

Narrative II The Individual and the State

The third of three themes that the Lok Survey Project covers is the nature of the relationship between the individual and the State. What do Indians expect from the State? How much confidence do they have in it? Do they feel protected by the State? Is the State perceived to be a more reliable provider of services than the private sector? Do Indians expect the State to provide employment or do they prefer to work in the private sector? These are the types of questions that Lok Surveys V, VI, and VII cover. Narrative II provides a flavor of these findings and points to areas for possible further research.

Perceptions about Government Services/Confidence in the State

Selected questions taken from Survey V highlight attitudes about government efficacy and people's confidence, or lack thereof, in the state. We examine aggregate trends and those disaggregated by geographical location and social group status. For each question, broad trends are summarized followed by an expanded narrative.

1. Willingness to pay more for electricity amongst respondents with at least some electricity access¹

Respondents were asked several questions about the perceived desirability of government versus private services. Those with access to at least some electricity, but for less than 24 hours, were asked: "Would you be willing to pay 25% more for electricity, if you can be guaranteed 24 hour supply?"² 35.8% of our sample fell within this category and were asked this question.

We find that across India a significant number of people -- **23.7%** -- are willing to pay. Another **16.6%**³ would consider doing so.⁴ However when disaggregated by location and social and economic group status this reality appears more complex:

- Strikingly, in 13 states, people's willingness to pay for a 24 hour electricity supply was greater than the average Indian with access to at least some electricity. In fact, **in four of these states more than 50% of respondents were willing to pay for a guaranteed 24 hour electricity supply** (62%, 74%, 77.5% and 100% in Haryana, Assam, Maharashtra and Kerala respectively). Some states however fell way below the average. In West

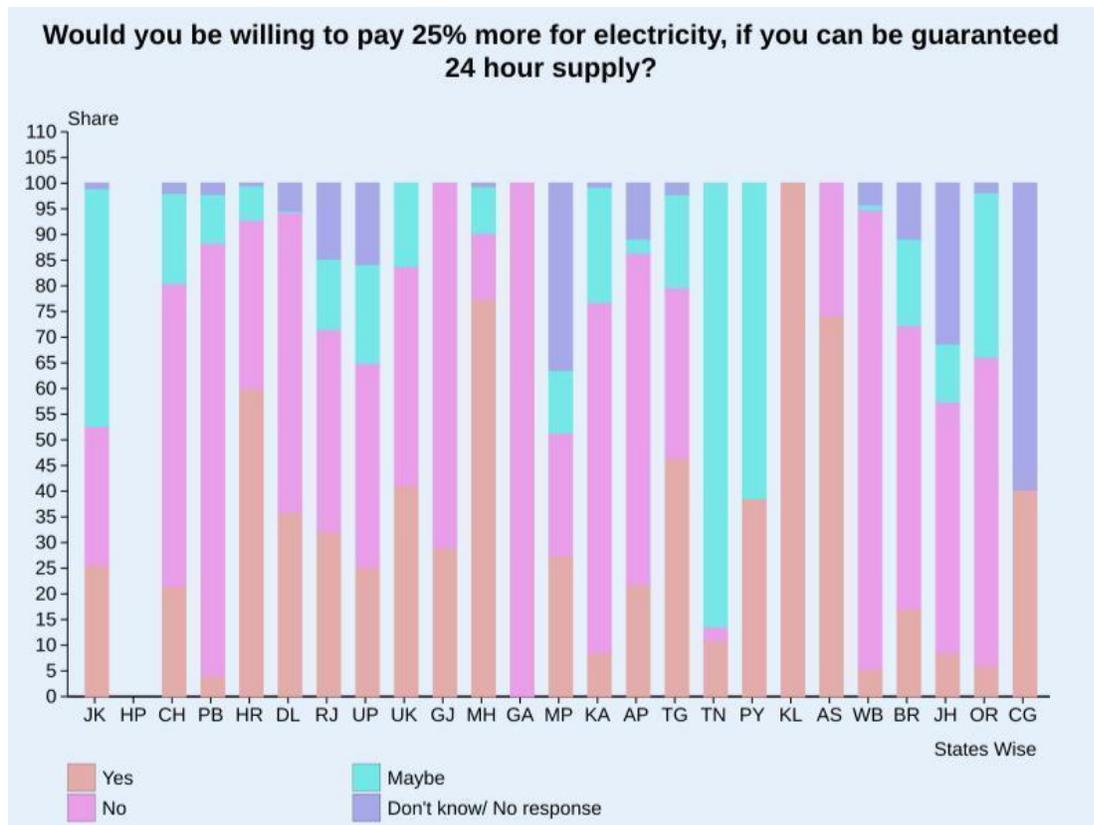
¹ Of the total 25 states on our sample, very few from Kerala and Goa fell into this category (i.e. with access to electricity, but for less than 24 hours). These states have therefore been excluded from our analysis.

² 0.7% of respondents in our sample have no electricity; 63.5% have a 24 hour supply; 35.8% have some electricity but less than a 24 hour supply.

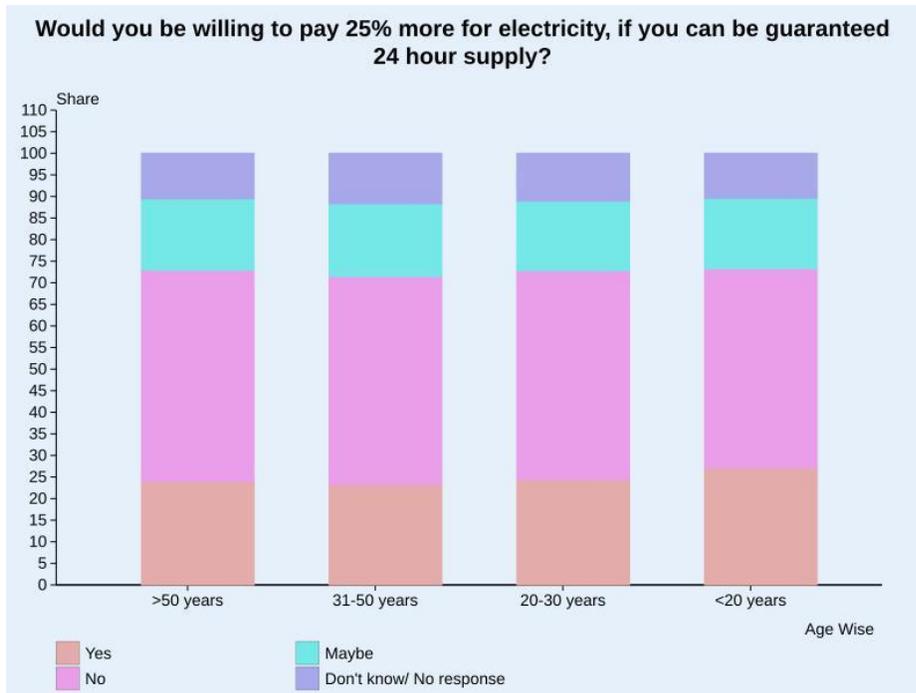
³ All percentages have been rounded up to one decimal point.

