

# Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey

## 2024-14

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# Harini Amarasuriya a popular choice for Prime Minister

#### FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES

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## About the IHP Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey

The Institute for Health Policy (IHP) conducts the SLOTS survey to track changes in health and social conditions, and public opinion in the country, on behalf of the Sri Lanka Health and Ageing Study (SLHAS) consortium of Sri Lankan academic and research institutions. IHP is solely responsible for commissioning and designing the survey, and it takes full responsibility for it. IHP is an independent, non-partisan research institution based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The SLOTS lead investigator is Dr Ravi Rannan-Eliya of IHP, who was trained in public opinion polling at Harvard University, and who has conducted many opinion surveys over three decades, both in and outside Sri Lanka.

IHP conducts the SLOTS survey to track changes in health and social conditions, and public opinion in the country. IHP is solely responsible for conceiving, commissioning and designing the survey, and it takes full responsibility for it. Interviews are done daily by phone by IHP employees, with respondents recruited by a national field survey or by randomly dialling phone numbers. SLOTS fieldwork since 2021 has been supported by a range of funders, who play no role in question design, data analysis, or reporting. Past funders have included the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, Asia Foundation, European Commission, UK National Institute for Health and Care Research, the Foundation Open Society Institute, and others. Current fieldwork is supported by funding from the Velux Stiftung foundation, New York University Abu Dhabi, USAID, and the IHP Public Interest Research Fund. The survey findings and IHP reporting do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of past and present funders. Interested parties can contact IHP for more detailed data and results.

SLOTS respondents consist of a mix of respondents reached by random digit dialling of mobile numbers, and others coming from a national panel of respondents who have agreed to be reinterviewed, and who were previously recruited using random selection. As with any survey, bias can arise from the sampling design and non-response, which means that respondents are not representative of the underlying population. To adjust for this, unless otherwise noted, all reported estimates and analyses use data that have been weighted to ensure that they are representative of the national adult population. This weighting process uses propensity weighting and iterative proportional fitting (raking) to match the national population according to age, gender, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic ranking, education, sector, and geographical location, and where appropriate by voting history. All survey results reflect the views of respondents only at the time the survey was fielded, as indicated in this report.

The survey has an omnibus design, and the Institute welcomes sponsorship to continue the survey, to add new questions, or to undertake tailored analyses of the data. Potential sponsors should contact the Institute for further details.

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# Harini Amarasuriya a popular choice for Prime Minister

In IHP SLOTS polling through 2024 prior to the Presidential Election, AK Dissanayake, Harini Amarasuriya, and Ali Sabry were consistently the most popular politicians tracked. After AK Dissanayake, Harini Amarasuriya was the next most popular, suggesting she will be a popular choice for the PM post.

