

# CHAPTER 7

## SOCIAL COHESION AND DIVERSITY

### 7.0 Introduction

In the CESL study 2003, two country specific scales were designed, to research students' attitudes on social cohesion and diversity, and the peace process, in addition to retaining items on social cohesion and diversity included in the IEA CIVED student questionnaire. The attitudes measured across the domain – social cohesion and diversity were critically important in the context of Sri Lanka at that time. The findings, it was felt, would be of considerable significance, in the aftermath of two decades of conflict and, the peace initiatives in progress.

In the 2017 study the same section on social cohesion except for the section on the peace process was used. In this chapter, the data from the social cohesion scale in the country specific section is presented and analyzed first. Students' attitudes on gender issues, ethnic groups, internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka and, non-democratic groups are presented and analyzed, in the sections that follow. The data in this chapter is presented mostly in graphs, with the data on which each graph was based indicated below the graph.

### 7.1 Items in the country specific scale on social cohesion

In the student questionnaire, a scale comprising 16 items was developed to solicit opinions of students on aspects of social cohesion both in the school and out of school context. Existing relationship patterns and opportunities for children from the different ethnic groups to come together in formal learning contexts and for informal exchanges were examined. Students were asked to what extent they have had such opportunities, and for their agreement on whether they should get such opportunities.

Mutual understanding and mutual exchanges facilitative of social cohesion would ensue, if children from the different ethnic groups learned together in classrooms. Items were designed in paired sets to probe whether the respondents had such varied opportunities facilitative of social cohesion and, whether they agree that such opportunities should be made available to students.

The respondents were asked if they had opportunities to learn together with children of other ethnic groups (SQ\_Part III – 3.1). They were also asked whether students should get opportunities to learn together and for mutual exchange of ideas. Associating with pen friends would provide similar opportunities to children; the set of items 4.2 – 4.8 were therefore designed to obtain student responses, regarding opportunities students had to interact with other ethnic groups.

Further exchanges of a more informal nature and facilitative of social cohesion occur when students participate jointly in leisure time activities such as trips (item 3.4), and cultural events such as ethnic group festivals (3.4). The existing relationship patterns were probed by querying whether in their own/family’s close group of friends there were members of other ethnic groups (items 1.1 and 1.2), and whether they considered opportunities to forge such close relationships desirable.

In the 2017 questionnaire these items were categorized under four main questions/statements.

The first question finds out about the students’ family social relationships. Table 7.1 analyses this data.

**Table 7.1: Students’ family social relationships**

SQ_P III_1 : Your/your family's social relationships	Majority		Only some		Only a few		None	
	2003	2017	2003	2017	2003	2017	2003	2017
1.1 In your close group of friends are there children of other ethnic groups?	5	6	20	20	26	22	49	53
1.2 In your family’s close group of friends are there children of other ethnic groups?	4	5	18	18	23	19	55	58

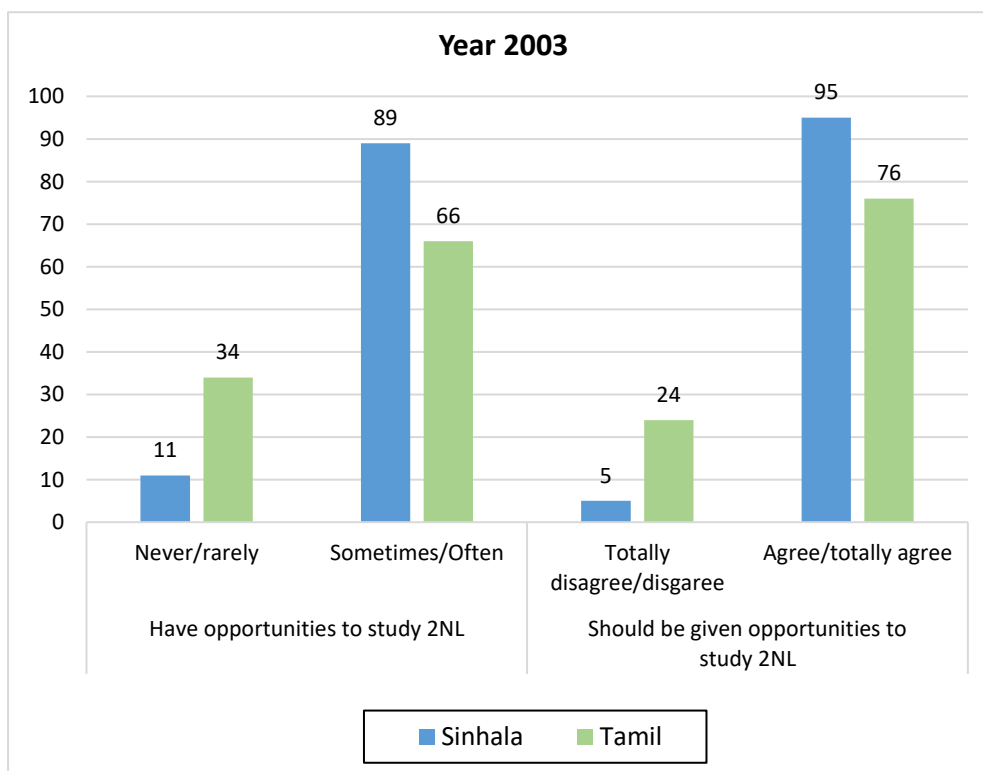
According to the information there is no improvement in students or their family social relationships with other ethnic groups since 2003. In fact there is a deterioration. This does not augers well for reconciliation and peace. Parental attitudes need to be changed in this regard.

## 7.2 Opportunities for second language learning in the school system

In grades 6 through 9 in schools in the national system in Sri Lanka, time table time of 2 periods per week, each of 40 minutes' duration is allocated for the teaching of Sinhala/Tamil as a second language - Tamil for students studying in the Sinhala medium and Sinhala for students studying in the Tamil medium. In response to item 2 in the scale, students indicated whether they never, rarely, sometimes or often got opportunities to study the second language. In response to item 4.1 in the scale, they indicated whether they agree or totally agree, disagree or totally disagree with the statement that students should get opportunities to study the second language.

In this section student responses are also analysed by medium of instruction, (Table 7.2), ethnicity (Table 7.3) and province (Table 7.4). Further, responses of students in 2003 is compared with those of 2017.

The responses of students in the sample, by medium of instruction, indicating opportunities they had to study the second language in school is given in Fig. 7.1.



**Fig. 7.1: Opportunities to study second language by medium of instruction - 2003**

As indicated (Table 7.2 and Fig. 7.1) in 2003, 34% of the Tamil medium students had claimed that they did not have an opportunity to learn 2NL. However, 76% agree that 2NL should be taught.

**Table 7.2 opportunities to study second language by medium of instruction- 2003**

Medium	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	11	89	5	95
Tamil	34	66	24	76

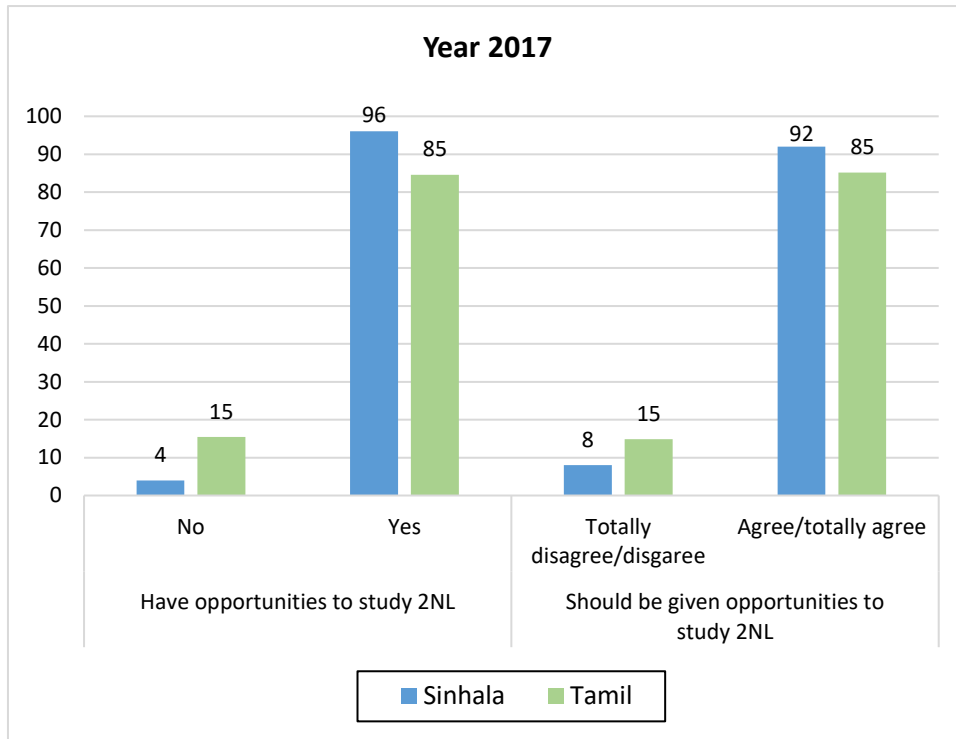
In this sample 34 percent of the Tamil medium students have reported that they rarely or never got the opportunity to learn Sinhala as second language. However, they should have had 2 class periods a week, of second language learning, at least over the 4 years 2000-2003 when they studied in grades 6-9.

The same information was solicited in 2017 as a 'yes' / 'no' question. The data is presented in Table 7.3

**Table 7.3: Opportunities to study second language by medium of instruction - 2017**

Medium of instruction	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	No	Yes	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	4	96	8	92
Tamil	15	85	15	85

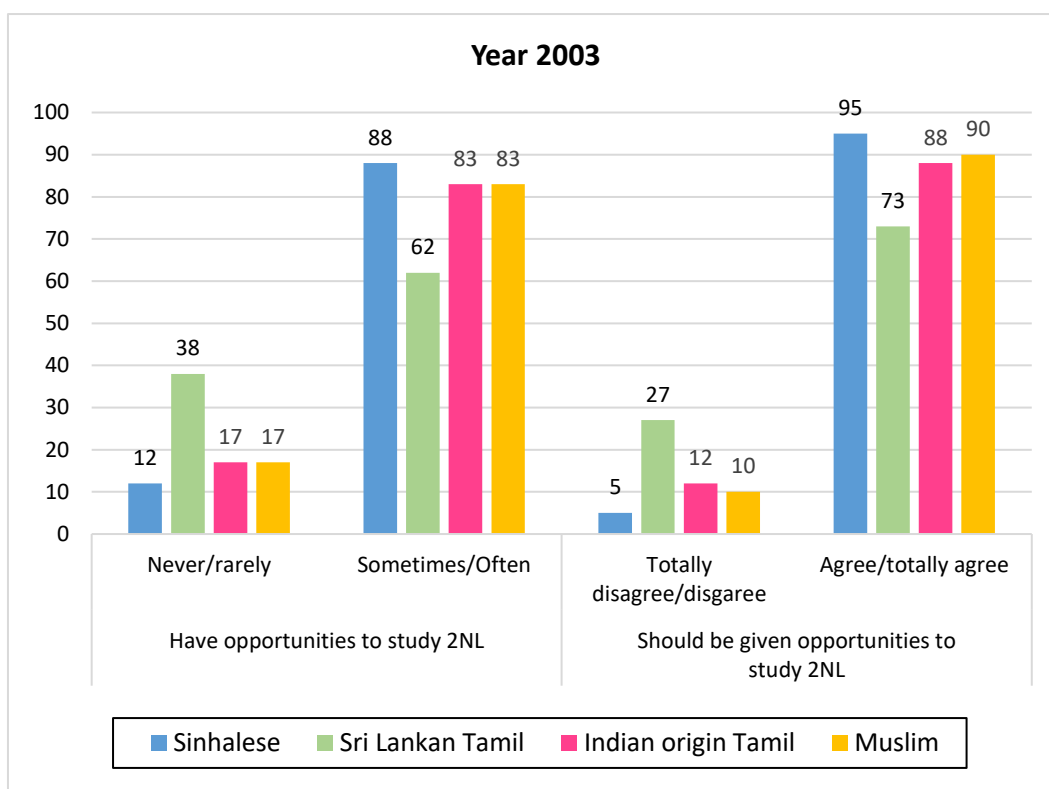
In 2017, the situation has turned for the better. Only 15% of Tamil students claim that they did not get an opportunity to study Sinhala.