⁴ Our sample contains a "don't know/no response" category (11.2% in this case); because of the limited scope of this analysis we will not analyze this data here.

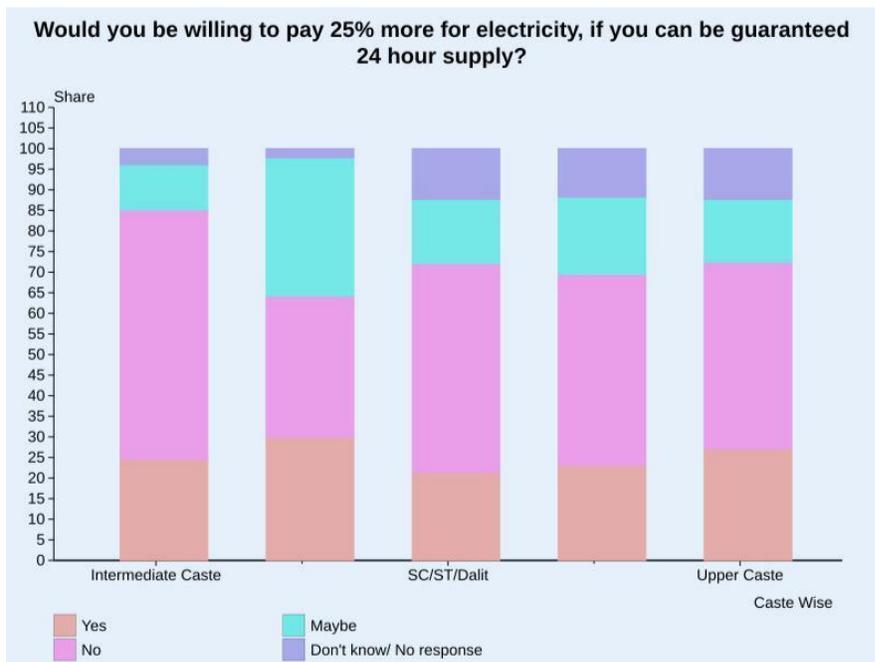
Bengal, Orissa, and Punjab for instance, only 5.9%, 5.7% and 5% of respondents respectively were willing to pay. In Goa no one was willing.



- **Urban residents were notably more willing to pay for a 24 electricity supply than their rural counterparts (31.1% versus 21.2%) and the average Indian.**
- **Gender has no material influence on people's willingness to pay for electricity – both men and women are effectively as willing as the average Indian (23.2% and 23.8% respectively).**
- **India's youth population (under 20) is most willing to pay for a 24 hour electricity supply (i.e. 26.6% compared to 23.1% for those aged 31-50 – the latter being least willing). Those above 50 are essentially as willing as the average Indian (23.6%).**



- Caste privilege has a material influence on willingness to pay for a 24 hour electricity supply. **Upper castes are most willing** – and more willing than the average Indian - at 26.2%. **SC/ST/Dalits on the other hand are least - and less willing than the average Indian - at 21.4%.**



- **Hindus in our sample are more willing to pay for a 24 hour electricity supply than Muslims** (24.3% compared to 22.1% respectively). They are also a little more willing than the average Indian.⁵
- Class, as measured by both income and education, has a material influence on people's willingness to pay for a 24 hour electricity supply. The rich (35.3%) are most willing to do so; much more willing than the average Indian. **Only 18.9% of poor respondents, significantly less than the average Indian, are willing to pay.** Those who are most educated are most willing to pay (28.8%). Uneducated respondents are least willing (21.1%).

Expanded Narrative

State-based variations in people's willingness to pay more for a 24 hour electricity supply vary widely and strikingly. Haryana, Assam, Maharashtra and Kerala – states where people are most willing to pay -- span several regions. While willingness to pay likely reflects respondents' capacity to do so, further research is required to determine whether this is in fact true. Since states like Haryana and Kerala differ significantly in relative human development, other contributing factors are likely at play.

We also encourage research which explores the various non-income factors that might account for the noteworthy urban/rural divide in willingness to pay. Further analysis using Lok data could for instance consider how willingness to pay is linked to the hours of electricity a given respondent has access to.

Why does age have such a material influence on willingness to pay for a 24 hour electricity supply? We invite researchers to use Lok data to examine whether this reflects growing aspirations amongst a new generation.

Class, caste and religious privilege increases willingness to pay for electricity. Further analysis should explore whether this is linked to the financial capacity of the privileged or whether there are other factors at play.

We also encourage researchers to consider how respondents' relative willingness to pay (or not) can be understood as a commentary on the perceived role of the state. It could be, for instance, that even where financial capacity exists people believe the government should be providing a consistent subsidized electricity supply and will therefore not be willing to pay more.

