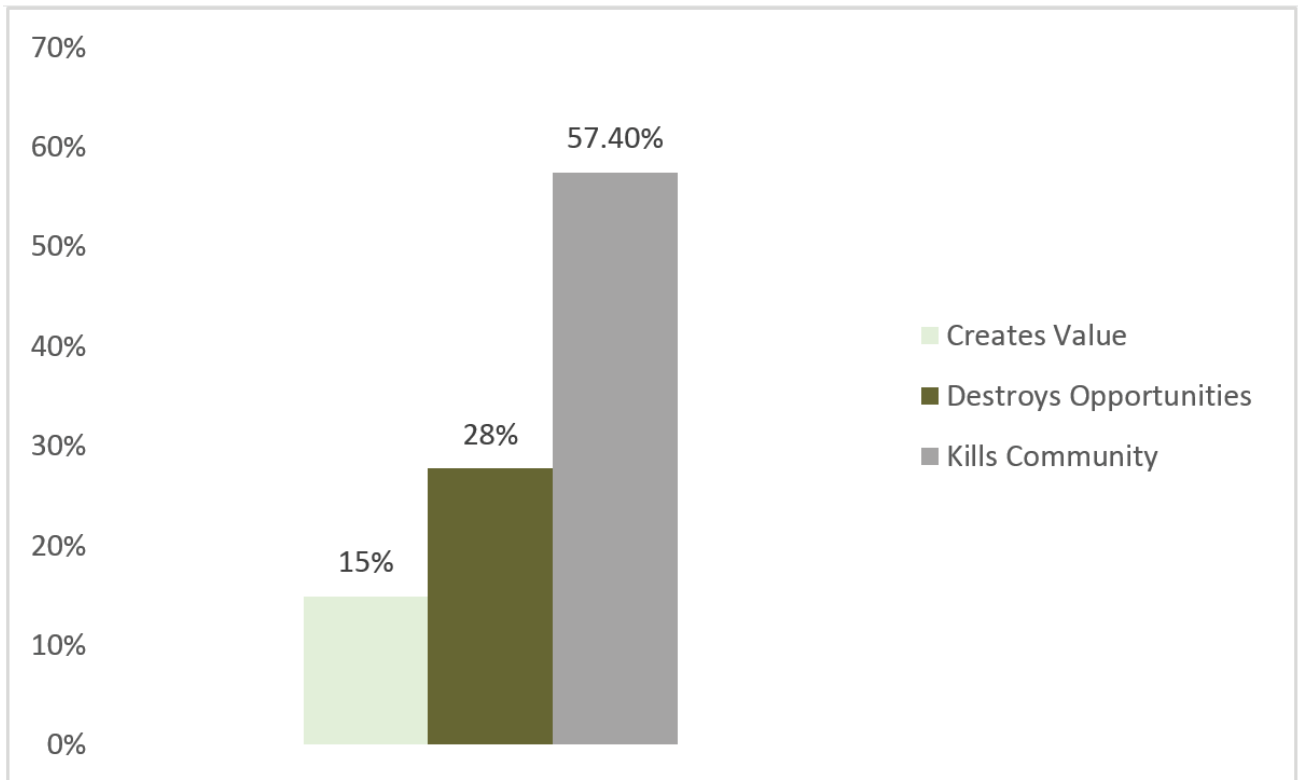
Why do housing societies proliferate in Pakistan despite potential drawbacks?



Housing societies in Pakistan have become a staple of urban development, but it's crucial to critically examine whether these developments genuinely contribute to social progress. One major concern is the transformation of agricultural land into residential plots—a practice that raises questions about its sustainability and long-term impact. Insights from Twitter highlight several factors fueling the growth of housing societies: stringent zoning restrictions that stifle broader developmental flexibility, a preference among VIPs for central urban locations, and a heavy focus on car-dependent infrastructure.