**Fig. 7.2: Opportunities to study second language by medium of instruction - 2017**

The comparison of responses indicate that the percentage of students who claim that they did not or rarely had the opportunity to learn the 2NL had decreased and also the percentage of positive responses towards learning the language had also increased. On the other hand, the percentage of Sinhala medium students who claimed to have opportunities to learn 2NL had increased but the attitude towards learning the language had decreased.

Responses of students in the sample, by ethnicity, indicating opportunities they had to study the second language in school in 2003 are given in Fig 7.3.



**Fig 7.3: Opportunities to study second language by ethnicity - 2003**

Findings regarding the medium of instruction is confirmed by the data in Fig.7.3

**Table 7.4: Opportunities to study second language by ethnicity – 2003**

Ethnicity	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	12	88	5	95
SL Tamil	38	62	27	73
Indian origin Tamil	17	83	12	88
Muslim	17	83	10	90

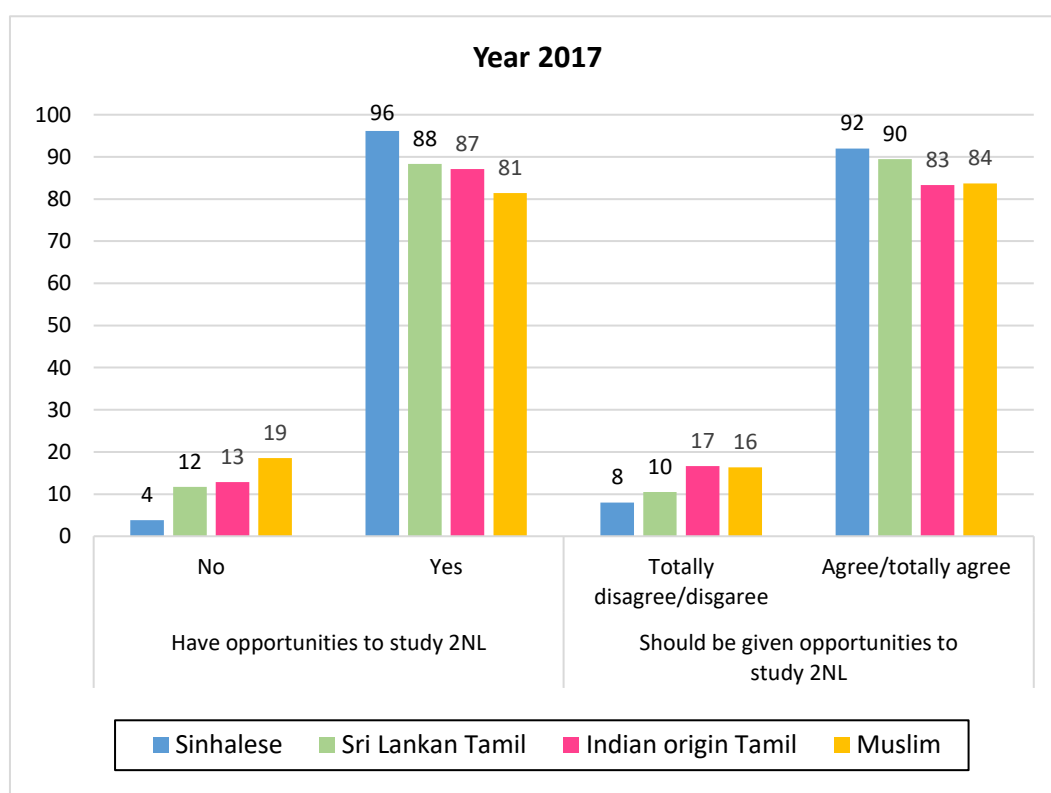
As Table 7.4 indicates 38% of SL Tamil students claim that they did not get an opportunity to learn 2NL, even though 73% agree that 2NL should be taught.

On the other hand, in 2017 there is a positive change which is a good sign.

**Table 7.5: Opportunities to study second language by ethnicity – 2017**

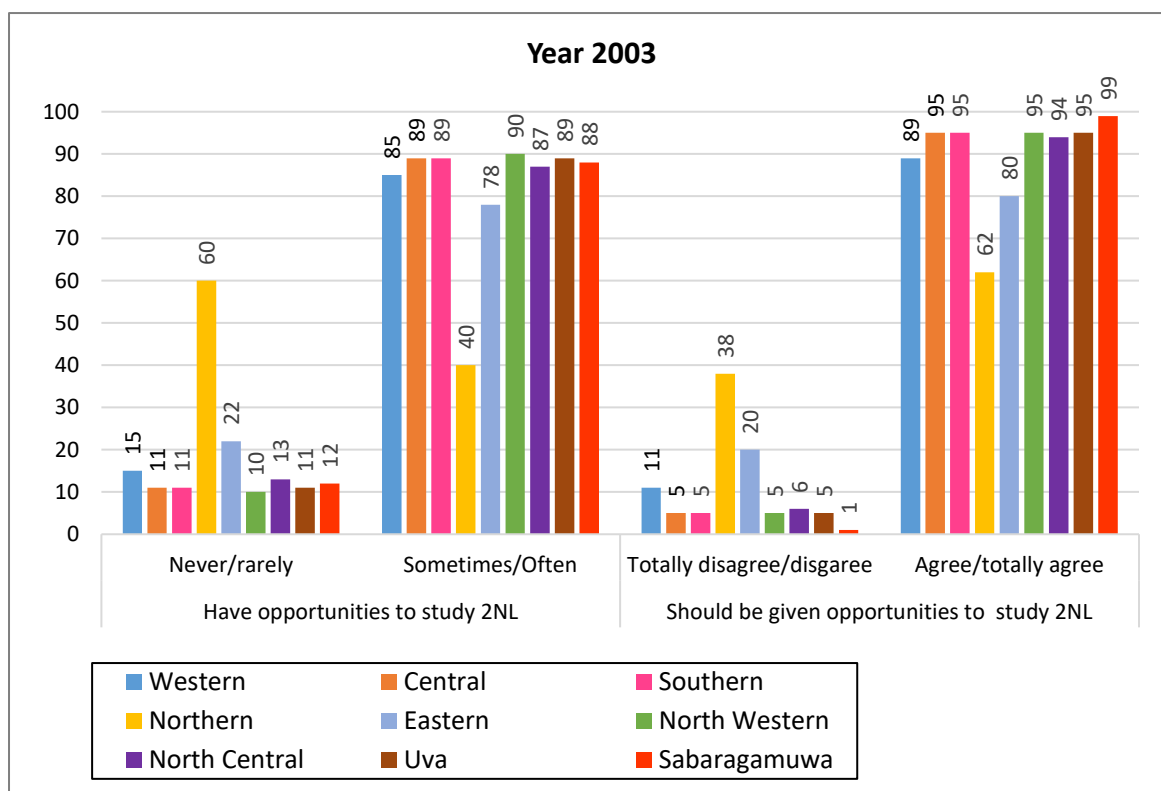
Ethnicity	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	No	Yes	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	4	96	8	92
SL Tamil	12	88	10	90
Indian origin Tamil	13	87	17	83
Muslim	19	81	16	84

All positive responses record over 80% for the availability of opportunities as well as agreement for the need to teach 2NL. However, positive responses of Muslim students have declined for both questions.



**Fig 7.4: Opportunities to study second language by ethnicity – 2017**

The responses of students in the sample, by province, indicating opportunities they had to study the Second National Language in school are given in Fig 7.5.



**Fig 7.5: Opportunities to study second language by province - 2003**

Same information is provided in Table 7.6

**Table 7.6: Opportunities to study the Second National Language by province - 2003**

Province	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Western	15	85	11	89
Central	11	89	5	95
Southern	11	89	5	95
Northern	60	40	38	62
Eastern	22	78	20	80
North Western	10	90	5	95
North Central	13	87	6	94
Uva	11	89	5	95
Sabaragamuwa	12	88	1	99

It is the Northern Province which does not seem to have provided opportunities for the students to learn the Second National Language in 2003.