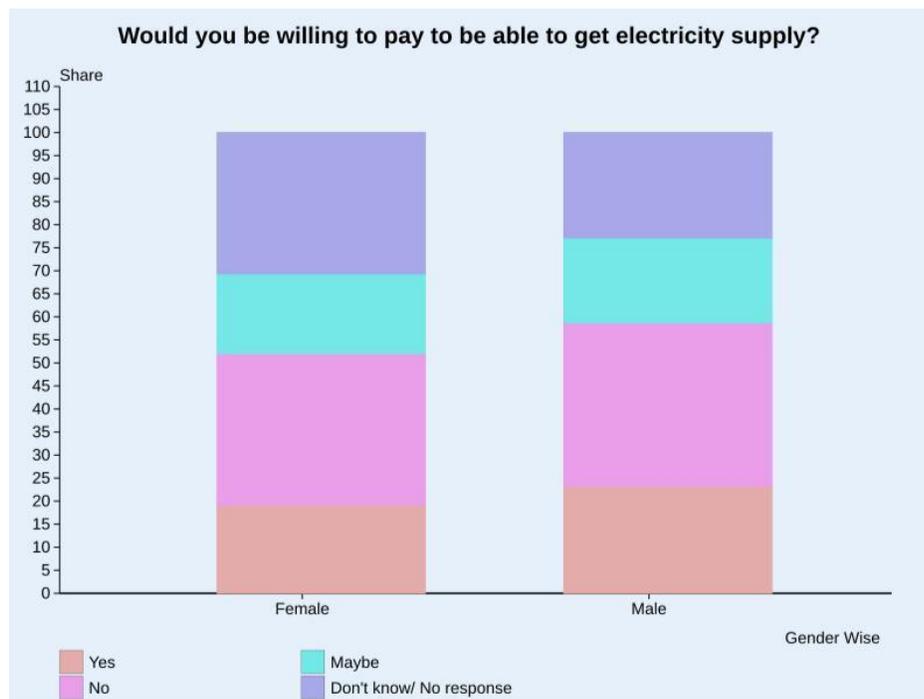
⁵ While it is difficult to draw inferences from this, it could be that a greater proportion of Hindus have at least some access to electricity than Muslims. An analysis of this would require a more granular examination of our survey data.

2. Willingness to pay for electricity amongst those with no access to electricity

0.7% of our sample had no access to electricity.⁶ These respondents were asked a similar question: “Would you be willing to pay to be able to get electricity supply?”

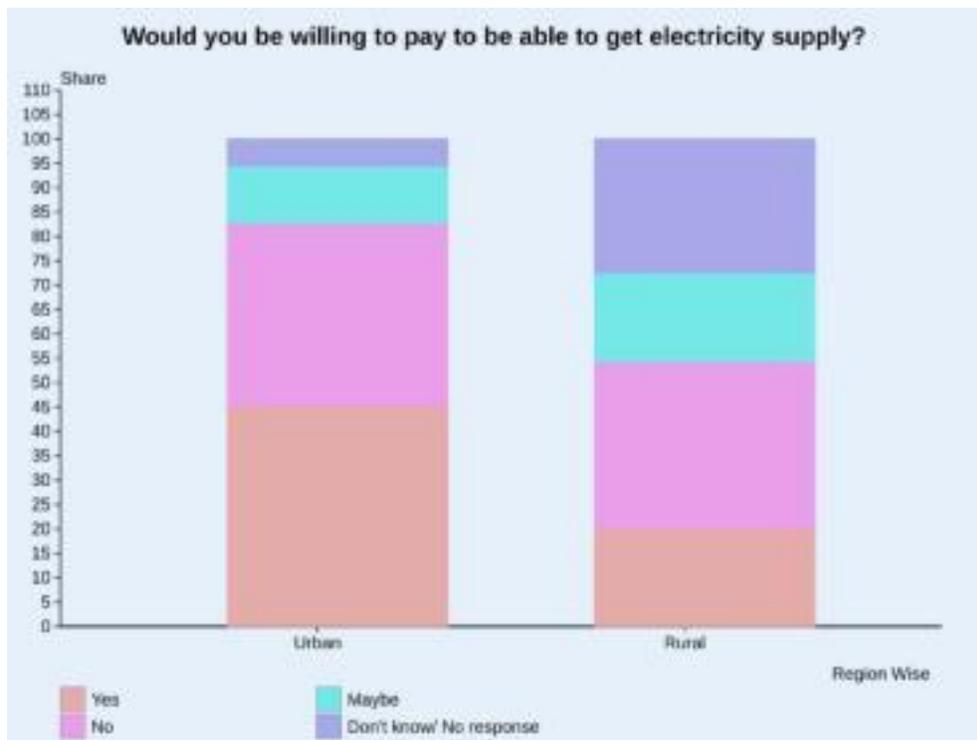
Here, **19.4%** of respondents were willing to pay, while another **19%** were willing to consider doing so. Notably, those without any electricity at all seem materially less willing to pay than those with at least some — most likely because of their inability to do so. Further trends are summarized below:

- Respondents in 7 states were more willing to pay for electricity than the average Indian with no electricity. This was true of all respondents in Karnataka, for example, while in Maharashtra, 53.3% share this perspective. Together with other states, **Gujarat, UP and Bihar were least willing – falling below the national average.** at 9.7%, 11.8% and 11.6% respectively.
- Gender matters amongst those with no electricity. **Men were more willing to pay for electricity than women (and the average Indian).** 21.49% compared to 17.26%.

