

PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL

Date: Tuesday, March 28, 2023
Time: 12:00 PM Sri Lanka Time

TO CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Dalreen Barthelot
Email: dalreen `at` ihp.lk

TO CONTACT LEAD INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Ravi Rannan-Eliya
Email: ravi `at` ihp.lk Twitter: @ravirannaneliya

Sri Lankans continue to hold unfavourable views of all political party leaders

Most more unpopular than French President Macron, with only a few having a small positive rating

Sri Lankans continue to have deeply unfavourable views of most politicians a year after the economic and political collapse in early 2022, and despite progress in recent months in stabilizing the economy and in negotiations with the IMF.

In polling during Sept. 2022–Mar. 2023, almost all politicians tracked by SLOTS had negative favourability ratings, and most had ratings below -30, which make most Sri Lankan politicians as or more unpopular than French President Macron today.

The most popular politician tracked by SLOTS is Dr Sudarshini Fernandopulle, former State Minister for COVID-19. She had an average net favourability rating of +7, but this was still substantially down from late 2021 when it was typically +50 – +70. The only other politicians who had positive or neutral net favourability ratings, were also professionals and from both the government and opposition: Professor Channa Jayasumuna (+1), Harini Amarasuriya (-8), and Ali Sabry (-10).

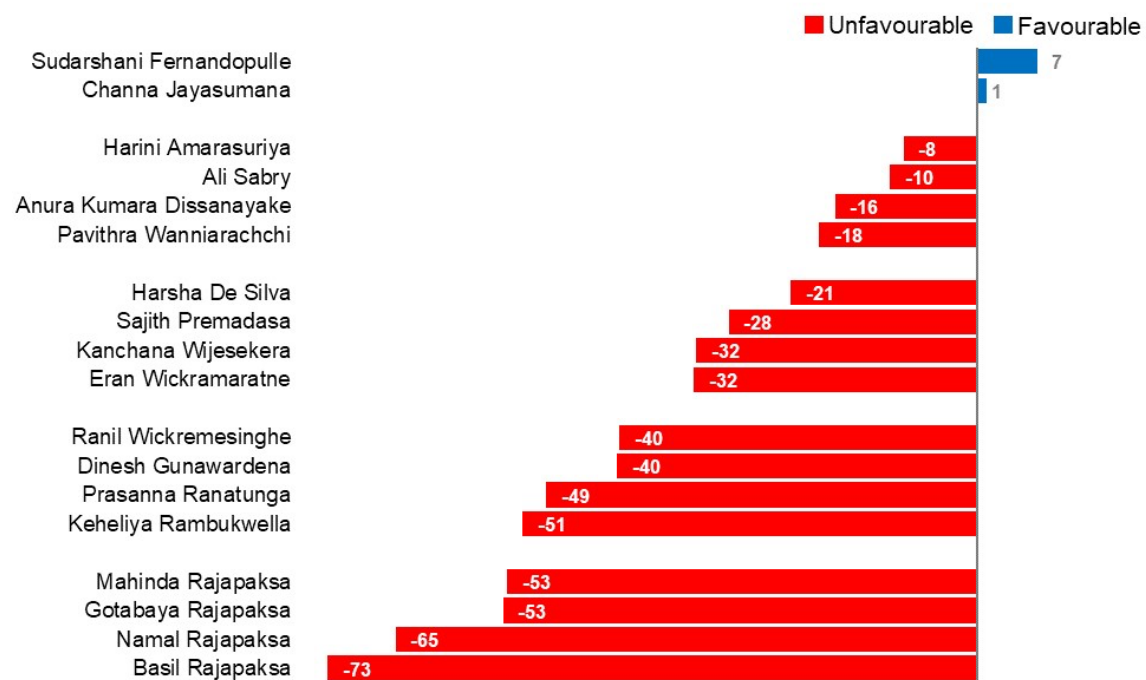
The most unpopular politicians tracked were from the Rajapaksa family, all of whom had net favourability ratings less than -50, with Basil Rajapaksa and Namal Rajapaksa being the most unpopular with ratings of -73 and -65.

Other politicians had ratings of -10 to -50, with government politicians generally doing worse than opposition ones, with the exceptions of Pavithra Wanniarachchi (-18) and Kanchana Wijesekera (-32), although both had significantly negative ratings.

Dr Rannan-Eliya, Executive Director of IHP and lead investigator, commented that “These results suggest that the whole political class is discredited. However, it is notable that the politicians with better ratings tended to be professionals or politicians with a reputation of speaking hard truths to the public—Dr Sudarshini in the case of COVID-19, or Ali Sabry about the economic crisis and the need for painful measures. I think that most politicians don’t want to say difficult things because they think it would make them unpopular, but the public seems to appreciate politicians who try to be honest, even if it means admitting difficult things.”

Sri Lankans have negative views of most politicians

Net favourability rating (%) of ____



Institute for Health Policy Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS)

Survey of 3,692 adults during 23 Aug. 2022–22 Mar. 2023, with favourability items randomized between respondents. Refusals and respondents who had not heard of the relevant item, which averaged 4–6% across questions, are excluded. All estimates weighted to match the national population.

Full report

Institute for Health Policy, March 2023, “Public continue to hold deeply unfavourable views of almost all politicians across all parties” Available at <https://www.ihp.lk/publications/docs/SLOTSReport202307.pdf>

Related reports

Institute for Health Policy, April 2022, "SLOTS Favourability Ratings: Methodology for tracking public favourability", SLOTS Report #2022-03. Available at:

<https://www.ihp.lk/publications/docs/SLOTSReport202203.pdf>

Institute for Health Policy, April 2022, "Economic crisis results in growing public disaffection with politicians, but particularly with President Rajapaksa", SLOTS Report #2022-03.

Available at: <https://www.ihp.lk/publications/docs/SLOTSReport202204.pdf>

Institute for Health Policy, December 2022, "Sri Lankans continue to have unfavourable views of all political party leaders", SLOTS Report #2022-14. Available at

<https://www.ihp.lk/publications/docs/SLOTSReport202214.pdf>

About IHP

IHP is an independent, non-partisan research centre based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The SLOTS lead investigator is Dr Ravi Rannan-Eliya of IHP, who trained in public opinion polling at Harvard University, and who has conducted numerous surveys over three decades.

Methodology

SLOTS surveys a national sample of adults (ages 18 and over) reached by random digit dialling of mobile numbers, and others coming from a national panel of respondents who were previously recruited through random selection. SLOTS tracks favourability by asking respondents if they have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of a public figure or institution: net favourability being the average of the positive (+100), negative (-100) and neutral (zero) responses. All estimates are weighted to match the national population with respect to age, sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sector, province, and past voting preference.

Funding

The SLOTS survey was made possible by funding support from the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, the UK National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the Asia Foundation, and others, but the sponsors played no role in the study design, and analysis and interpretation of findings.