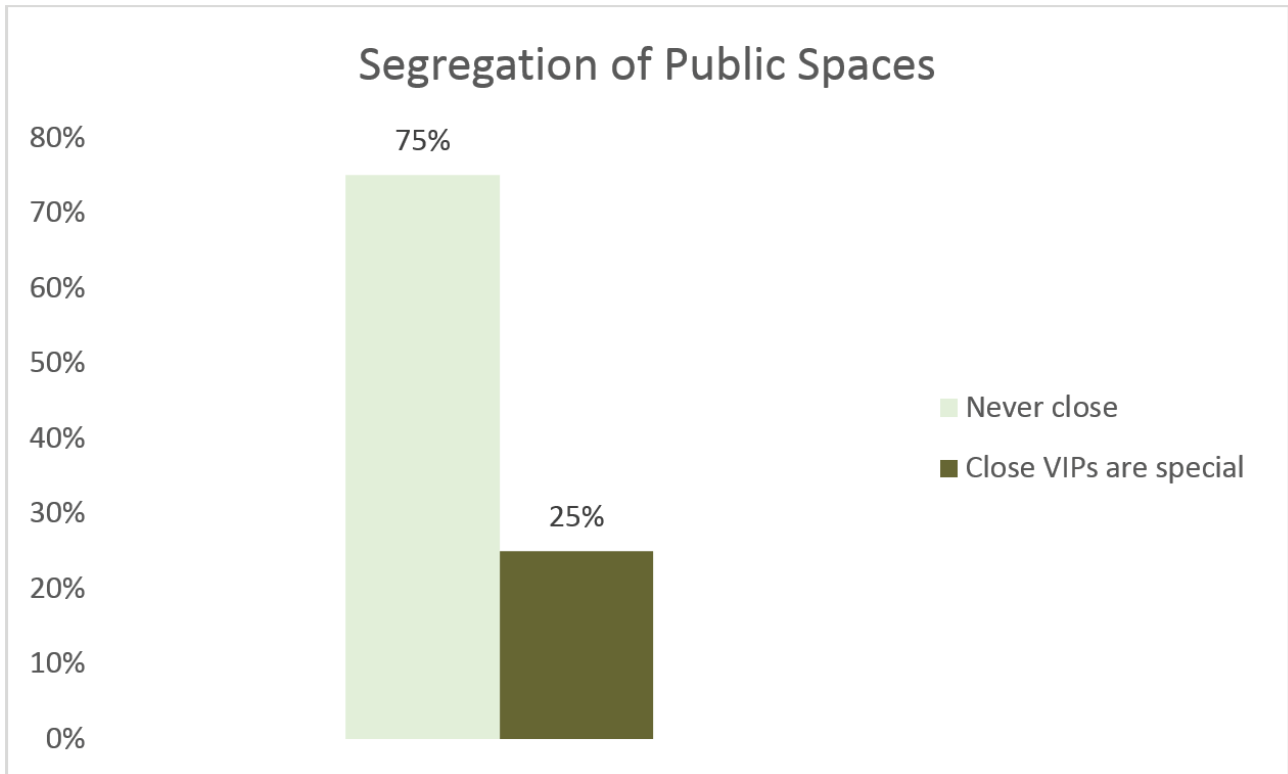
This trend, often cloaked in the promise of urban development, leads to the alarming depletion of vital agricultural resources. As housing societies sprawl outward, the question arises: are we sacrificing essential green spaces for short-sighted gains in real estate? This situation calls for a reevaluation of urban planning priorities to balance residential needs with ecological and agricultural sustainability.

Should city downtowns be dominated by VIP housing and flyovers for cars, reflecting Pakistan's approach to urban master planning?



A thriving city is built on the backbone of a strong, accessible community, where downtown areas are hubs of connectivity to schools, markets, restaurants, and more. Effective urban master planning requires a sophisticated architectural design that brings people closer to community resources, fostering vibrant public spaces. However, feedback and public opinion suggest a growing concern: many believe that current master planning strategies, which often prioritize VIP housing and extensive road networks for cars, actually restrict community access to essential public amenities and reduce the quality of urban life. This raises critical questions about the direction of urban development and the need for more inclusive planning that enhances rather than hinders public engagement and access.