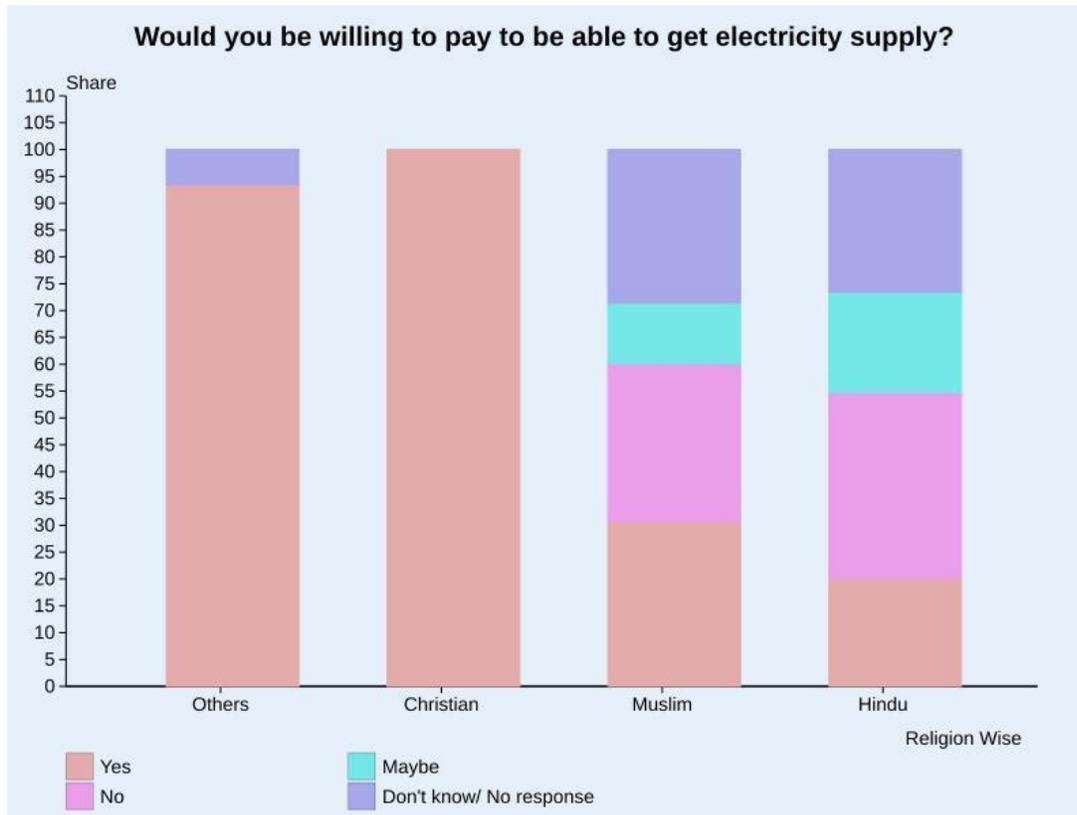


⁶ 2011 Census data indicates 67.25% of Indians had access to electricity. We expect electricity coverage to have increased notably since then.

- Urban respondents with no electricity were much more willing to pay for a supply than their rural counterparts. **The divide is stark 40.44% and 18.63% respectively with rural residents being less willing than even the average Indian.**



- 28.97% of India's youth without electricity between ages 20-30 were willing to pay for a supply. This is notably more than any other age group and the average Indian. Only 14.87% of those over 50 were willing to pay – less than any other age group and the average Indian.
- 22.62% of OBCs were willing to pay for electricity – more than upper castes and SC/ST/Dalits as well as the average Indian. Lower castes were least willing to pay (16.44%) and together with upper castes (18.20%) were less so than the average Indian.
- Religion has a material influence on willingness to pay for electricity. **Significantly more Muslims than Hindus without electricity** (28.3% and 18.23% respectively) were willing to pay. Hindus were less willing than the average Indian. All Christians, and almost all respondents from other religious groups were also willing to pay.



- Income measures of class materially influence willingness to pay; this is less clear in the case of education. The wealthiest respondents without electricity (i.e. higher middle income) were most willing to pay for a supply. This was notably more than in the case of the average Indian (37.4%). Those poorest and without electricity were least willing (17.5%) - less also than the average Indian. **The influence of education was not so clear** (about 11% of those with at least a graduate degree and education until 5th standard respectively were willing to pay).

Expanded Narrative

Again, of those with no electricity, there are vast intra-state variations in willingness to pay for the service which require analysis. In particular, it is worth considering why Gujarat, UP and Bihar fall so notably below the national average. While poverty may be a factor, there is greater willingness to pay for electricity amongst other poorer states (i.e. Orissa and West Bengal), suggesting there might be more complex dynamics that require exploration.

In contrast to those with at least some access to electricity, here, gender appears to influence people's willingness to pay for this service. Research should consider why this might be the case. Some might suggest this difference reflects men's greater decision-making power over household expenditure while others might argue women influence these decisions more than is often assumed.

The striking urban bias – much greater amongst those who have no electricity than those who have at least some -- might reflect the desperation of many urban migrants who have lost access to even basic infrastructure. We encourage further analysis that unveils the complexities driving these findings.

While youth under 20 with at least some electricity were most willing to pay, those between 20-30 with no electricity are most willing. While this might be because this slightly older group has greater financial capital, we require a deeper understanding of other contributing factors and associated state-based variations.

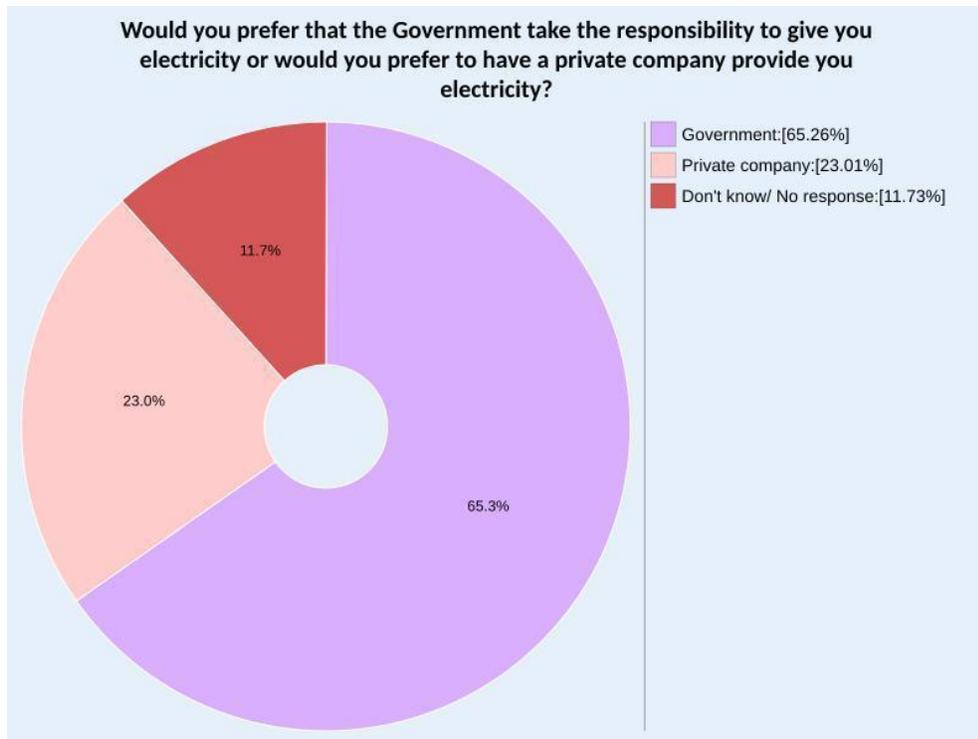
While we find that income based class privilege leads to greater willingness to pay for electricity, other forms of privilege do not appear to shape willingness to pay as clearly as for those with at least some electricity. Education status, for instance, appears to have no clear bearing on people's positions. These comparative dynamics warrant further exploration.