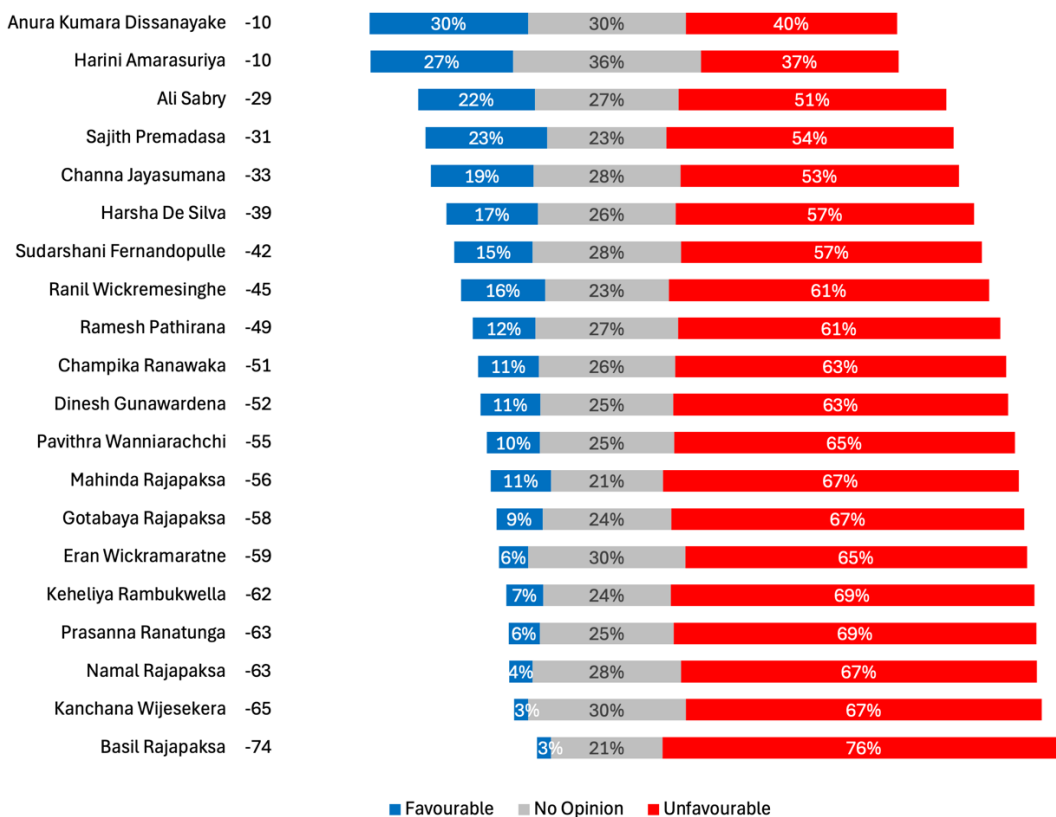
Overall, Sri Lankans still held unfavourable views of all politicians tracked by SLOTS, with most having net favourability ratings below -30%. AK Dissanayake and Harini Amarasuriya had net ratings of -10%, and Ali Sabry and Sajith Premadasa followed with net ratings of -29% and -31% each.

Ali Sabry had the highest favourability rating of all SLPP politicians that SLOTS tracked, suggesting that his retirement from Parliament may be a loss for his party.

Most politicians tracked were deeply unpopular having net favourability ratings less than -50%, with members of the public having unfavourable views typically outnumbering those with favourable views five to one. In general, professionals such as Ali Sabry, Harsha de Silva, Dr Sudarshani Fernandopulle, and Professor Jayasumana tended to have higher favourability ratings than other politicians.

## Sri Lankans have negative views of most politicians

Net favourability rating (%) of \_\_\_ and % of favourable, no opinion or unfavourable view of \_\_\_



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

Based on 6,267 interviews with adult respondents during Jan. 1, 2024–Sep. 20, 2024. Favourability questions were randomized between respondents to minimize respondent burden, so respondents were not asked about all individuals listed. Individual sample sizes given in report appendix. Refusals and respondents who had not heard of the asked individual are excluded. All estimates weighted to match the national population.

The most unpopular politicians tracked during the year were Basil Rajapaksa (-74%), Kanchana Wijesekera (-65%), Namal Rajapaksa (-63%), and Prasanna Ranatunga (-63%).

IHP tracked the favourability of 20 active politicians during the year, consisting of recent Presidents and Prime Ministers, major party leaders, current and recent health ministers and selected other MPs. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, and it's possible that more popular politicians were not tracked. All favourability estimates are weighted for age, gender, ethnicity, province, income ranking, education and sector to match the national population.

## **How we did this**

This analysis uses data collected by the Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS) between January 1, 2024 and September 30, 2024. SLOTS is a national phone survey that has been tracking public opinion every day since August 2021, interviewing people across the country. Respondents are drawn from a mixed sample of a national representative panel of respondents previously recruited in 2019 through face-to-face interviews from all parts of the country, and others reached by randomly dialling mobile numbers.

Respondents are interviewed in their language of choice: Sinhala, Tamil, or English. The specific question about favourability is worded as follows: "Can you tell me whether you have a favourable or unfavourable view of \_\_\_\_\_ — or that you are unsure or have no view of [it], or that you have not heard of [it]." When interviewers read out the possible responses, the ordering of "favourable" and "unfavourable" is randomized between respondents to minimize bias. The specific individual or institution that respondents are asked their opinion about are randomized between respondents, so no respondent is asked about all items.