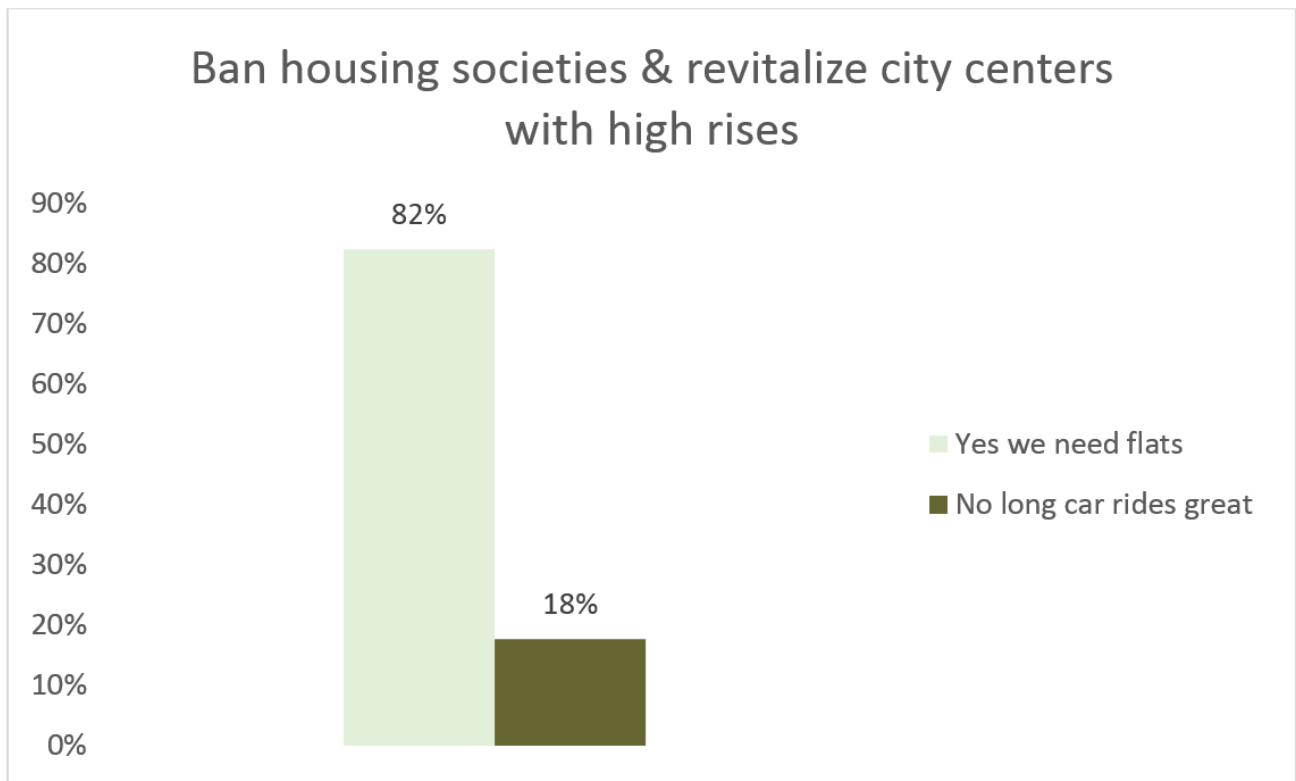
Why are public spaces in Pakistan increasingly enclosed by walls and gates, often under the guise of security?



Public spaces are fundamentally designed for the enjoyment of the masses, not to be cordoned off for the privileged few in positions of power. Yet, in Pakistan, it is not uncommon to see sidewalks, parts of roads, or even entire roads taken over by government officials and diplomatic entities, all in the name of security. This encroachment often cuts essential parts of the city, like the road linking Quaid-i-Azam University to the rest of Islamabad, from public access.

