INTERIM TECHNICAL REPORT_RESEARCH ICT AFRICA

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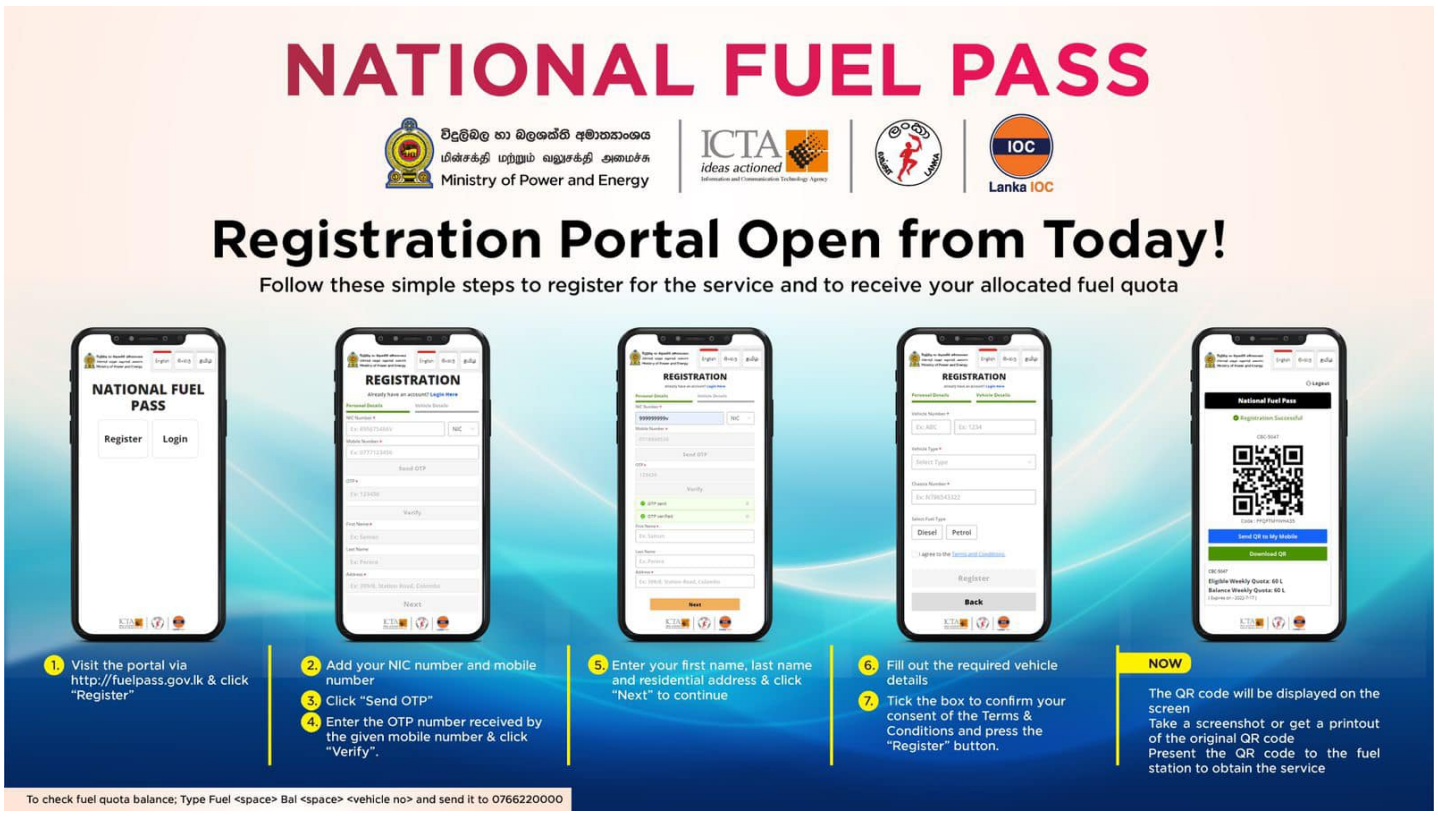
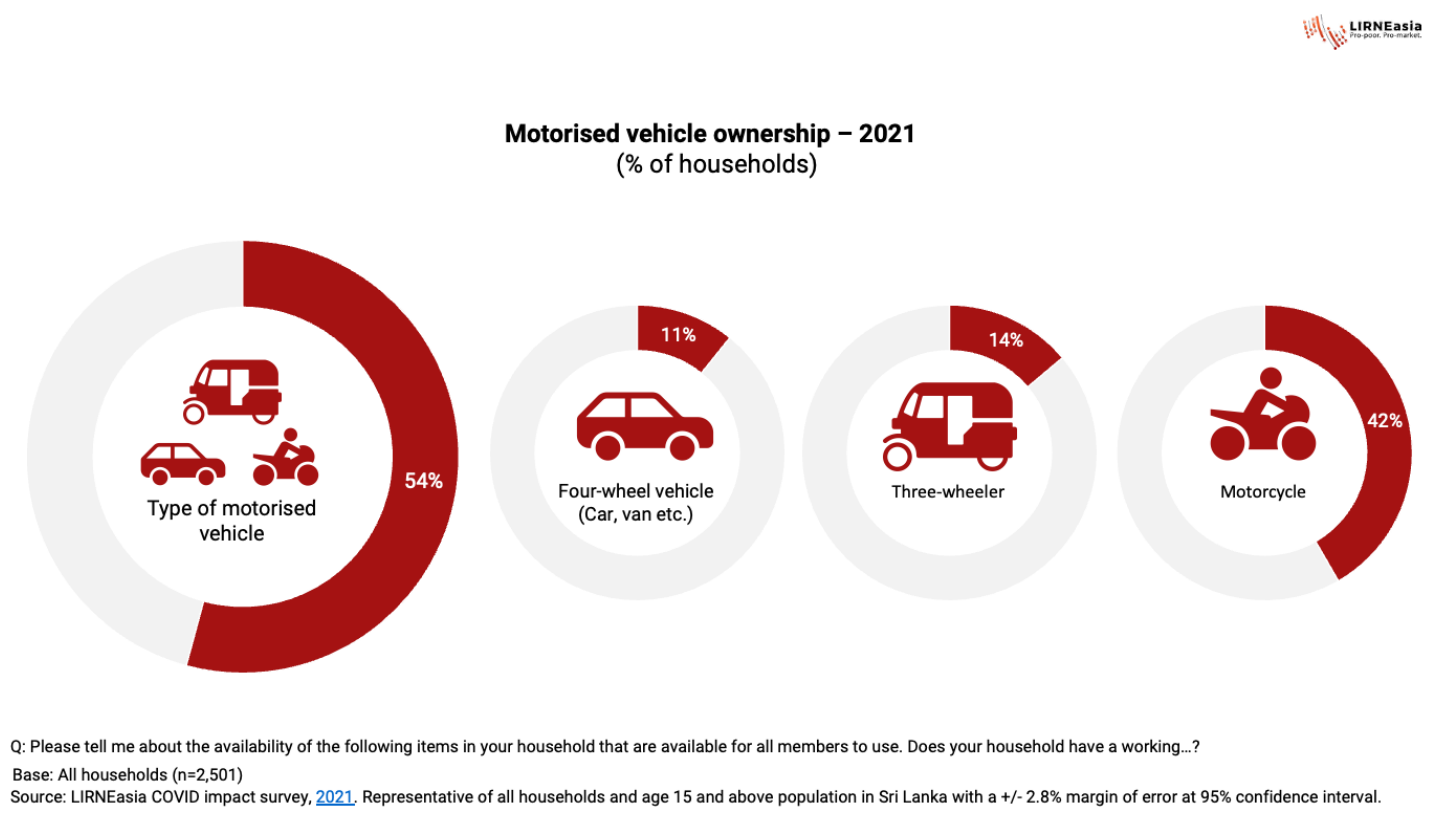
National Fuel Pass – Roadblocks to Inclusion