All reported results are weighted to be representative of all Sri Lankan adults by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, household socioeconomic status ranking, education, and province. The household socioeconomic status ranking of respondents is based on a wealth index computed from ownership of household assets, which is calibrated to match the overall national distribution of assets including households without phones.

Weights are trimmed at the 2nd and 99th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. The SLOTS survey cannot reach adults living in households without phones, but the weighting adjustment by socioeconomic status and province substantially compensates for this.

## Statistical Appendix

### Appendix 1: Net favourability estimates

Politician	N	Net favourability (%)	95% CI
Anura Kumara Disanayake	2,806	-10.0	-14.5 – -5.5
Harini Amarasuriya	1,201	-10.5	-16.8 – -4.1
Ali Sabry	1,542	-28.5	-34.3 – -22.8
Sajith Premadasa	2,800	-31.3	-35.7 – -26.9
Channa Jayasumana	906	-33.3	-40.8 – -25.7
Harsha De Silva	1,620	-39.2	-44.4 – -33.9
Sudarshani Fernandopulle	1,748	-42.1	-47.0 – -37.3
Ranil Wickremesinghe	2,808	-44.7	-48.7 – -40.7
Ramesh Pathirana	2,773	-49.1	-52.9 – -45.3
Chandika Ranawaka	1,052	-51.2	-57.2 – -45.2
Dinesh Gunawardena	2,789	-52.0	-55.7 – -48.3
Pavithra Wanniarachchi	1,049	-54.6	-60.3 – -48.9
Mahinda Rajapaksa	1,051	-56.0	-62.5 – -49.5
Gotabaya Rajapaksa	1,518	-58.1	-63.2 – -53.0
Eran Wickramaratne	1,659	-59.1	-63.2 – -54.9
Keheliya Rambukwella	1,045	-61.9	-67.4 – -56.3
Prasanna Ranatunga	860	-62.7	-68.7 – -56.7
Namal Rajapaksa	2,565	-62.9	-66.2 – -59.6
Kanchana Wijesekera	1,746	-64.7	-68.3 – -61.2
Basil Rajapaksa	2,565	-73.5	-77.8 – -69.2

Note: N = Number of respondents

## Appendix 2: Favourability of politicians – Composition of samples

		Keheliya Rambukwella			Pavithra Wanniarachchi			Sudarshani Fernandopulle			Channa Jayasumana		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
<b>Total</b>		1,045	1,045	100.0	1,049	1,049	100.0	1,748	1,748	100.0	906	906	100.0
<b>Sex</b>	Male	540	525	50.2	538	516	49.2	874	840	48.1	459	416	45.9
	Female	505	520	49.8	511	533	50.8	874	908	51.9	447	490	54.1
<b>Age (years)</b>	18–29	179	283	27.0	172	277	26.4	305	432	24.7	151	229	25.2
	30–39	228	183	17.5	230	190	18.2	367	333	19.1	185	164	18.1
	40–49	249	168	16.1	243	175	16.6	393	313	17.9	199	166	18.3
	50–59	155	183	17.5	171	178	17.0	306	286	16.3	165	150	16.6
	60–69	146	129	12.3	149	126	12.0	223	221	12.6	123	118	13.0
	70–79	72	78	7.4	66	78	7.4	123	126	7.2	60	58	6.4
	80+	18	22	2.1	18	25	2.4	32	36	2.1	24	21	2.3
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Sinhala	887	792	75.8	896	791	75.4	1,519	1,300	74.4	796	690	76.1
	SL Tamil	80	122	11.6	82	136	12.9	116	235	13.5	61	105	11.6
	Estate Tamil	14	35	3.4	10	32	3.0	24	60	3.4	11	27	2.9
	Muslim	45	92	8.8	44	87	8.3	76	147	8.4	33	82	9.0
	Other	21	5	0.4	17	4	0.4	14	6	0.3	6	3	0.3
	<b>Province</b>	WP	300	260	24.9	297	243	23.2	470	454	26.0	231	234
CP		123	148	14.1	142	160	15.2	226	257	14.7	128	138	15.2
SP		158	151	14.4	154	136	12.9	279	204	11.7	143	98	10.8
NP		49	51	4.8	53	54	5.1	77	92	5.3	37	46	5.1
EP		48	80	7.6	45	77	7.4	85	135	7.7	38	77	8.5
NWP		123	108	10.3	120	122	11.6	189	212	12.1	95	101	11.2
NCP		69	83	8.0	61	65	6.2	120	120	6.8	69	66	7.3
Uva		72	60	5.7	74	66	6.3	121	119	6.8	73	53	5.9
Sab		105	104	10.0	103	127	12.1	182	155	8.9	93	92	10.1
<b>Sector</b>	Urban	289	202	19.4	270	188	17.9	463	323	18.5	241	167	18.4
	Rural	758	843	80.6	779	861	82.1	1,286	1,425	81.5	666	739	81.6
<b>SES Tertile</b>	Lower Income	219	359	34.4	241	379	36.1	367	591	33.8	203	312	34.4
	Middle Income	289	316	30.3	299	328	31.3	520	571	32.7	275	277	30.5
	Upper Income	539	369	35.3	509	342	32.6	862	586	33.5	429	318	35.1