The situation in 2017 is given in Table 7.7

**Table 7.7: Opportunities to study the Second National Language by province - 2017**

Province	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Yes	No	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Western	95	5	11	89
Central	92	8	11	89
Southern	97	3	9	91
Northern	91	10	11	89
Eastern	76	24	19	81
North Western	97	3	5	95
North Central	98	2	5	95
Uva	95	5	5	95
Sabaragamuwa	93	7	7	93

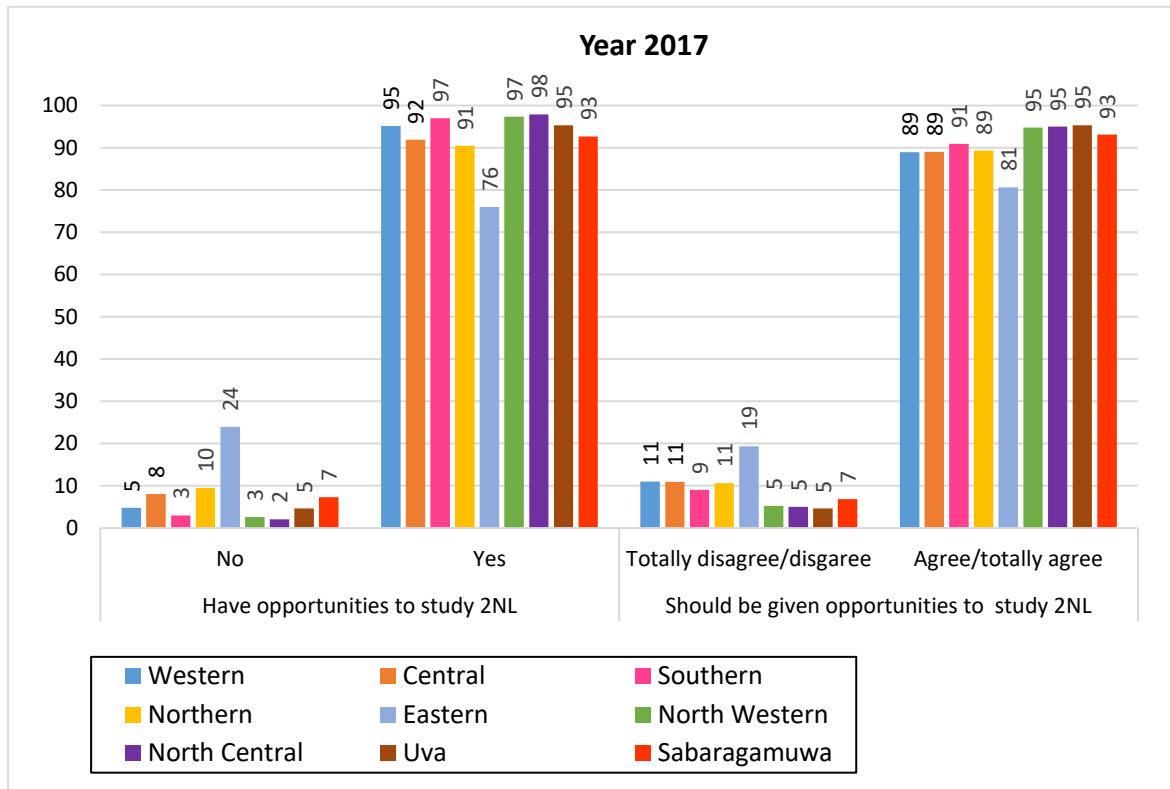
The 2003 data when analysed by ethnicity of students (Table 7.4) and province (Table 7.6) showed further that Sri Lankan Tamil students (38 percent), particularly those resident in the Northern Province (60 percent) comprise the majority of this group deprived of second language learning. The highest percentage - 27 percent students disagreeing with the statement that in school students should get opportunities to learn the second language, were also Sri Lankan Tamil students (Table 7.4). The province that recorded the highest - 38 percent disagreement with this statement was again the Northern, in which most of the student respondents are by ethnic origin Sri Lankan Tamil (Table 7.6).

However, this situation has changed in 2017.

Although, there is a slight drop in the positive responses of the Eastern Province. The Northern Province records a high percentage of 91% which is a very positive sign.

The National Education Commission has declared the achievement of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity the first of the nine national goals, and as educationally relevant goals. Therefore it was imperative that action be taken to improve the teaching of 2NL, especially in the Northern Province.

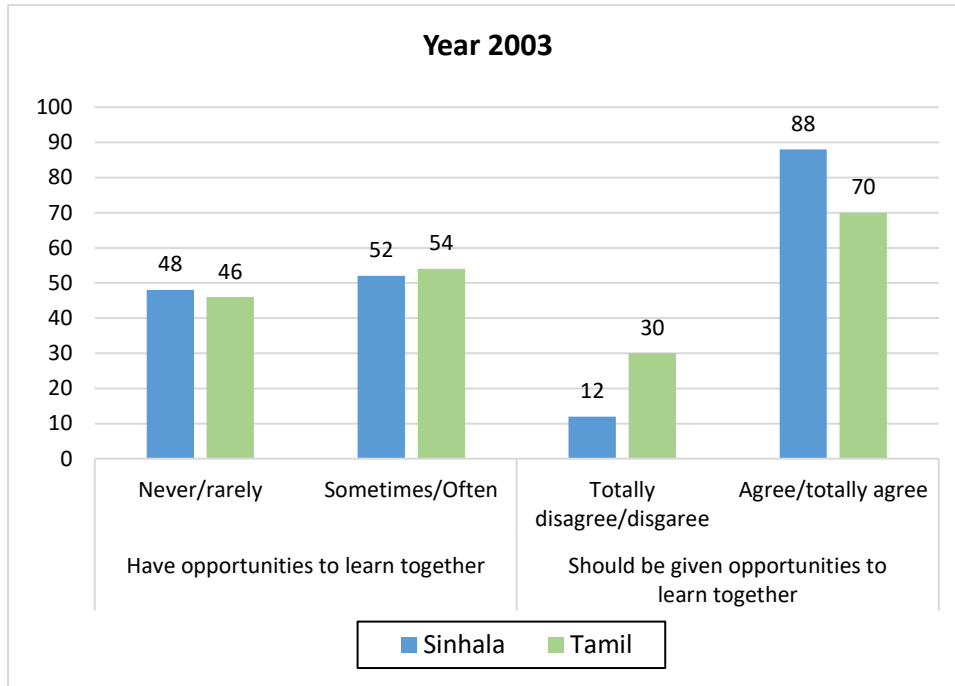
In comparison to 2003, in 2017 there is a positive improvement in all provinces according to student responses.



**Fig 7.6: Opportunities to study second language by province - 2017**

### 7.3 Opportunities for students of different ethnic groups to learn together in the school system

The responses of students in the 2003 sample, by medium of instruction, indicating opportunities they have had to learn together with students of other ethnic groups in school are given in Fig 7.7.



**Fig. 7.7: Opportunities to learn together by medium of instruction -2003**

**Table 7.8: Opportunities to learn together by medium of instruction -2003**

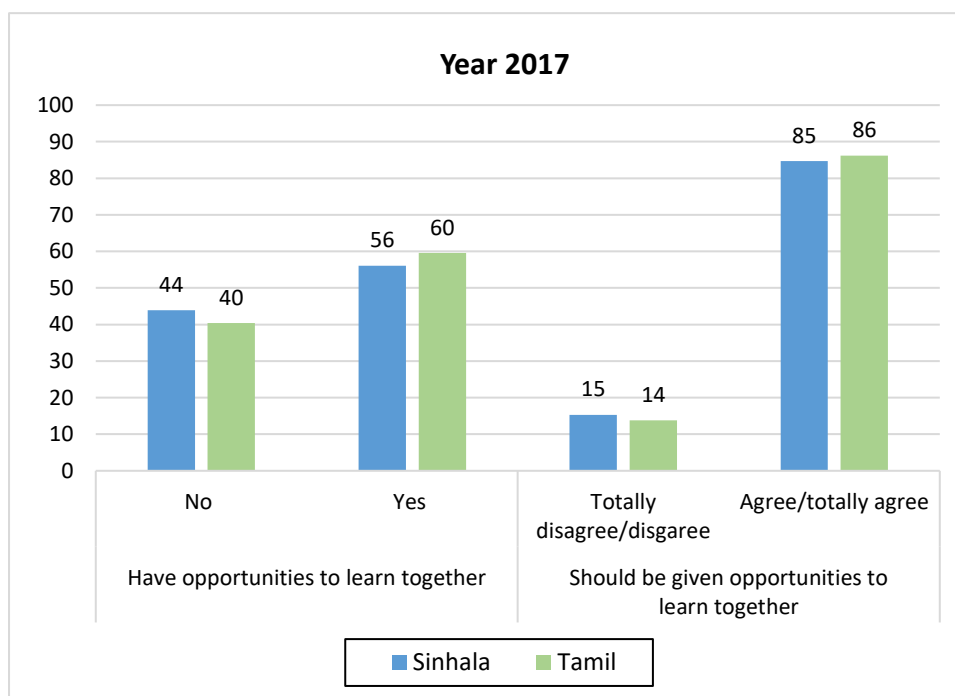
Medium	Have opportunities to learn together		Should have opportunities to learn together	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	48	52	12	88
Tamil	46	54	30	70

Nearly a third of all students learning in the Sinhala and Tamil medium streams in this sample have never had the opportunity to learn together with students of other ethnic groups. The percentages are close to 50 percent, when the two response categories never and rarely are aggregated (Fig. 7.7).

However, this situation appears to have slightly changed in 2017.

**Table 7.9: Opportunities to learn together by medium of instruction -2017**

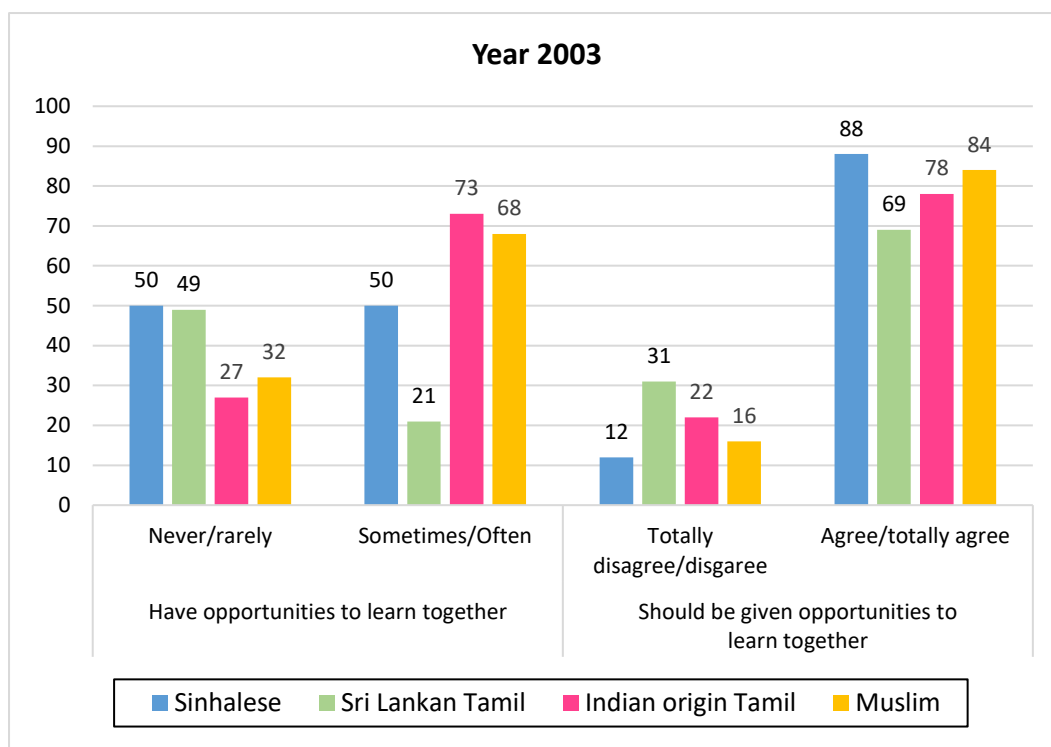
Medium of instruction	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	44	56	15	85
Tamil	40	60	14	86



**Fig. 7.8: Opportunities to learn together by medium of instruction -2017**

In both samples in 2003 and 2017 more than 70% of students agree that they should be provided the opportunities to learn together.

The responses of students in the sample, by ethnicity, indicating opportunities they have had to learn together with students of other ethnic groups in school are given in Fig. 7.9.