Regrettably, public funds—which should facilitate the creation and maintenance of these spaces for public use—are instead used to restrict access, depriving citizens of their rights to freely use these areas. An overwhelming 75% of respondents in a recent survey voiced that public spaces should remain open and accessible, asserting that these areas are meant for the public's benefit and should not be closed off. This calls for a reevaluation of security measures that infringe on public access and diminish the quality of urban life.

Should we ban housing societies and focus on revitalizing city centers with mixed-use high-rises and limited vehicle access?



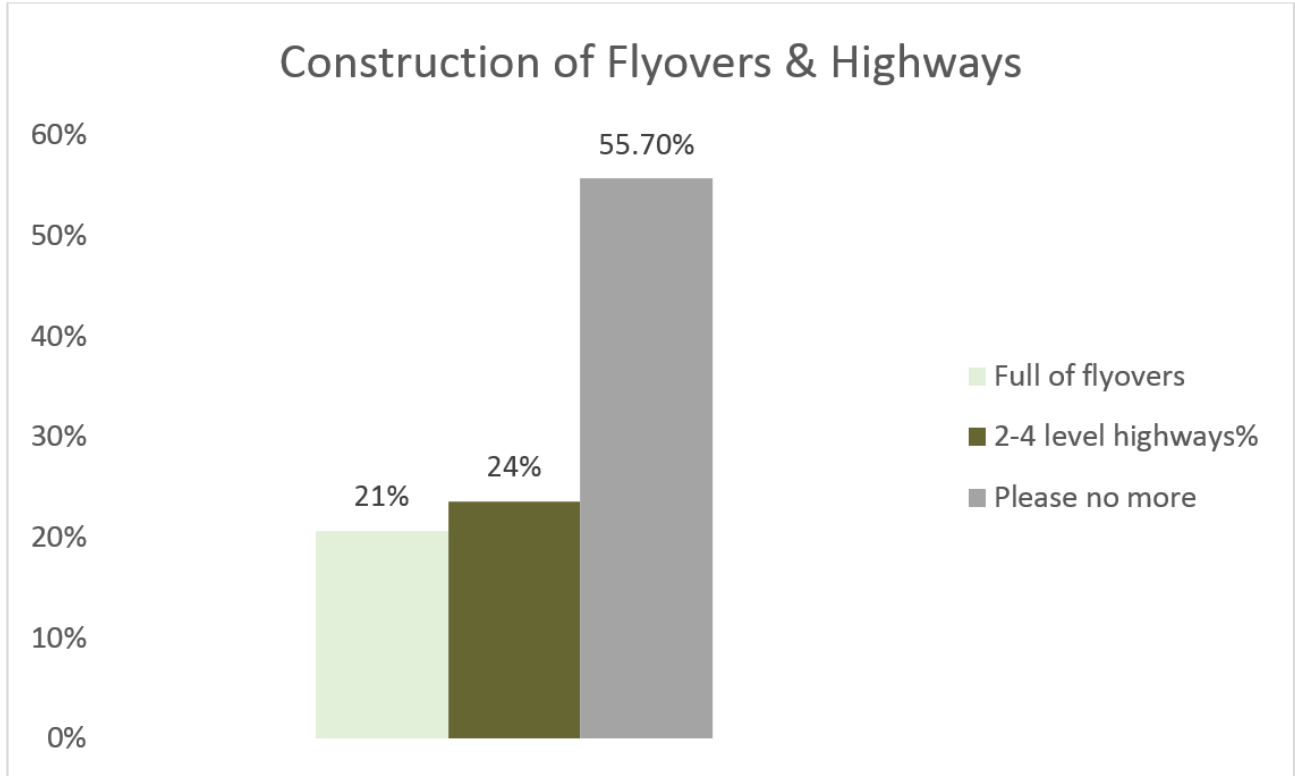
Given the pressing urban issues faced by Pakistan's cities, the move towards a high-rise, mixed-use development model has garnered substantial support, with many respondents affirming its potential benefits. This policy promises to address urban sprawl, improve the quality of life, and promote sustainable growth.