		Prasanna Ranatunga			Basil Rajapaksa			Namal Rajapaksa			Ali Sabry		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
<b>Total</b>		860	860	100.0	957	957	100.0	2,565	2,565	100.0	1,542	1,542	100.0
<b>Sex</b>	Male	443	427	49.7	477	452	47.3	1,260	1,266	49.3	759	718	46.6
	Female	417	433	50.3	480	505	52.7	1,305	1,299	50.7	783	824	53.4
<b>Age (years)</b>	18–29	136	237	27.6	177	244	25.5	532	687	26.8	269	391	25.3
	30–39	184	150	17.5	186	178	18.6	553	456	17.8	306	300	19.4
	40–49	202	133	15.4	213	176	18.4	598	445	17.3	345	271	17.6
	50–59	148	153	17.8	173	151	15.8	427	418	16.3	282	252	16.4
	60–69	119	103	12.0	124	120	12.6	312	302	11.8	196	188	12.2
	70–79	54	65	7.6	64	64	6.7	123	201	7.8	117	108	7.0
	80+	18	18	2.1	20	23	2.4	22	58	2.2	27	32	2.1
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Sinhala	719	652	75.9	826	740	77.3	2,200	1,900	74.1	1,328	1,135	73.6
	SL Tamil	66	103	11.9	69	103	10.7	182	344	13.4	110	209	13.6
	Estate Tamil	14	27	3.1	10	31	3.3	26	90	3.5	21	52	3.3
	Muslim	43	75	8.7	43	80	8.4	126	223	8.7	70	141	9.2
	Other	19	4	0.4	9	3	0.3	33	9	0.3	13	5	0.3
	<b>Province</b>	WP	251	215	25.0	259	261	27.3	730	623	24.3	415	416
CP		109	121	14.0	135	140	14.6	316	361	14.1	206	204	13.2
SP		121	112	13.0	157	109	11.4	390	332	12.9	243	184	11.9
NP		49	43	5.0	42	48	5.0	108	143	5.6	72	82	5.3
EP		40	61	7.1	38	63	6.6	126	197	7.7	73	124	8.0
NWP		91	90	10.4	105	113	11.8	325	296	11.5	160	180	11.7
NCP		53	65	7.5	67	68	7.1	142	187	7.3	104	108	7.0
Uva		58	53	6.2	65	60	6.3	173	158	6.2	115	96	6.2
Sab		89	100	11.6	89	96	10.0	257	267	10.4	154	149	9.7
<b>Sector</b>	Urban	232	167	19.5	263	172	18.0	645	528	20.6	406	279	18.1
	Rural	629	693	80.5	694	785	82.0	1,922	2,037	79.4	1,136	1,263	81.9
<b>SES Tertile</b>	Lower Income	180	287	33.3	215	318	33.3	505	881	34.3	340	523	33.9
	Middle Income	234	270	31.4	275	302	31.6	714	848	33.1	466	504	32.7
	Upper Income	447	303	35.3	467	336	35.2	1,348	836	32.6	736	515	33.4

Note: N = Unweighted number of respondents; Nw = Weighted number of respondents.