**Fig. 7.9: Opportunities to learn together by ethnicity -2003**

**Table 7.10: Opportunities to learn together by ethnicity – 2003**

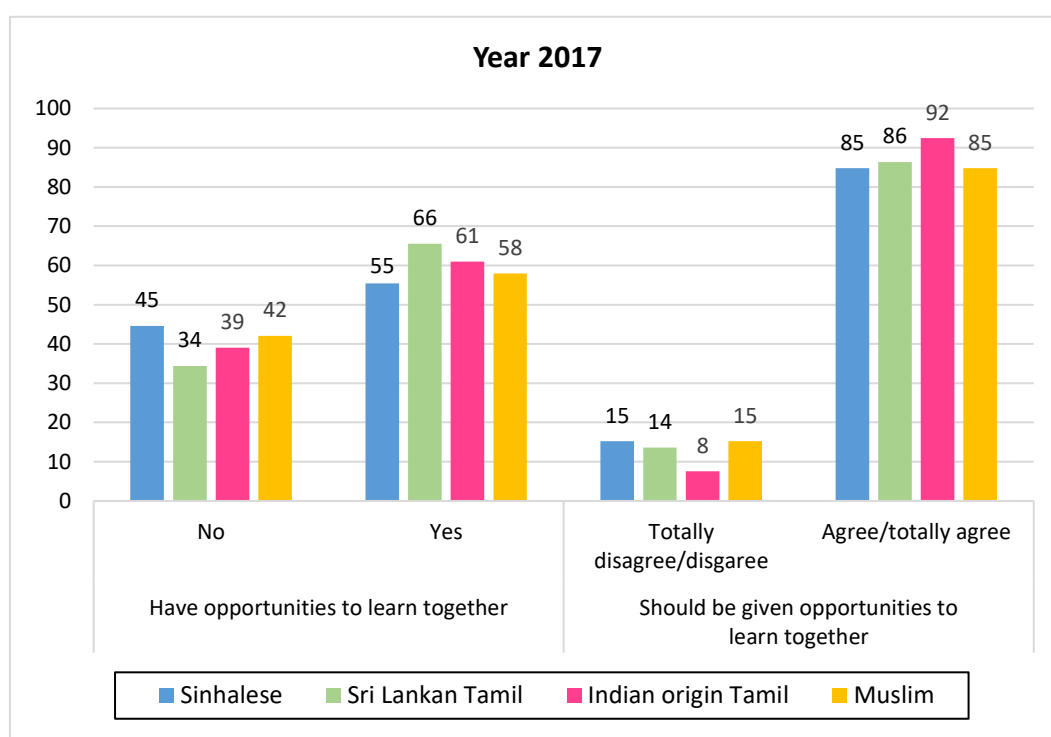
Ethnicity	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	50	50	12	88
SL Tamil	49	51	31	69
Indian origin Tamil	27	73	22	78
Muslim	32	68	16	84

By ethnicity (Fig. 7.9, Table 7.10), the pattern of responses is very similar, with nearly half the students in the two ethnic groups Sinhala and Sri Lankan Tamil indicating they never/rarely had the opportunity to learn together with children of other ethnic groups. The Indian origin Tamil (73 percent) and Muslim (68 percent) students in the sample have had more opportunities to learn together with students of other ethnic groups.

In 2017, the situation has changed for the better slightly for the Sinhala and especially SL Tamil group. However, for the Muslim and Indian Tamil groups the opportunities seem to be less.

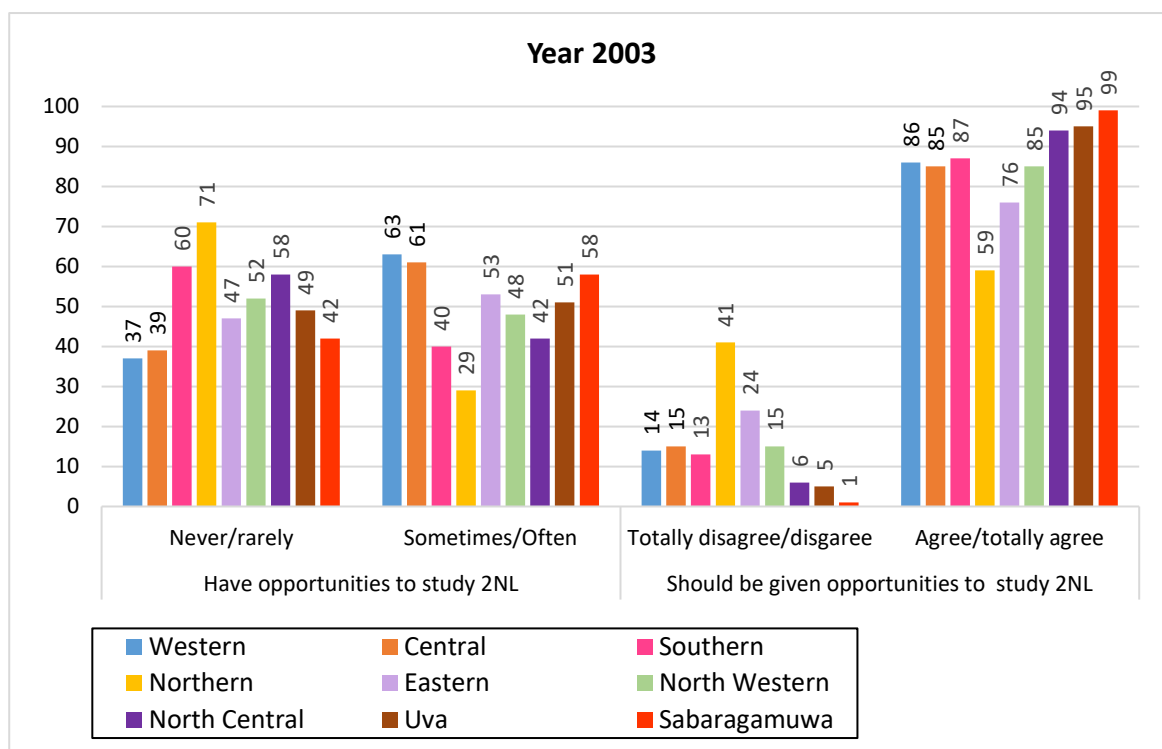
**Table 7.11: Opportunities to study learning together by ethnicity – 2017**

Ethnicity	Have opportunities to learn together		Should have opportunities to learn together	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	45	55	15	85
SL Tamil	34	66	14	86
Indian origin Tamil	39	61	8	92
Muslim	42	58	15	85



**Fig. 7.10: Opportunities to learn together by ethnicity -2017**

The responses of students in the sample, by province, indicating opportunities they have had to learn together with students of other ethnic groups in school are given in Fig. 7.11.



**Fig 7.11: Opportunities to learn together by province - 2003**

**Table 7.12: Opportunities to learn together by Province - 2003**

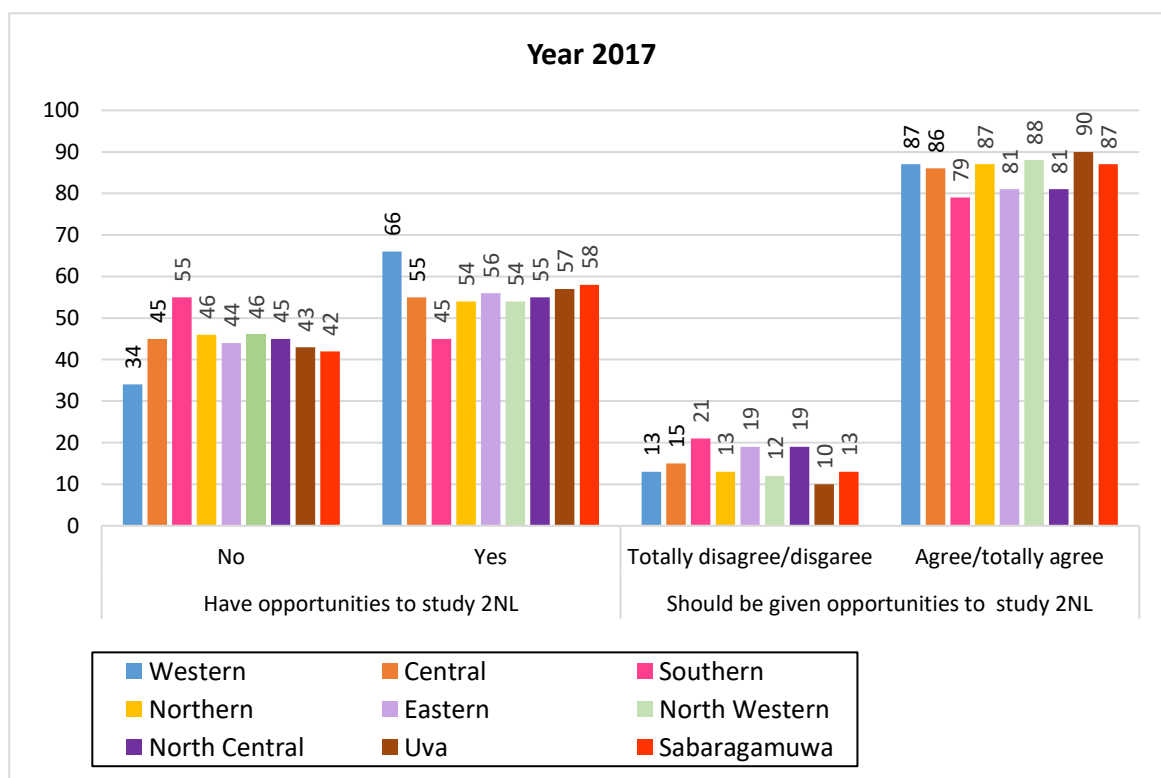
Province	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Western	37	63	14	86
Central	39	61	15	85
Southern	60	40	13	87
Northern	71	29	41	59
Eastern	47	53	24	76
North Western	52	48	15	85
North Central	58	42	6	94
Uva	49	51	5	95
Sabaragamuwa	42	58	1	99

More than half the percentage of students in four provinces (Fig. 7.11, Table 7.12) Northern, Southern, North Central and North Western have never or rarely had this opportunity, followed close upon by 49 and 47 percent respondents in two other provinces Uva and Eastern respectively.

In 2017 while in most of the provinces including the Northern Province opportunities have increased in Central Province the opportunities have declined.