Also unlike those with some access to electricity, Muslims with no electricity are more willing than Hindus to pay for this service. To what extent might this reflect a higher degree of material deprivation amongst Muslims relative to Hindus and other religious communities? (Muslims were also less willing to pay than the average Indian). Lok data should be used for further analysis, with particular consideration of other more complex socio-political factors that might be at play.

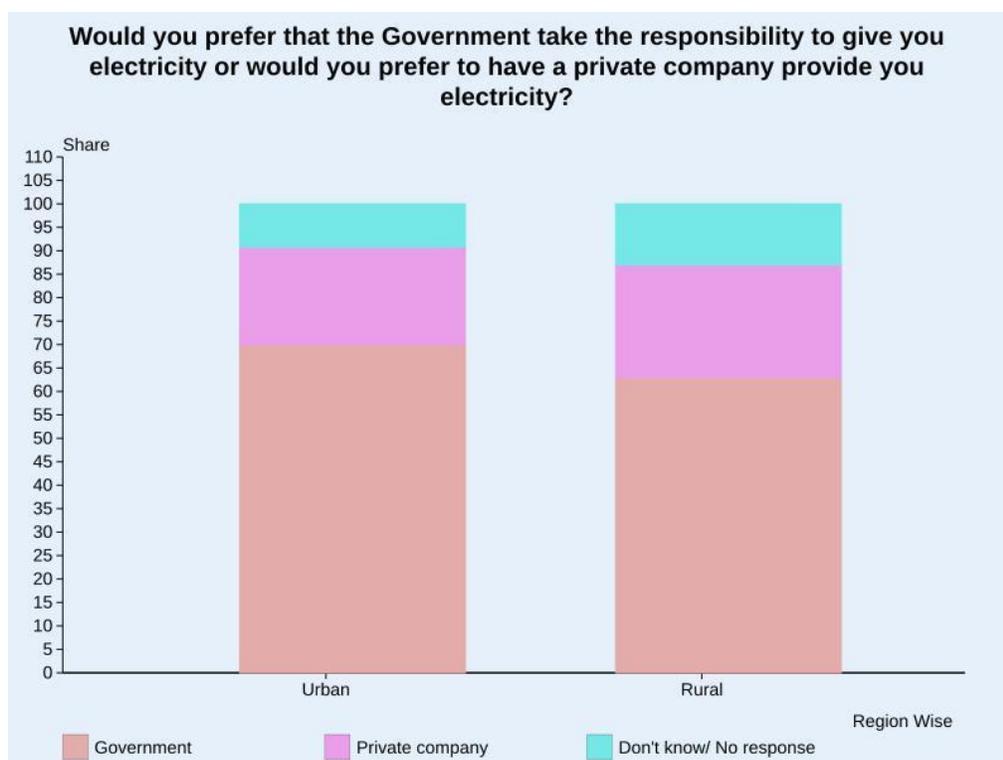
While amongst those with at least some electricity, upper castes were most willing to pay for a full supply, we find that where no electricity supply exists, OBCs are most willing to pay. This might vary across states. Future research should consider why both upper castes and SC/ST/Dalits who have no electricity are less willing than the average Indian to pay for the service. This might have to do with a combination of factors such as financial capacity, and perceptions about the role of the state and entitlements, amongst other things.

3. Should electricity be provided by the government or a private company?

Respondents were asked a series of questions aimed at gauging relative confidence in the state. One such question focused on gauging perceptions about whether the government or private sector should be responsible for electricity provisioning. Respondents were asked: "Would you prefer that the Government take the responsibility to give you electricity or would you prefer to have a private company provide you electricity?" At the country level the vast majority preferred government (65%) over private (23%) provisioning. While this might not explicitly reveal the degree to which people have confidence in the state, it does point to a very widely held expectation of a strong role for the State in service delivery.



- Across all states government provisioning is preferred. In 16 states this was true at levels above the national average. Delhi (99%) and Himachal Pradesh (98.8%) in particular stand out.
- Across caste groups, government provisioning is most preferred. **OBCs and lower castes mirrored the average Indian while upper castes fell just below** (66%, 65.8% and 63.9% respectively).
- Both Muslims and Hindus prefer government provisioning. **This is true for Muslims at slightly higher levels than Hindus** (66.1% and 65.2% respectively) **and the average Indian.**
- **Both men and women prefer government provisioning --- women at higher rates than men** (67.4% compared to 63.2%) and the average Indian.
- Rural and urban respondents both prefer government provisioning. **This preference is held more by urban than rural respondents** (70.2% compared to 62.9%) – and at higher rates than the average Indian.



- Across age groups government provisioning is preferred. This is most true amongst India's youth - under 20 and 20-30 – who state these preferences at **higher levels than the average Indian** (68.4% and 67.5%).
- Irrespective of class status, respondents state a preference for government provisioning. The wealthiest and most educated do so at the highest levels and (77.6% and 68.4% respectively) and more than the average Indian. While their expectations are still high, the poor and **uneducated appear to have comparatively lower expectations from government** (58.6% and 64.1% respectively).

Expanded Narrative

Our findings show that nationally and across geographical and social group location there is a clear expectation for government intervention in service provisioning. It is striking that this is the case in all states and irrespective of caste, class, gender, religion, age or geography (i.e. urban/rural). Not only was this preference clear, but it was significant – on average and when disaggregated.