		Harsha De Silva			Eran Wickramaratne			Gotabaya Rajapaksa			Mahinda Rajapaksa		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
<b>Total</b>		1,620	1,620	100.0	1,659	1,659	100.0	1,518	1,518	100.0	1,051	1,051	100.0
<b>Sex</b>	Male	825	782	48.3	846	820	49.4	775	775	51.0	544	509	48.4
	Female	795	838	51.7	813	839	50.6	743	743	49.0	507	542	51.6
<b>Age (years)</b>	18–29	265	431	26.6	273	430	25.9	291	408	26.9	156	278	26.4
	30–39	343	296	18.3	359	307	18.5	337	259	17.1	246	182	17.3
	40–49	360	282	17.4	378	269	16.2	374	261	17.2	237	176	16.7
	50–59	283	266	16.4	269	285	17.2	241	258	17.0	181	182	17.3
	60–69	216	194	12.0	236	205	12.4	182	187	12.3	143	131	12.5
	70–79	115	112	6.9	118	130	7.8	73	113	7.4	67	76	7.3
	80+	38	39	2.4	27	34	2.0	22	33	2.2	21	26	2.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Sinhala	1,381	1,219	75.2	1,410	1,229	74.1	1,297	1,141	75.2	903	788	75.0
	SL Tamil	124	203	12.5	120	221	13.3	105	186	12.3	82	143	13.6
	Estate Tamil	20	48	3.0	24	58	3.5	18	53	3.5	10	30	2.8
	Muslim	75	145	8.9	78	145	8.8	78	132	8.7	41	86	8.2
	Other	20	6	0.4	28	6	0.4	22	5	0.3	15	4	0.4
<b>Province</b>	WP	451	424	26.2	464	405	24.4	435	387	25.5	291	246	23.4
	CP	210	239	14.8	206	239	14.4	186	224	14.7	132	157	15.0
	SP	241	200	12.4	251	219	13.2	228	188	12.4	154	146	13.9
	NP	84	83	5.1	81	85	5.1	66	76	5.0	55	55	5.2
	EP	68	112	6.9	80	132	7.9	79	114	7.5	44	78	7.4
	NWP	176	175	10.8	186	196	11.8	183	160	10.5	129	106	10.1
	NCP	112	117	7.2	99	107	6.5	92	113	7.4	63	69	6.6
	Uva	116	94	5.8	117	98	5.9	93	97	6.4	76	69	6.6
	Sab	162	174	10.8	176	178	10.7	158	159	10.5	107	124	11.8
	<b>Sector</b>	Urban	451	292	18.1	432	325	19.6	402	306	20.2	272	200
Rural		1,169	1,328	81.9	1,228	1,334	80.4	1,118	1,212	79.8	779	851	81.0
<b>SES Tertile</b>	Lower Income	352	546	33.7	350	560	33.7	302	515	33.9	233	382	36.3
	Middle Income	470	512	31.6	495	544	32.8	399	491	32.3	296	317	30.2
	Upper Income	798	562	34.7	815	556	33.5	819	513	33.8	522	352	33.5