**Table 7.13: Opportunities to learn together by Province - 2017**

Province	Have opportunities to learn together		Should have opportunities to learn together	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Western	34	66	13	87
Central	45	55	14	86
Southern	55	45	21	79
Northern	46	54	13	87
Eastern	44	56	19	81
North Western	46	54	12	88
North Central	45	55	19	81
Uva	43	57	10	90
Sabaragamuwa	42	58	13	87



**Fig 7.12: Opportunities to learn together by province – 2017**



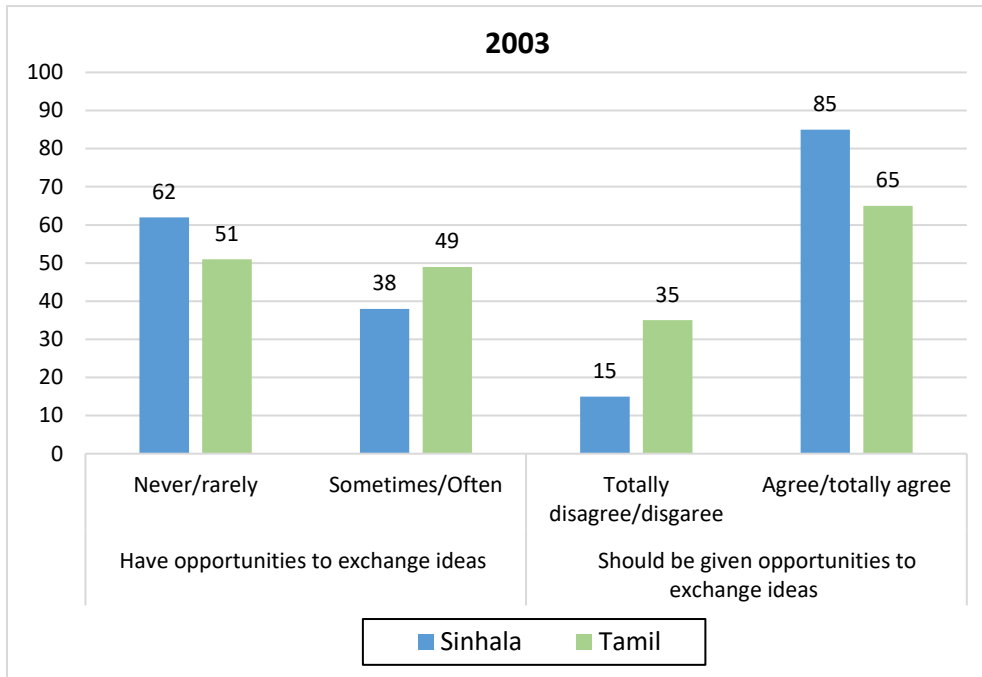
In the total sample in 2003 the vast majority of students – 80 percent were in agreement that students should get the opportunity to learn together. However, by medium of instruction, ethnicity and province, the pattern that emerges is somewhat similar to the pattern of student responses to the paired items 2 and 4.1, on opportunities to learn second language. By medium of instruction, the disagreement with the statement that students should get the opportunity to learn together with students from other ethnic groups was higher, in the Tamil medium relative to the Sinhala medium - 30 and 12 percent responses respectively; highest disagreement by ethnic group – 31 percent was by Sri Lankan Tamil respondents by province, highest percentage disagreement was in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, 41 and 24 percent respectively.

However, it is noteworthy that in 2017 in all provinces there is more than 80% agreement that there should be opportunity to learn together. It is significant that the Northern Province records 95% agreement while Eastern Province records 81% agreement. It reflects that the resistance to national integration and social cohesion, is less among the 14 year old students. Therefore, more opportunities need to be provided if the educationally relevant goal of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity are to be realized.

#### **7.4 Opportunities in school for students of different ethnic groups to exchange ideas**

If the educationally relevant goals of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity are to be realized, school should ideally be a venue and forum for discourse and exchange of ideas among students of different ethnic groups. Conditional to the prevailing limitations to opportunities for students from the different ethnic groups to learn together, and the attitudinal stance of students themselves to the proposition that such opportunities should be available, according to the data from their responses to the paired items 3.2-3.6 and 4.3-4.8

The responses of students in the 2003 sample, by medium of instruction, indicating opportunities they have had to exchange ideas in school with students of other ethnic groups, for example on the ethnic issue, are given in Fig. 7.13.



**Fig. 7.13: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by medium of instruction (2003)**

**Table 7.14: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by medium of instruction - 2003**

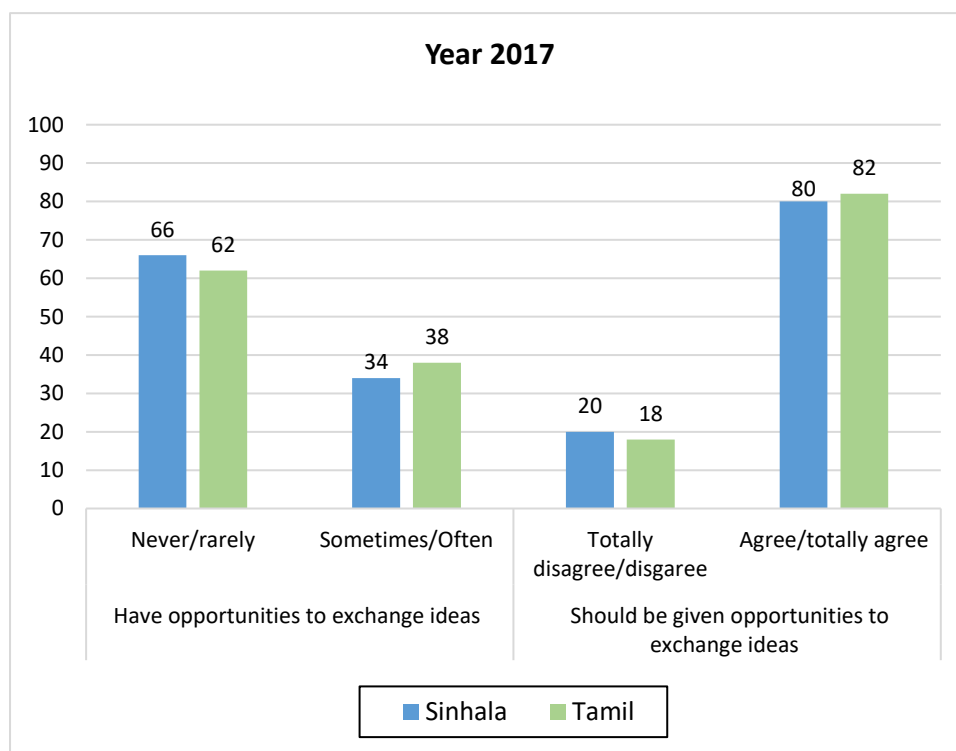
Medium	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	62	38	15	85
Tamil	51	49	35	65

By medium of instruction 62 percent Sinhala medium students relative to 51 percent Tamil medium students indicate that they never or rarely engaged in such exchange of ideas. A higher percentage of Sinhala medium students relative to Tamil medium students agreed that they should get opportunities to do so.

It is disappointing to find that compared to 2003, the situation has deteriorated in 2017.

**Table 7.15: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by medium of instruction – 2017**

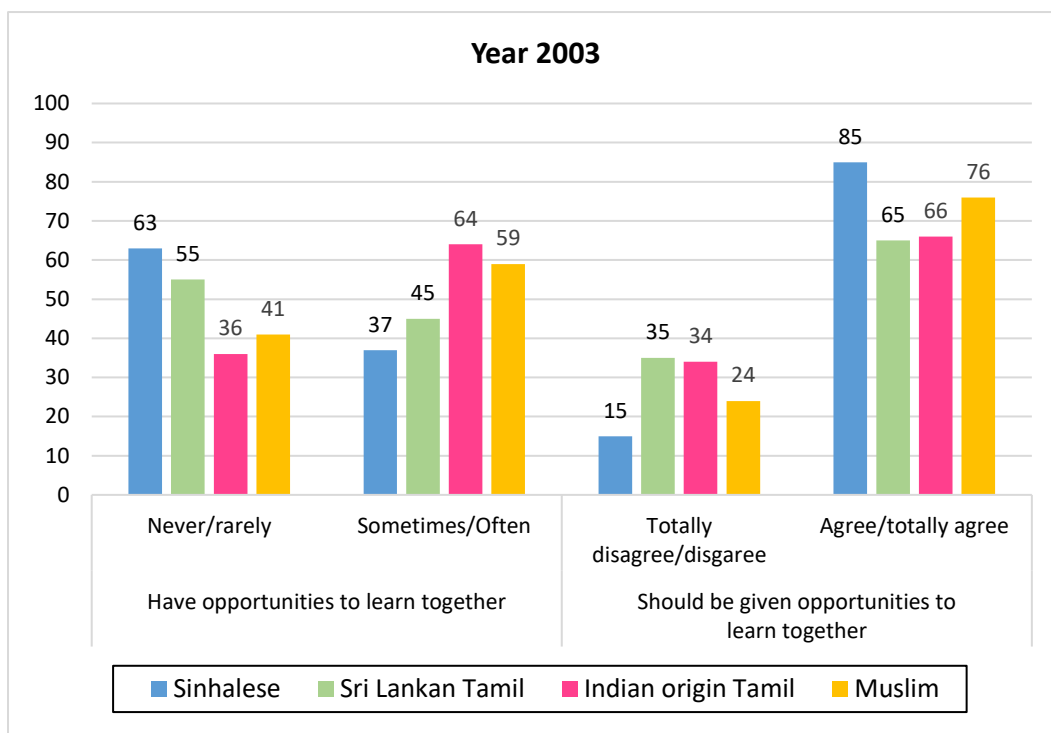
Medium	Have opportunities to study 2NL		Should have opportunities to study 2NL	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	66	34	20	80
Tamil	62	38	18	82



**Fig. 7.14: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by medium of instruction (2017)**

More than 60% of both Sinhala and Tamil medium students claim that they did not have opportunities to exchange ideas. However, there is 80% or more agreement that such opportunities should be provided.

By ethnicity (Table 7.15), the highest agreement with the statement that students should get the opportunity to do so is reported by 85 percent Sinhalese followed by 76 percent Muslim students. In the other two communities too, the percentage agreement with this statement is high, 66 and 65 percent respectively.