Posted by Tharaka Amarasinghe on July 20, 2022 / 0 Comments



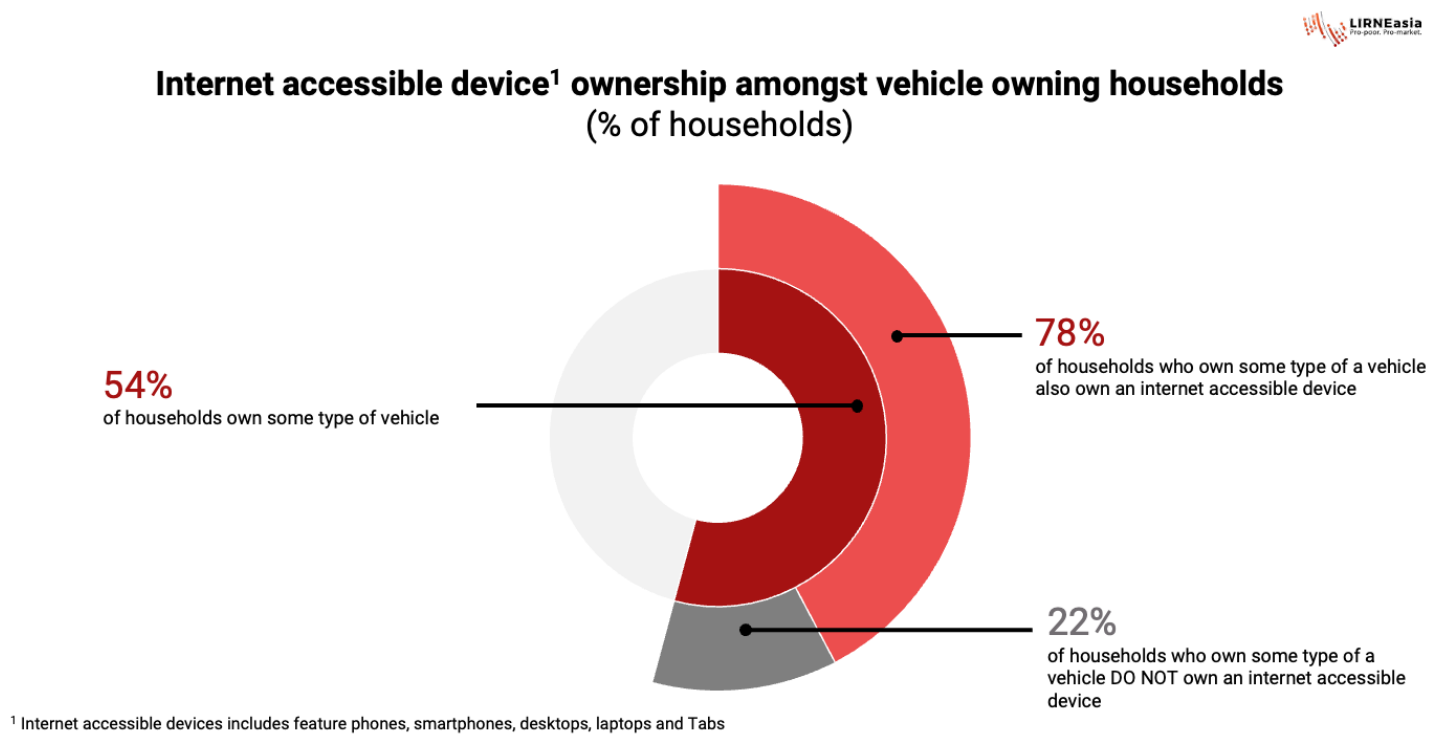
On July 16, 2022, the Ministry of Power and Energy in Sri Lanka launched the National Fuel Pass – a QR code-based system to tackle the ongoing and ever worsening queues for purchase fuel in Sri Lanka. Two million registrations were done with the system by 19th July.

LIRNEasia's nationally representative survey conducted in 2021 shows that 54% of households in Sri Lanka own at least one motorised vehicle – this translates to about three million households.



This system requires those signing up to use a smartphone, or an internet accessible device to register for the service. These devices could include a computer (desktop/laptop/tablet) or a phone (smartphone/feature phone). The user experience with a feature phone will be poor.

However, only 78% of the vehicle owning households own such internet accessible devices. While a substantial portion of the vehicle owning households will own the devices necessary to register for the service, we risk some others being left behind



The fuel pass can be accessed by a smartphone, computer and a feature phone with some difficulty. That still leaves roughly 670,000 households (22% of all vehicle owning households) unable to use this system. They can of course purchase a phone, borrow one from friends and family or access the internet at their office or a communication center (if they can get to one). For some these alternative access modes will beast; for others impossible.

However, 100% of the households w ho own a vehicle own some kind of mobile phone (including basic phones). It will therefore be more inclusive to introduce a system that is compatible with basic and feature phones. SMS or USSD based transactions and authorizations already work in mobile money systems and many other transactional systems. Why not for the fuel pass? The population without smartphones are often the most marginalized so solutions that include them are highly desirable.

Another key issue observed in our 2021 survey was the lack of digital skills among the population. Only 29% of the population aged 15 and above were able to search for information online; just 26% were able to create log-in details and a password.