Research should consider in particular why government electricity provisioning is most preferred in some states over others. While religious and caste based differences are non-material, further research should explore intra-state variations along these dimensions. Gender – and the

motivations shaping the slightly higher preferences for government provisioning held by women – also warrants further exploration.

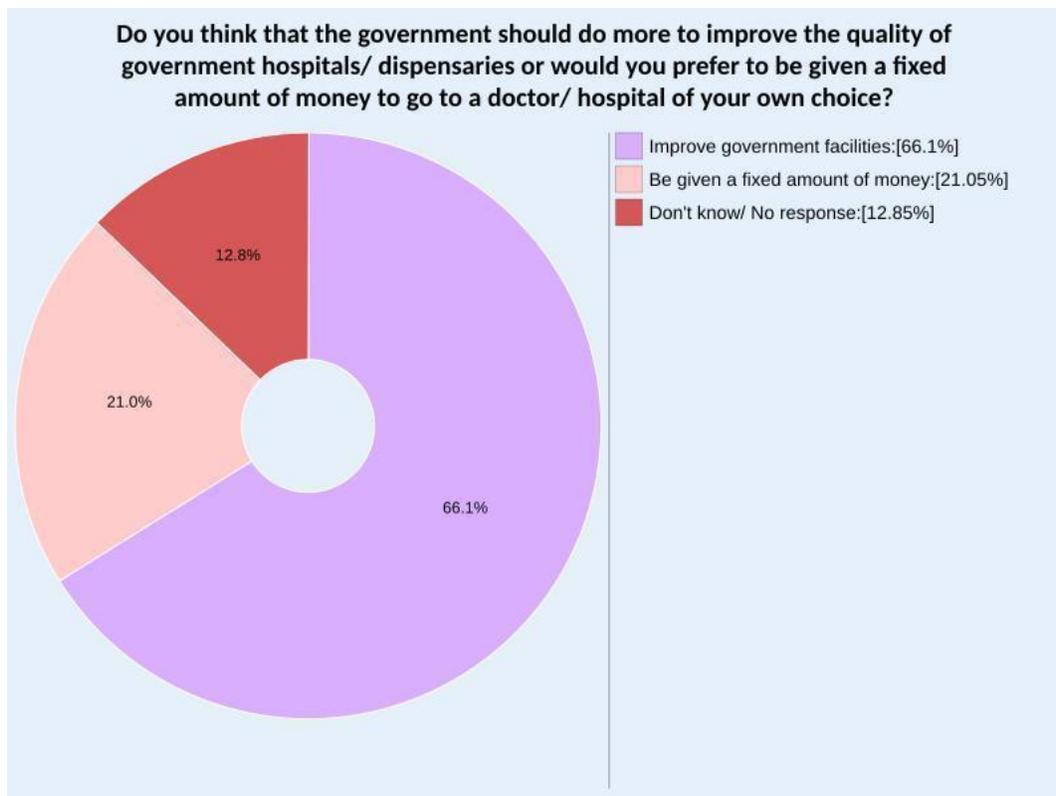
Specific attention should be given to the urban/rural divide in the degree to which respondents prefer government over private provisioning. Our findings suggest that rural residents might have less faith in the government as a service provider than their urban counterparts. The reasons influencing these dynamics warrant further consideration.

India's youth population appears to have the greatest expectations from the state. Future research should explore the factors influencing this reality.

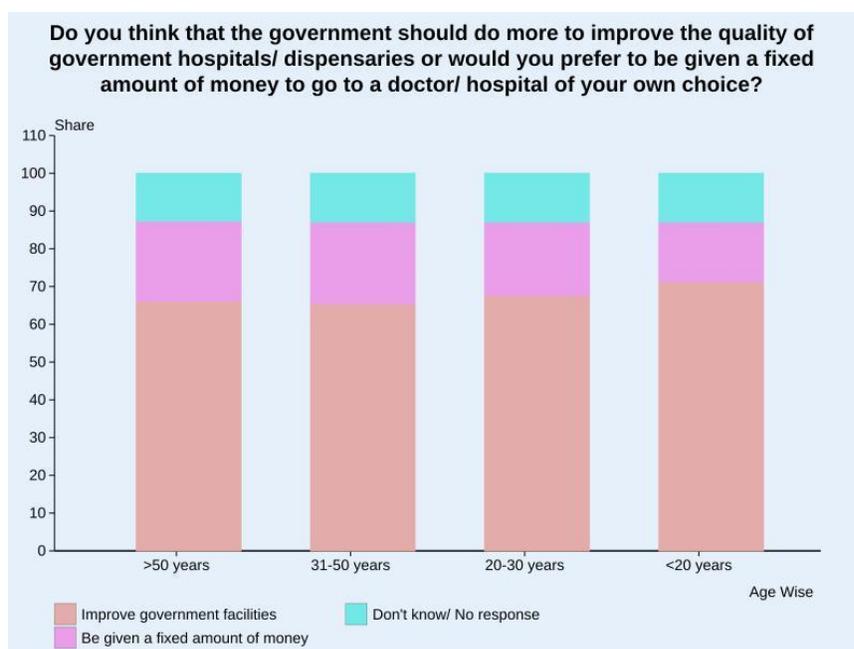
It is perhaps unsurprising that those who enjoy relative levels of privilege have greater expectations of the state. While poor and uneducated respondents still prefer government over private provisioning they do so less enthusiastically than the wealthy and more educated. Research should consider to what extent, if at all, this reflects the failure of the state to guarantee access to services for socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

4. Preference for Government Improved Health Services or Fixed Cash Amount

Respondents were also asked: “Do you think that the government should do more to improve the quality of government hospitals/dispensaries or would you prefer to be given a fixed amount of money to go to a doctor/ hospital of your own choice?” The vast majority -- **66%** --- stated preferences for improved government health services over cash.