**Fig. 7.15: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by ethnicity (2003)**

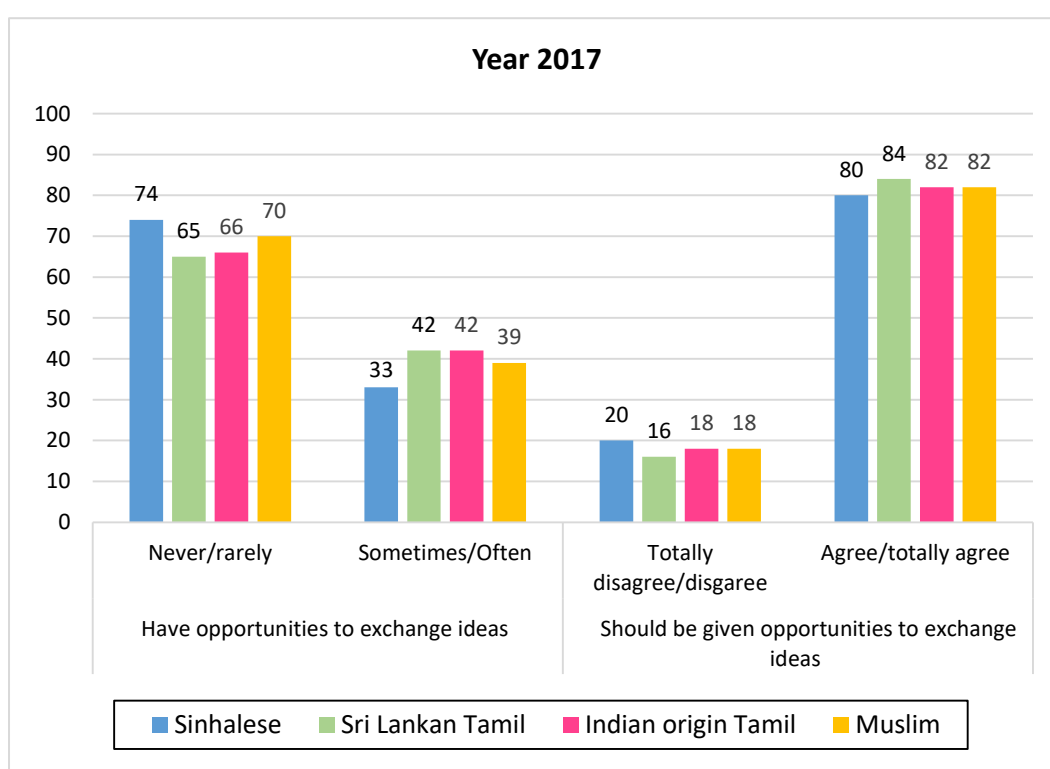
**Table 7.16: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by ethnicity – 2003**

Ethnicity	Have opportunities to learn together		Should have opportunities to learn together	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	63	37	15	85
SL Tamil	55	45	35	65
Indian origin Tamil	36	64	34	66
Muslim	41	59	24	76

Compared to 2003, it is very disappointing that in 2017 more than 65% of all ethnic groups claiming that they never/ rarely get an opportunity to discuss with other ethnic groups.

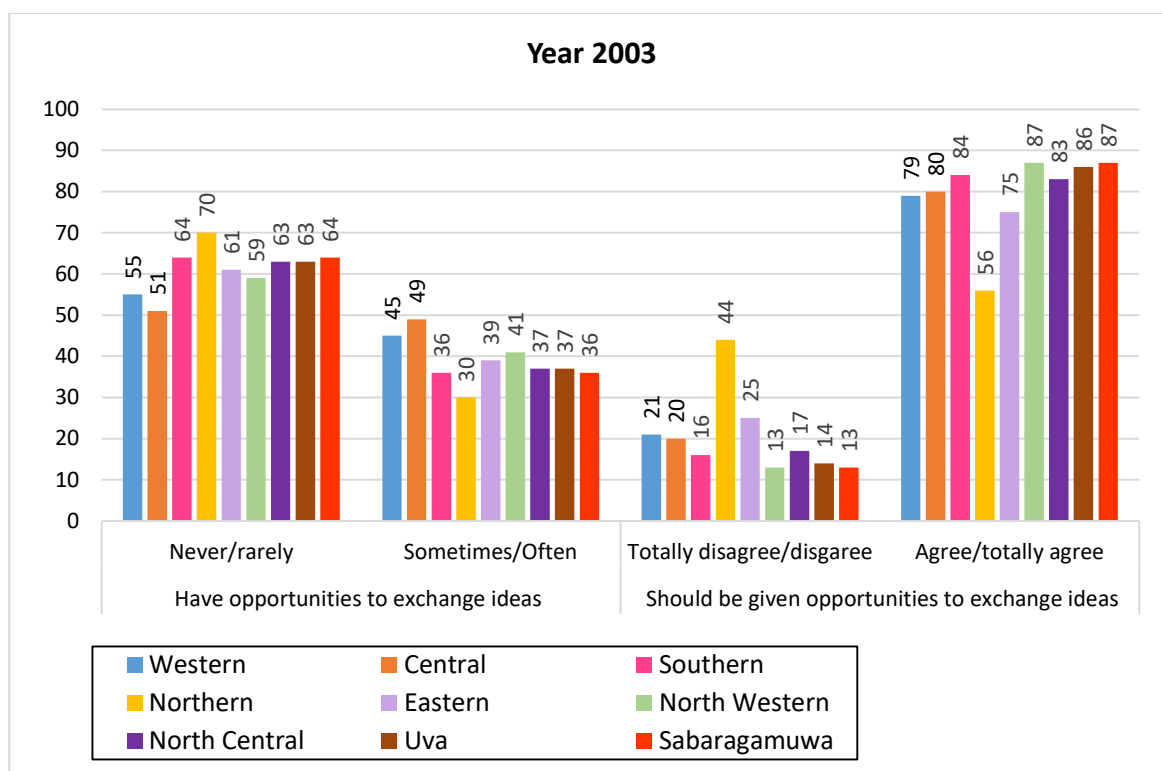
**Table 7.17: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by ethnicity – 2017**

Ethnicity	Have opportunities to learn together		Should have opportunities to learn together	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	67	33	20	80
SL Tamil	58	42	16	84
Indian Origin Tamil	58	42	18	82
Muslim	61	39	18	82



**Fig. 7.16: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by ethnicity (2017)**

The data by province indicates that in all 9 provinces, a majority of the students have never or rarely engaged in open discussions with their peers from other ethnic groups, on national issues of critical concern such as the ethnic conflict. It is noteworthy that the Northern province indicates the highest - 70 percent agreement in the combined response category that students never or rarely had such opportunities and also records the highest disagreement - 44 percent in the combined response category that such opportunities should be available to students, thus reflecting the extent of polarization of attitudes, mistrust and alienation that existed in 2003.



**Fig. 7.17: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by province (2003)**

**Table 7.18: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by province - 2003**

Province	Have opportunities to learn together		Should have opportunities to learn together	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Western	55	45	21	79
Central	51	49	20	80
Southern	64	36	16	84
Northern	70	30	44	56
Eastern	61	39	25	75
North Western	59	41	13	87
North Central	63	37	17	83
Uva	63	37	14	86
Sabaragamuwa	64	36	13	87

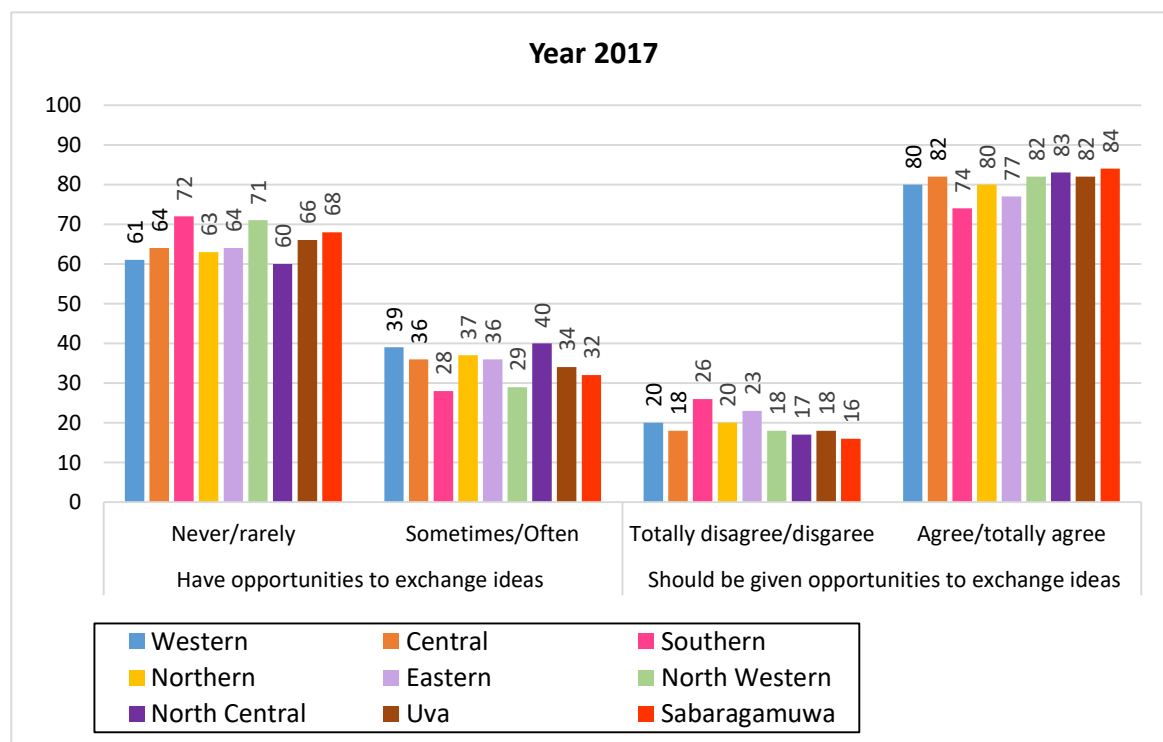
Students' responses in 2003 can be understood in the context of polarization that existed at that time due to the war situation. However, it is sad to note that in 2017 the situation has worsened. If Sri Lanka is to have reconciliation and lasting peace this situation has to

change immediately. A redeeming feature is that in all provinces there is more than 70% agreement that there should be opportunities for dialogue.

**Table 7.19: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by province - 2017**

Province	Have opportunities to learn together		Should have opportunities to learn together	
	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Western	61	39	20	80
Central	64	36	18	82
Southern	72	28	26	74
Northern	63	37	20	80
Eastern	64	36	23	77
North Western	71	29	18	82
North Central	60	40	17	83
Uva	66	34	18	82
Sabaragamuwa	68	32	16	84

In the Northern Province students' agreement records 80% which is a positive sign.



**Fig. 7.18: Opportunities to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups by province (2017)**

## 7.5 Responses of students to paired items

The responses of students to the three sets of paired statements on opportunities to engage jointly with students of other ethnic groups in leisure time activities (SQ\_Part III- 3.3 & 4.4), to participate in activities such as ethnic group festivals (SQ\_Part III- 3.4 & 4.5) and to associate as pen friends/online friends (SQ\_Part III- 3.5 & 4.6) is given in Table 7.20. In this table students responses are compared with 2003 and 2017.

**Table 7.20: Opportunities to engage in leisure time activities, participate in cultural activities and associate as pen friends/online friends with other ethnic groups – 2003 & 2017**

Que.No: SQ_Part III	2003		2017	
	Sometimes/ Often (%)	Agree/ totally agree (%)	Sometimes/ Often (%)	Agree/ totally agree (%)
3.3 & 4.4	50	84	47	83
3.4 & 4.5	45	84	42	83
3.5 & 4.6	29	81	20	59

The student responses to these three sets of paired items, as reported in Table 7.19 indicate that relatively few have associated as pen friends with children of other ethnic groups. Even in events that are traditionally sponsored by schools such as trips, festivals and competitions, many never or rarely had the opportunity to forge informal associations with children of other ethnic groups whereas the vast majority in the total sample agree that students should get the opportunity to do so. It is mostly when students of different ethnic groups study together in schools that they get these opportunities. However, in schools where the student composition is mono-ethnic or, if students are segregated in classrooms by medium of instruction, opportunities for relationships being fostered among students from different ethnic groups are limited or non-existent.