Many people will need help from others to register for the service. Some will be able to turn to family and friends for support. Some communication centers are already responding to this need and offering this service (see image below). However, some extra support could be provided to help those in need acquire the skills needed to register and use the Pass.

A low bandwidth “how to” video on the website, which runs through how navigate the website, how to register for the service, and use the Fuel Pass at the service station could be a start. It is crucial that these videos also address issues of online safety and security (e.g. informing users that they shouldn’t post or share their QR code or other unique identifiers).

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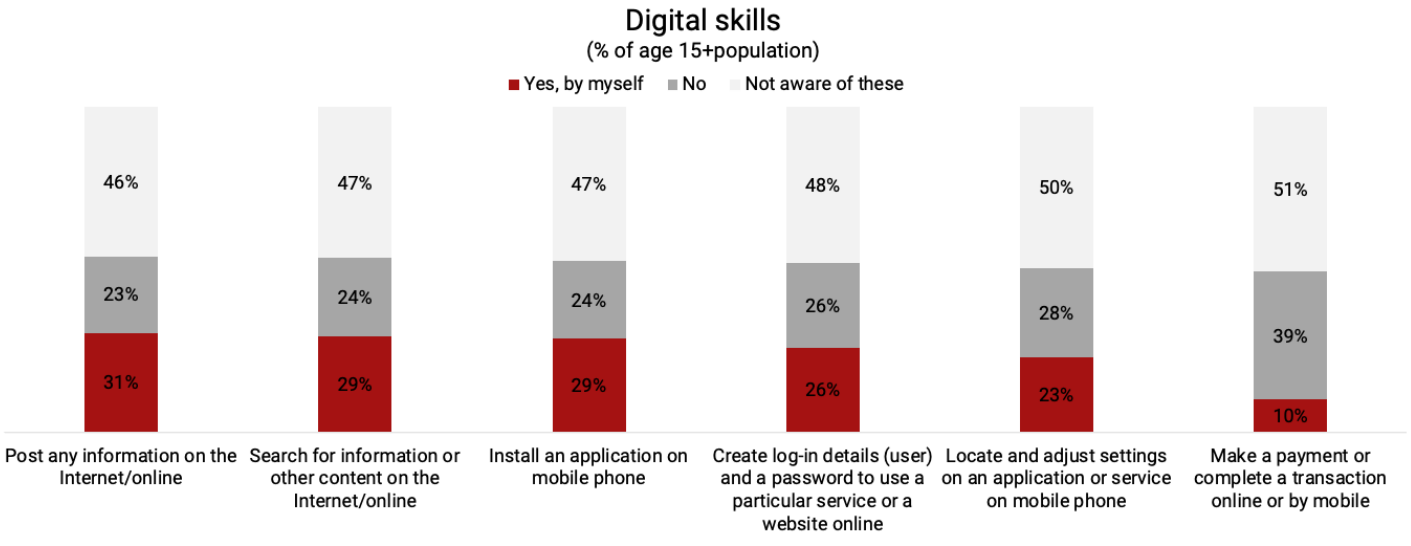

Q1: Can you Search for information or other content on the Internet/online?
Q2: Can you Install an application on mobile phone?
Q3: Can you Create log-in details (user) and a password to use a particular service or a website online. Some examples are Facebook.
Q4: Can you locate and adjust settings on an application or service on mobile phone?
Q5: Can you post any information on the Internet/online. This can include commenting on something that you see, or posting or sharing.
Q6: Can you make a payment or complete a transaction online or by mobile .

Base: All households (n=2,501)
Source: LIRNEasia COVID impact survey, 2021. Representative of all households and age 15 and above population in Sri Lanka with a +/- 2.8% margin of error at 95% confidence interval.

Comments are closed.

New Media & Society : International in scope and interdisciplinary in approach

In his publication 'International in scope and interdisciplinary in approach', LIRNEasia's chair Rohan Samarajiva addresses new media's impact on societies bound by it and the policy implications that emerge as a product of the same within the three spheres of data protection, data localization and cybersecurity. He highlights the continuous need for interdisciplinary research and reflection on social implications of new media.

LIRNEasia Affiliate Dr. Nisansa de Silva Receives Google Inclusion Research Award 2022

Dr Surangika Ranathunga and Dr Nisansa de Silva from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, University of Moratuwa recently became recipients of Google's Inclusion Research award, 2022. Dr.

LIRNEasia' multidisciplinary work on disruptive innovation

Today, I delivered the keynote at the 9th International Conference on multidisciplinary approaches at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Here is on story that I told.

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