- With the exception of Chhattisgarh, all states indicate a preference for government intervention to improve health services. Although in Chhattisgarh the preference is for a fixed cash amount this desire is **not materially distinct from preferences for improved government services** (49% and 47.4% respectively). In 17 states⁷ the preference for improved government health services is greater than the national average. **Delhi and Himachal in particular stand out** (97.7% and 97.3% respectively).
- Across caste groups there is a preference for government improved health services – this is true at levels just above the national average. **Intra-caste differences are negligible** (66.7%, 66.5% and 65.2% respectively).
- Muslims and Hindus both prefer government improved health services; they do so at similar rates (65.3% and 66.2%). While Muslims do so less than the average Indian, Hindus match the average Indian in this regard.
- Government improved health services are preferred across age groups. This is especially true amongst India's youth where **this preference is held at levels beyond the national average** (71.3% and 67.5% for under 20s and 20-30s respectively). **Those aged 31-50 state these preferences at levels below the national average; those over 50 remain just above it** (65.5% and 66.23% respectively).



⁷ Delhi (97.7%); Himachal Pradesh (97.3%); Goa (83.8%); J&K (82.43%); Telangana (79.2%); Orissa (78.3%); Assam (77.8%); Andhra Pradesh (77.6%); Kerala (75.7%); Rajasthan (74.7%); Chandigarh (72%); Karnataka (71.6%); Punjab (69.7%); Haryana (68.4%); Madhya Pradesh (68%); Uttarakhand (67.5%); West Bengal (67%).

- Men and women both prefer government improved services, and at similar rates (65.8% and 66.5%). They are each positioned just below and above the average Indian.
- Rural and urban respondents both prefer government improved services. **Urban respondents in particular hold this preference – more so than rural respondents** (68.8% compared to 64.8% respectively) and the average Indian.
- Irrespective of class status, respondents prefer government improved health services. This is most true amongst the **wealthiest and most educated** (75.8% and 72.3% respectively), including when compared to the average Indian. The poor and uneducated, while aligned in their preferences, are relatively **less favorable towards this position** (62.4% and 64.7% respectively), including when compared to the average Indian.

Expanded Narrative

Across all states but one,⁸ respondents indicated a preference for government investment in quality health services. This makes clear a strong desire for state intervention and accountability for service provisioning. The alternative, a fixed cash amount, was less desirable, perhaps also reflecting disillusionment with private health services/health privatization. We encourage further research on inter-state variations in the degree to which improved government service provisioning is welcomed (with particular attention to Himachal Pradesh and Delhi as above). The case of Chhattisgarh appears to be an awkward exception, an explanation for which is called for. While further research is required to understand this case, our findings might reflect a complete failure on the part of the state to address the basic health needs of communities in a state where access to public health is dire.

It is surprising that intra-caste and intra-religious differences are not material – further research should consider whether caste and religious identity plays a greater role at the state level. The same is true of gender. Like above, India's youth population appears most enthusiastic about the continued role of government in service provisioning – this raises similar questions to those discussed above.

Interestingly, the urban/rural divide is less stark in this case --- this might reflect skepticism towards the idea of a fixed cash amount in lieu of government services. This distinction on the other hand might reveal perceived differences about the government's capacity/ role when it comes to electricity and health provisioning respectively.

Again, unsurprisingly, those occupying positions of relative privilege have greater confidence in the state than those who have experienced social and economic exclusion. Just as research is required to highlight these nuances with regard to electricity provisioning, we invite further analysis on the classed nature of perceptions about government health provisioning.

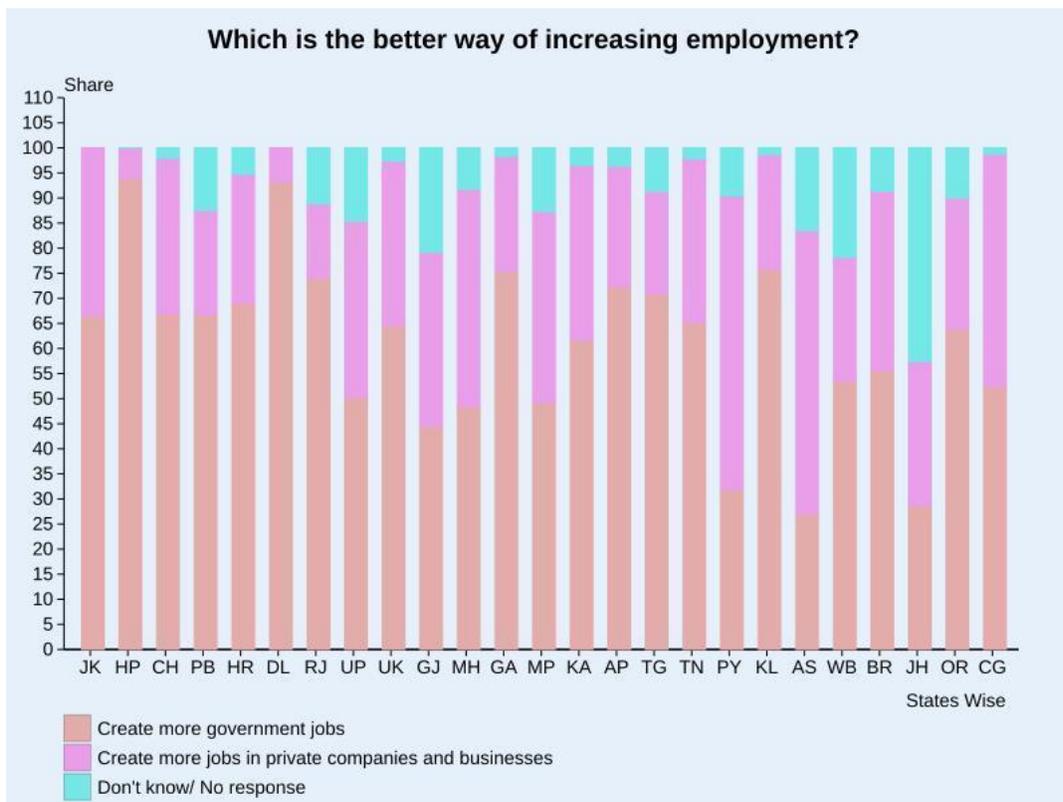
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Chhattisgarh is an outlier in the sample.