## 7.6 Student perceptions on gender rights and equality

The perceptions of students on gender rights and equality were probed in part 3 of the student questionnaire and items that focus on gender but appear in a number of different scales are presented together in this section. In the test section (part 1) of the student questionnaire, two items, Q.3 and Q.13 touched on gender discrimination and gender equality respectively. The relatively low percentage correct responses of the total sample of SL students particularly to Q.13 in both 2003 and 2017 was discussed in section 2.1, in chapter two, on Civic Knowledge.



In section C on what responsibilities should the government have, item C9 queried students whether ensuring equal political opportunities for men and women should or should not be a government responsibility was discussed in chapter 4 Table 4.5 and the students responses were positive. In section G of the student questionnaire, items G2 – G6 are statements about opportunities women should have relative to men. Items F2 and are G1 statements about the opportunities girls and women in Sri Lanka really do have.. In section A, in item 16, students were asked to indicate whether it is good or bad for democracy when laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed. The responses of the 2003 and 2017 samples of students to these items are presented in Table 7.21.

**Table 7.21: Percentage responses of students to items related to gender rights – 2003 & 2017**

	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Don't know
		2003	2017	2003	2017	2003	2017	2003	2017	2017
G2	Women should contest elections and take part in the government just as men	5	3	11	10	46	50	38	28	9
G3	Women should have the same rights as men in every way	3	10	14	14	35	38	48	34	9
G4	Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women	22	12	34	26	28	30	16	17	14
G5	When jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women	23	13	35	29	26	27	16	14	17
G6	Men and women should get equal pay when they are in the same jobs	4	5	12	12	36	36	48	34	13
F2	Girls have fewer chances than boys to get a good education	25	22	37	40	24	18	14	8	12
G1	Women have fewer chances than men to get good jobs	18	18	32	33	31	29	19	9	11
Sec .A	Item	V. bad for democracy		Somewhat bad for democracy		Somewhat good for democracy		Very good for democracy		Don't know
		2003	2017	2003	2017	2003	2017	2003	2017	2017
A16	When laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed that is	26	27	24	20	26	20	24	21	12

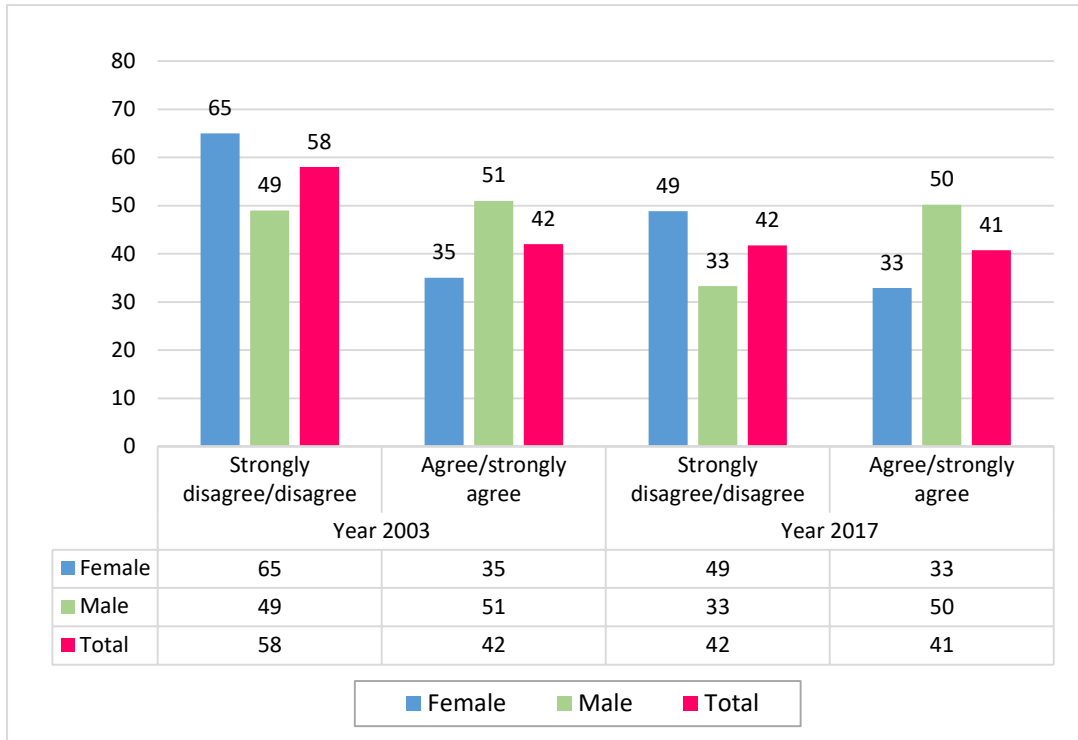
Same trend in responses can be seen in both 2003 and 2017. There is also 10% or more students who claim they do not know the answer.

Item G3 is an inclusive statement on women's rights in general, G6 is on the rights of women to equal pay for same jobs, and G2 is a statement on women's political right to contest elections. All three are stated in relation to men's rights. Over 80 percent of the student respondents are in agreement with all three statements. Although a relatively high percentage, 44 percent agree with the opinion stated in item G4 that men are better qualified than women to be political leaders, 84 percent of the respondents contend that women should contest elections and take part in the government just as men.

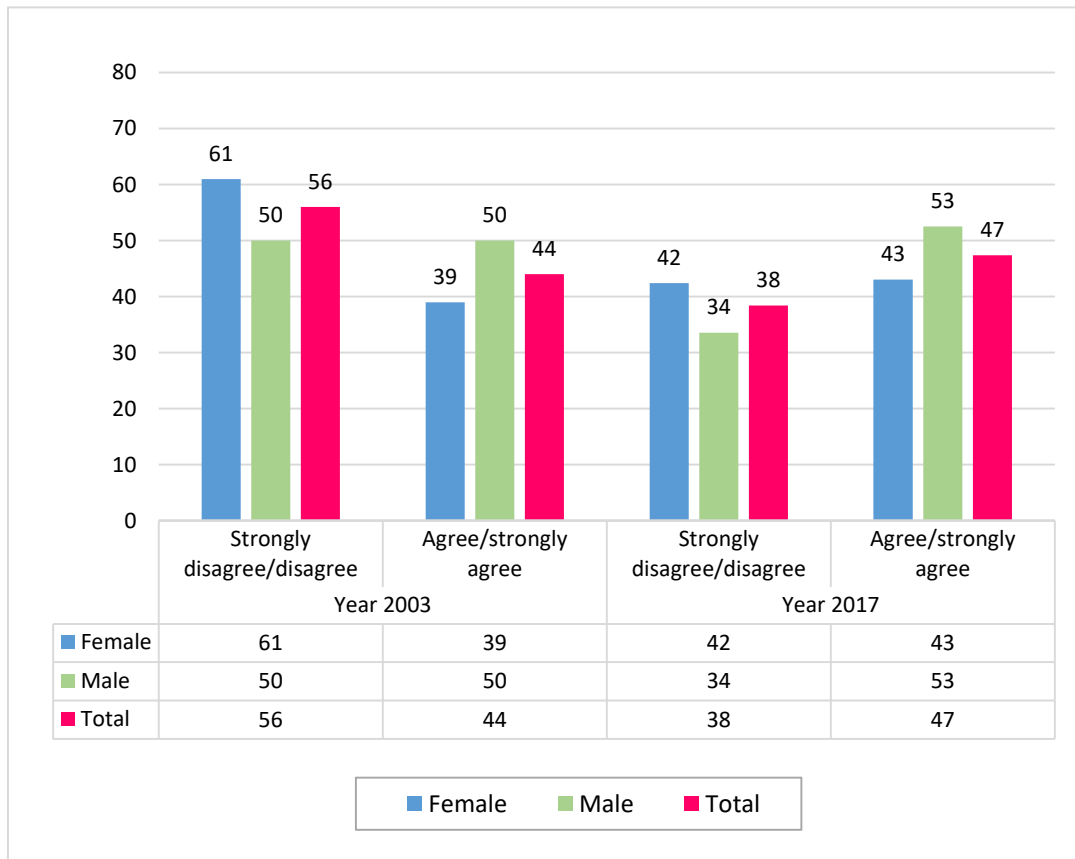
In item G5 when the right of women to jobs is stated conditionally - 'when jobs are scarce', 42 percent respondents have agreed that men should have a better right to a job than women. The respondents are equally divided, in both confirming and refuting the statement in item G1, that women have fewer chances than men, to get jobs. However, likewise, they are equally divided in their opinion on whether it is good or bad for democracy when laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed (A16).

Some interesting variations in student responses are noted when the responses to the two particularly gender sensitive items G5 and G4 are analyzed by gender and ethnicity.

The majority of girls in both 2003 and 2017 disagree with the two statements in G5 and G4. A majority, 51 percent of the boys agree that men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce (G5), but are equally divided in their response to G4.



**Fig. 7.19: Responses of students to Q.No. G5: 'When jobs are scarce men should have more rights to a job than women' by gender - (2003 & 2017)**



**Fig. 7.20: Responses of students to Q.No. G4: 'Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women' by gender - (2003 & 2017)**

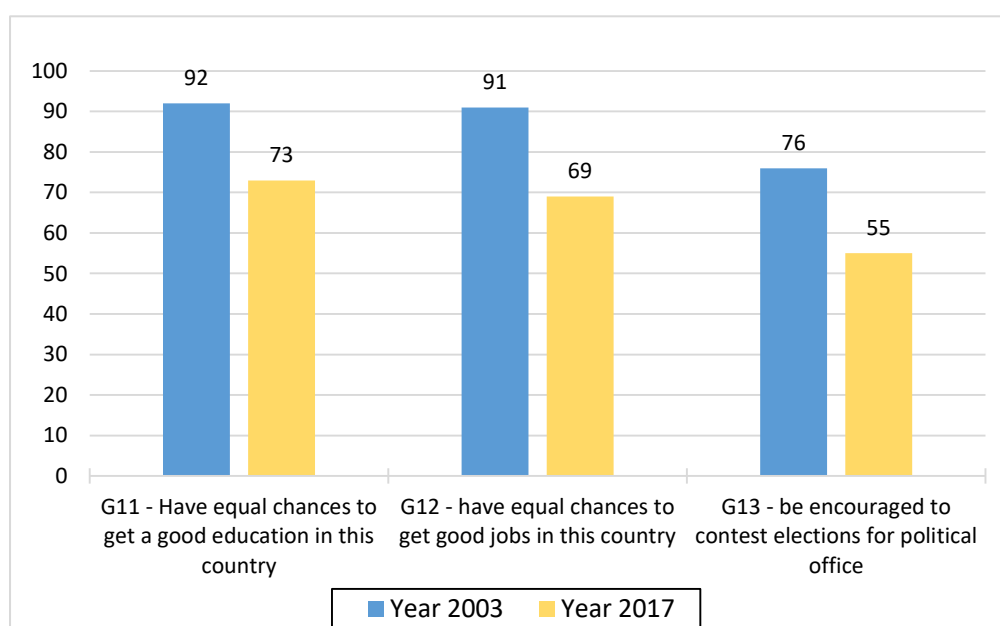
**Table 7.22: Responses of students to Q.No. G5 & G4 by ethnicity - (2003 & 2017)**

	G5: When jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women				G4: Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women			
	Strongly agree/ agree		Strongly disagree/ disagree		Strongly agree/ agree		Strongly disagree/ disagree	
	2003	2017	2003	2017	2003	2017	2003	2017
Sinhalese	39	36	61	44	42	44	58	41
Sri Lankan Tamil	55	54	45	37	54	59	46	31
Indian Origin Tamil	44	50	56	35	38	59	62	33
Muslim	51	54	49	29	48	61	52	23

By ethnicity, the Sinhalese (61, 58) and Indian Origin Tamil (56, 62), relative to Sri Lankan Tamil (45, 46) students in particular, are less in agreement with these two statements, respectively.