The horizontal expansion of cities through sprawling housing societies frequently leads to inefficiency, mismanagement, overutilization of public resources, and escalating costs. In contrast, vertical expansion through high-rise buildings presents a more resource-efficient and sustainable approach to urban development. It's crucial to consider policies that limit the spread of housing societies and promote the construction of high-rise, mixed-use structures that can rejuvenate city centers while reducing the reliance on cars.

This shift towards denser, more integrated urban planning is overwhelmingly supported by the public, as evidenced by Twitter polls where a substantial 84% of respondents favor high-rise buildings as a smarter urban development strategy. Embracing this model could transform urban landscapes into more vibrant, efficient, and sustainable environments.

High-rise buildings, by increasing population density, allow for more efficient use of space and help curb the need for expansive horizontal growth. This vertical development model not only fosters a compact urban footprint but also encourages the integration of residential, commercial, and business sectors, enhancing connectivity and convenience. This clustering effect is vital for creating vibrant, interconnected urban centers.

The current trend in urban planning involves the construction of flyovers, highways, and underpasses, often representing a wasteful utilization of crucial development funds. Notably, despite the existing challenges that cities face in providing basic resources to their inhabitants, significant funds continue to be allocated to these projects. For example, the construction of a new 10th avenue is underway, which starkly illustrates this misallocation (Dawn, 2021). This thus prompts the question if people want their cities to continue prioritizing constructions of flyovers and elevated expressways?



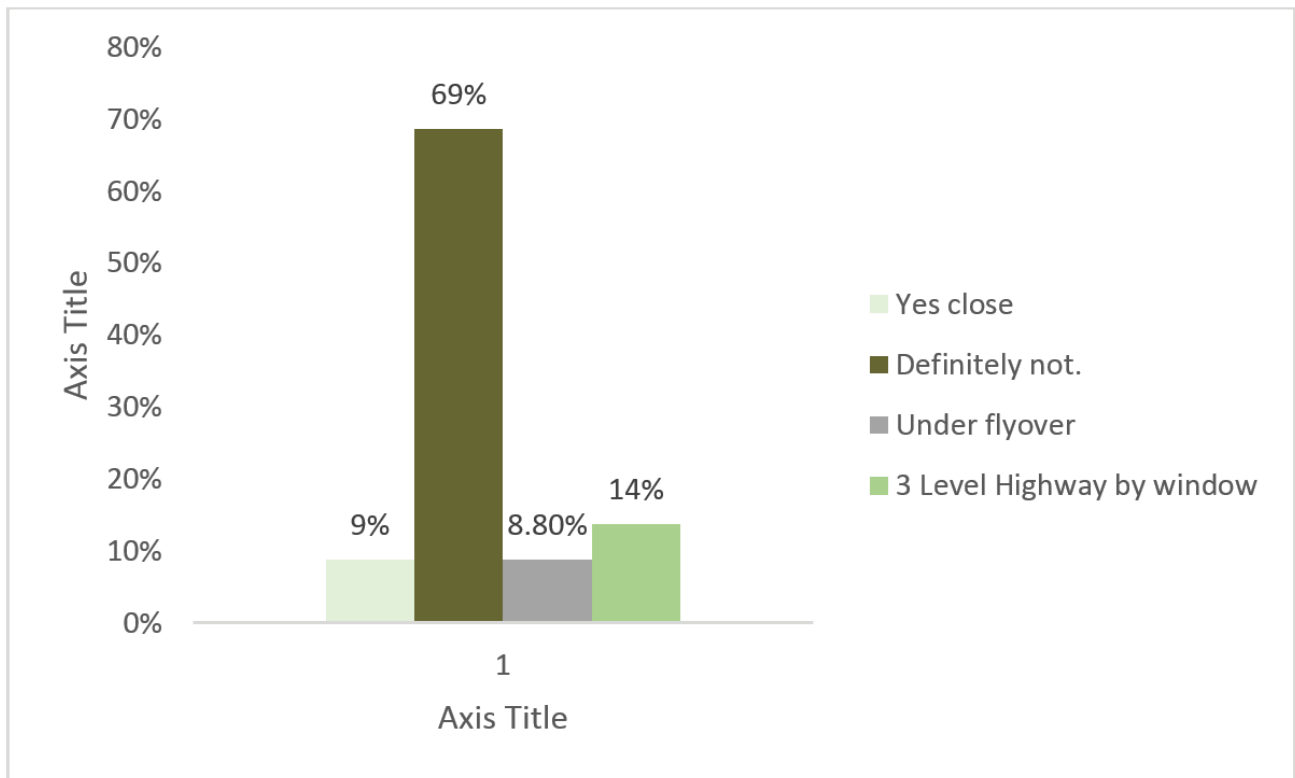
Urban development priorities should pivot towards ensuring that residents have access to essential services such as water, electricity, healthcare, education, and sanitation. Redirecting funds to these critical areas would cultivate a more equitable and sustainable urban environment.