5. Preferences for Government over Private sector jobs

Another question aimed at gauging relative confidence in the state focused on preferences for government versus private employment. Respondents were asked: Which is the better way of increasing employment? (a) create more government jobs; b) create more or private sector jobs? There is an overwhelming preference for government jobs over private sector employment -- **56.81%** compared to only **32.14%** respectively.

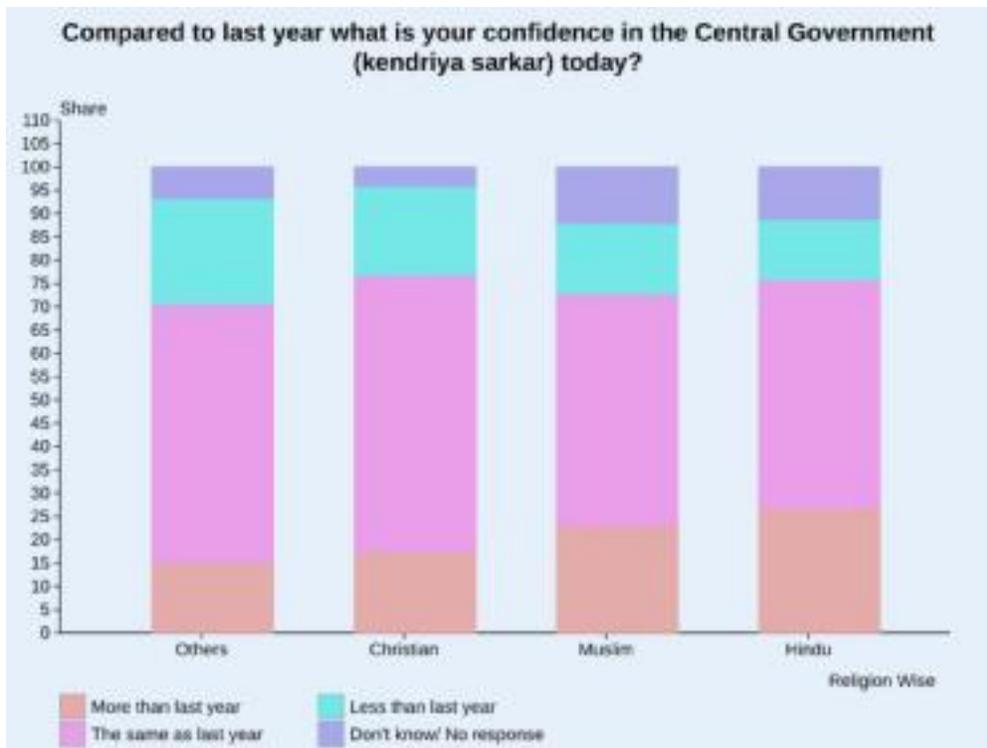
- Government jobs are preferred in all states and above the national average in 15 states.⁹ Government employment is most preferred in Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, where 93.7% and 93.3% respondents respectively hold this view.



- In both urban and rural India, government jobs are most desired. This is **particularly true in urban India** (60.8% compared to 55.1% in rural areas). Government jobs are most preferred irrespective of caste identity.

⁹ Himachal Pradesh (93.7%); Delhi (93.3%); Goa (81.4%); Rajasthan (74.3%); Andhra Pradesh (72.7%), Haryana (69.4%); Telangana (69.1%); Chandigarh (66.8%); Jammu and Kashmir (66.6%), Tamil Nadu (64.3%); Odisha (64. %); Uttarakhand (64.5); Karnataka (62.8%).

- There is no material difference across caste groups although **government jobs are marginally more desired amongst OBCs** (57.7%, compared to 56.9% and 56.1% for SC/ST/Dalits and upper castes respectively).
- Both Hindus and Muslims prefer government jobs. This preference is **materially greater amongst Hindus when compared to Muslims** (57.4% and 51.2% respectively). Muslims hold these preferences at lower levels than the average Indian, while Hindus essentially mirror the latter.



- Age shapes preferences for government jobs. While government jobs are preferred irrespective of age, India's youth (under-20) most desire this form of employment. They do so more than the average Indian (61.4%) while **all other age groups mirror the latter** (57.8%, 56.5% and 57.1% respectively).
- Gender does not appear to influence preferences for government jobs. Both men and women most prefer this form of employment, at levels akin to the average Indian (56.8% and 57.3% respectively).
- Government jobs are most preferred irrespective of class status. However privileged respondents—vis-a-vis income and education—state this preference more than other. 64.1% and 61.8% of respondents who are rich and have at least a graduate degree respectively prefer government jobs. This is notably higher than the average Indian (57.1%). When compared to the latter, the poor prefer government jobs less (52.1%).

Uneducated respondents prefer government jobs a little more than those with low levels of education (56.1% compared to 53.9% for those educated up to fifth grade). The latter two are both placed below the national average.

Expanded Narrative

The overwhelming preference for government over business/private sector jobs reflects some confidence and trust in the state as an employer, or certainly a widespread expectation from the state. Himachal Pradesh and Delhi stand out again -- research should give attention to these states along with others where there is a particularly strong preference for government employment.

While there is no material caste or gender difference in the degree to which preferences are stated, this might vary across states. Could the difference in expectations about government employment between Muslims and Hindus reflect perceptions of state discrimination?

Similar to our findings for other questions above, India's youth population appears enthusiastic about the role of the government as employer. It would appear that this segment of the population has a strong preference for the security that government employment provides. However, our findings suggest that the urban youth attach greater value to government employment than rural youth. Attitudes towards government employment across both parts of the country require further analysis.

Those with class privilege see greater employment opportunities for themselves in the government sector than their less privileged counterparts. Even amongst the wealthiest and most educated -- who might have better opportunities in the private sector -- the government is viewed as a better employer. While this view is shared by poorer and less educated communities, they are less enthusiastic -- this is likely a reflection of the barriers to employment they face in government service. We invite researchers to use Lok data to unpack the complex factors influencing these perceptions about the role of the government as an employer and the state more broadly.