## 7.7 Student perceptions on rights of ethnic groups

The responses of students to items in Section G that indicate their perceptions on rights of ethnic groups are given in Fig. 7.18 and Table 7.23.



**Fig. 7.21: Percentage responses indicating students' perceptions on rights of ethnic groups**

**Table 7.23: Percentage responses of students indicating their perceptions on rights of ethnic groups**

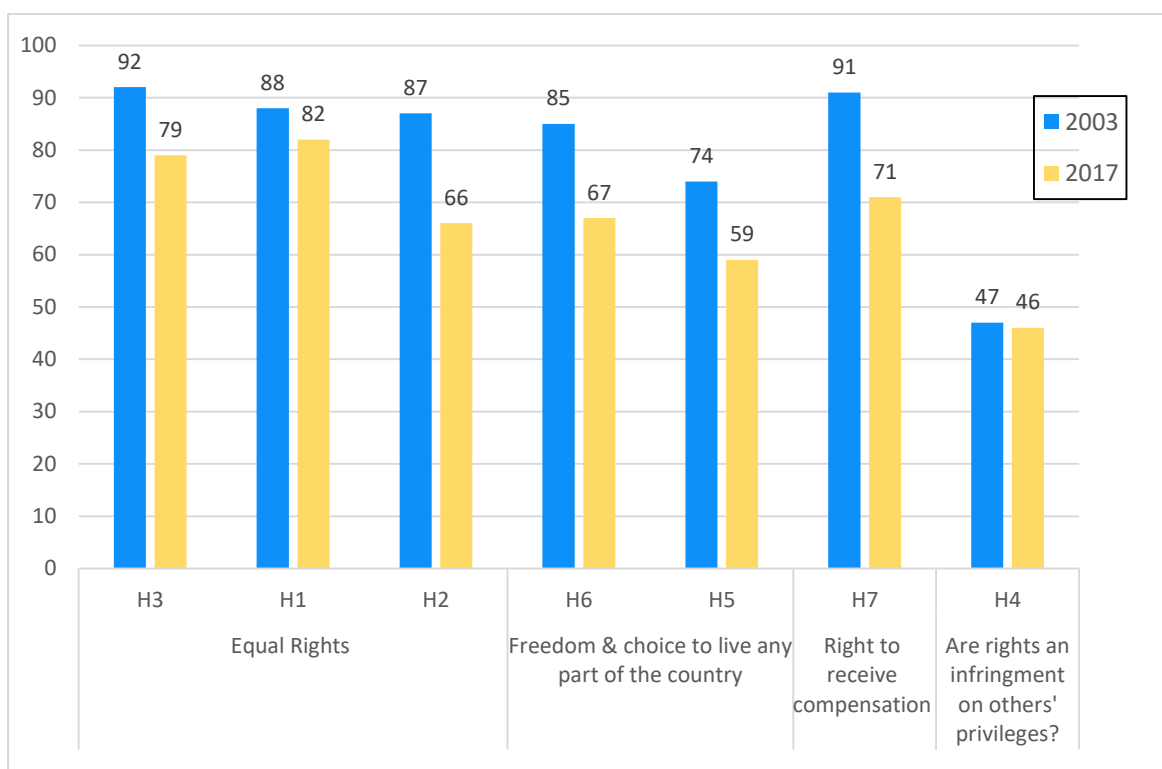
	Item: All ethnic groups should	Strongly disagree/ Disagree		Agree/ Strongly agree		Don't know
		2003	2017	2003	2017	2017
G11	...have equal chances to get a good education in this country	8	18	92	73	9
G12	...have equal chances to get good jobs in this country	9	20	91	69	10
G13	...be encouraged to contest elections for political office	24	23	76	55	22

Overall, the responses of the total sample to items G11 - G13, on rights of ethnic groups was extremely positive, with percentages of 90 and above in agreement with two of the statements in 2003. The percentage response in favor of statement G13 is relatively lower - 76 percent. The vast majority of student respondents are in agreement that members of all ethnic groups should be respected, have equal chances to a good education and good jobs, and be encouraged to contest elections for political office. In the aftermath of 20 years of ethnically oriented civil war in the country it is heartening to note that the younger generation stand by the rights of all citizens irrespective of their ethnicity.

However, in 2017 even though still there is over 50% agreement the percentages are less than in 2003. This is a cause for concern.

## **7.8 Student perceptions on rights of internally displaced persons**

Section H in the CIVED study was focused on the rights of immigrants, whereas in the CESL study, it focuses on the rights of internally displaced citizens/refugees. Most items in this scale were drawn up to probe the perceptions of student respondents on issues pertaining to internally displaced citizens in Sri Lanka in 2003. Fig. 7.22 gives the response percentages of students to the relevant items in section H.



**Fig. 7.22: Percentage responses indicating students' perceptions on the rights of internally displaced persons - 2003 & 2017**

**Table 7.24: Students' perceptions on the rights of internally displaced persons - 2003 & 2017**

		Agree/ Strongly agree		Don't know
		2003	2017	2017
Equal rights	H3. Equal rights for the displaced	92	79	9
	H1. Equal rights to education for displaced children	88	82	6
	H2. Right to receive protection	87	66	13
Freedom and choice to live in any part of the country	H6. Right of choice (of where one wishes to live)	85	67	15
	H5. Right to return to one's own residence	74	59	17
Right to receive compensation	H7. Right to be compensated for loss of property	91	71	16
Are rights an infringement on others' privileges?	H4. Rights as infringing on the right of Others?	47	46	18

In 2003, the perceptions of students were very positive, on rights of internally displaced citizens. The rights of refugee/displaced people to equal rights, of children to equal educational opportunities, to receive protection by being accepted in any part of the country was endorsed by over 80 percent agreement to statements. Students in this sample were equally fair and objective, in considering the more contentious issues of the rights of internally displaced persons to return (item H5), to the decision on whether to return (item H6), their right to compensation (item H7) by the government. Only 47 percent agreed with the opinion stated in item H4 that having many displaced people makes it difficult for people in a region to be united and live peacefully. Overall, the respondents have demonstrated enlightened civic perceptions on the rights of internally displaced persons, irrespective of how contentious the issues may be.

On the other hand, the percentage of students who responded positively to these items is less in 2017. There could be several reasons for this change. Situation in 2003 and 2017 regarding displaced persons have changed. Most of the students in the 2017 sample may not have directly experienced the war situation or the plight of the displaced person. Therefore, their answers are not directly based on practical knowledge but based on theoretical knowledge. This is the reason for more than 10% of 'I don't know' responses. This category has been disregarded in 2003 and that could also be one reason for the high percentage of positive responses.

## **7.9 Student perceptions on rights of members of anti-democratic groups**

Some items in Section G solicited student perceptions on the rights of members of anti-democratic groups, a sensitive issue in the context of Sri Lanka. The responses of students to these items both in 2003 and 2017 are given in Table 7.25.

**Table 7.25: Percentage responses indicating students' perceptions on rights of members of anti-democratic groups 2003 and 2017**

	Item: Members of anti-democratic groups should be prohibited from engaging in the following activities	Strongly disagree/ Disagree		Agree/ Strongly agree		Don't know
		2003	2017	2003	2017	2017
G6	Contesting elections for political office	44	40	56	42	17
G7	Making public speeches about their ideas	35	32	65	56	12
G8	Hosting a television show to talk about their ideas	38	34	62	53	12
G9	Organizing peaceful demonstrations or rallies	40	34	60	54	13

The rights of members of anti-democratic groups is a sensitive and contentious issue in Sri Lanka, clouded by disagreement on criteria by which groups in effect are to be categorized as anti-democratic. This state of ambiguity is probably what is reflected in the responses of student to this set of items. A majority of the respondents to all four items agree that 'anti-democratic groups' should be prohibited from contesting elections for political office, making public speeches about their ideas and hosting television shows for the same purpose, and even organizing peaceful demonstrations and rallies. However, the percentage of respondents disagreeing that anti-democratic groups should be prohibited from engaging in activities stated in these items, is relatively high. Further, in 2017 there is 12 -17% of students claiming they do not know the answer indicating their confusion regarding these issues.

## **7.10 Summary**

The findings in section 7.1, based on a detailed analysis of data obtained using the country specific scale on social cohesion, point to some significant school system related factors that constrain the achievement of educationally relevant goals of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity. If the process of schooling is to contribute to social cohesion the inadequacies and disparities in opportunities for second language learning for students from the different ethnic groups to learn together; to exchange ideas; for more informal interactions and cultural exchanges that foster mutual understanding are



issues that need to be addressed urgently. The polarization of attitudes based on ethnicity is an indication that the school system has not been sufficiently proactive and effective in facilitating social cohesion through the various processes it has in its command to do so, such as providing equal opportunities for second language learning. The redeeming feature in the findings however is that in both 2003 and 2017 the majority of students are positively oriented towards participation in processes that will contribute to social cohesion, if opportunities are provided in the school system. Further, in 2017 the positive responses have increased. This may be due to the activities conducted with the support of GIZ such as student parliaments, exchange programmes, joint religious and cultural celebrations.

In section 7.2, the findings on gender rights and equality indicate that the vast majority of students in Sri Lanka take a firm positive stand on equal rights for men and women, when presented as ideals. However, when issues of equality for men and women are presented in contexts such as job scarcity, a partiality towards men on the part of males in particular is noted. In the international CIVED study, a similar pattern of findings is reported. While generalizing that “the average 14 year old is more likely to have a positive than a negative attitude toward rights for women” (p.185), it states that “a very substantial gender difference in support for women’s rights continues to exist” (p. 186). Another pertinent finding in the international study is that in the endorsement of rights and opportunities for women, relatively low scores are indicated in several countries facing economic difficulty (p. 183).

The findings in the CIVED study indicate that particular groups experiencing discrimination differ between nations – immigrants in many countries, but also, racial, linguistic and religious groups among others (p.183). A positive feature in the findings of the CESL study both in 2003 and 2017 is that students stand by the rights of all citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity, particular status as internally displaced citizens or, as members of anti-democratic groups.

However, another finding that is significant is that there are more than 10% of students from the sample that they do not know whether to agree or not with the given statements. Thus this is an area schools should concentrate on under the topic of democracy.