Feedback from the community further supports this shift. The majority of respondents have expressed a strong desire to halt the construction of extensive road infrastructure. Instead, they advocate for the prudent utilization of public funds in development projects that advance technology, harness natural resources, and provide basic amenities to underserved populations.

This approach not only aligns with the practical needs of the community but also promotes long-term sustainability and growth.

### The growth of flyovers

Question: Would you want a flyover or a dual-story highway built right next to your house?



Concerns over privacy and tranquility have led to strong opposition against constructing flyovers or major road infrastructure near residential areas. Approximately 69% of individuals surveyed on Twitter voiced their resistance to such projects. This substantial majority highlights a common preference for peaceful and serene living environments, free from the disruptions that come with close proximity to large-scale infrastructure. Residents are clearly advocating for their neighborhoods to remain untouched by the noise, congestion, and visual intrusions that typically accompany the development of flyovers and highways. This overwhelming sentiment underscores the need for urban planners and decision-makers to consider the community's desire for tranquility when mapping out future infrastructure projects.

## CONCLUSION

The surveys presented in this book highlight a significant trend: the rising levels of awareness and engagement among Pakistanis on social media platforms, particularly Twitter. As the number of social media users continues to grow, now reaching 70 million with a median age of 20.5 years, it becomes increasingly important for politicians and policymakers to pay attention to this digital pulse. Contrary to popular belief, the average Pakistani is well aware and cognizant of the issues affecting their nation. The insights gathered from these surveys underscore the necessity for the government to engage more actively with local policy stakeholders.

The findings reveal several critical points about policy formulation in Pakistan. The process is often compromised by the influence of personal interests among the ruling elites and external donors, which can misalign policies with the genuine needs of the local populace. Only a small fraction of the population believes that policies are based on solid research, indicating a gap between policy-making and evidence-based practices.

Despite these challenges, there is a clear call for a shift towards more inclusive and transparent policy-making. The public's engagement on social media demonstrates a strong desire for policies that are tailored to local conditions and supported by robust evidence. This shift is essential for crafting policies that are not only effective but also sustainable in the long term.

Moreover, the surveys indicate a broader cultural need for fostering opportunities and ambitions. The youth, in particular, express a sense of disenfranchisement, with many feeling that they lack adequate opportunities within their own country. This sentiment has driven a significant number of skilled individuals to seek better prospects abroad, highlighting a critical need for systemic reforms that can create a more supportive environment for personal and professional growth within Pakistan.

The emphasis on local research and intellectual engagement is another key takeaway. There is a strong public consensus that policy-making should leverage the insights and expertise of local researchers and academic institutions. This approach not only ensures that policies are more relevant and effective but also helps build local intellectual capacity, reducing dependency on foreign consultants and donors.

In conclusion, the insights from these Twitter surveys provide a valuable snapshot of public opinion in Pakistan. They reveal a population that is increasingly informed, engaged, and eager for change. For policymakers, this represents both a challenge and an opportunity: to listen to these voices, to incorporate their insights into the policy-making process, and to work towards a future where policies are truly reflective of the needs and aspirations of the Pakistani people.



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