		Sajith Premadasa			Anura Kumara Dissanayake			Ranil Wickremesinghe			Dinesh Gunawardena		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
<b>Total</b>		2,800	2,800	100.0	2,806	2,806	100.0	2,808	2,808	100.0	2,789	2,789	100.0
<b>Sex</b>	Male	1,410	1,362	48.7	1,413	1,368	48.7	1,414	1,364	48.6	1,406	1,359	48.7
	Female	1,390	1,438	51.3	1,393	1,438	51.3	1,394	1,444	51.4	1,383	1,430	51.3
<b>Age (years)</b>	18–29	484	727	25.9	483	726	25.9	488	729	26.0	481	722	25.9
	30–39	589	512	18.3	594	514	18.3	590	515	18.3	590	512	18.4
	40–49	649	474	16.9	652	478	17.0	650	475	16.9	649	473	16.9
	50–59	487	473	16.9	484	473	16.9	489	476	16.9	480	468	16.8
	60–69	359	344	12.3	360	345	12.3	359	344	12.2	359	343	12.3
	70–79	185	208	7.4	185	209	7.4	185	208	7.4	182	209	7.5
	80+	49	62	2.2	50	62	2.2	49	62	2.2	50	62	2.2
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Sinhala	2,386	2,099	75.0	2,396	2,103	74.9	2,394	2,102	74.9	2,385	2,092	75.0
	SL Tamil	210	358	12.8	208	359	12.8	210	360	12.8	204	354	12.7
	Estate Tamil	40	89	3.2	39	90	3.2	39	93	3.3	38	90	3.2
	Muslim	132	243	8.7	131	244	8.7	133	243	8.6	130	243	8.7
	Other	34	10	0.4	34	10	0.4	34	10	0.4	34	10	0.4
<b>Province</b>	WP	768	725	25.9	771	725	25.9	770	723	25.8	768	722	25.9
	CP	360	406	14.5	362	406	14.5	363	411	14.7	360	403	14.5
	SP	435	341	12.2	435	342	12.2	436	341	12.1	433	340	12.2
	NP	136	142	5.1	136	141	5.0	137	142	5.1	131	140	5.0
	EP	139	212	7.6	137	213	7.6	138	212	7.6	135	212	7.6
	NWP	312	319	11.4	313	319	11.4	312	319	11.4	311	318	11.4
	NCP	179	199	7.1	179	200	7.1	180	200	7.1	180	199	7.1
	Uva	190	182	6.5	190	184	6.6	189	182	6.5	189	180	6.5
	Sab	283	275	9.8	285	275	9.8	285	276	9.8	284	274	9.8
	<b>Sector</b>	Urban	740	536	19.1	741	535	19.1	743	536	19.1	737	533
Rural		2,062	2,264	80.9	2,067	2,271	80.9	2,067	2,272	80.9	2,054	2,256	80.9
<b>SES Tertile</b>	Lower Income	607	946	33.8	605	948	33.8	604	949	33.8	597	943	33.8
	Middle Income	795	899	32.1	797	902	32.1	798	901	32.1	795	895	32.1
	Upper Income	1,400	956	34.1	1,406	957	34.1	1,408	958	34.1	1,399	952	34.1

Note: N = Unweighted number of respondents; Nw = Weighted number of respondents.

		Kanchana Wijesekera			Harini Amarasuriya			Champika Ranawaka			Ramesh Pathirana		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
<b>Total</b>		1,746	1,746	100.0	1,201	1,201	100.0	1,052	1,052	100.0	2,773	2,773	100.0
<b>Sex</b>	Male	870	823	47.2	593	564	46.9	532	515	48.9	1,396	1,335	48.2
	Female	876	923	52.8	608	637	53.1	520	537	51.1	1,377	1,438	51.8
<b>Age (years)</b>	18-29	293	415	23.8	222	303	25.2	197	283	26.9	457	717	25.9
	30-39	362	334	19.1	253	235	19.6	218	189	18.0	594	506	18.2
	40-49	402	319	18.3	280	203	16.9	232	174	16.6	621	469	16.9
	50-59	322	286	16.4	202	196	16.3	181	183	17.4	499	468	16.9
	60-69	215	226	13.0	155	150	12.5	130	118	11.2	365	343	12.4
	70-79	121	127	7.3	78	88	7.3	73	82	7.8	183	207	7.5
	80+	31	38	2.2	12	26	2.2	21	23	2.1	54	64	2.3
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Sinhala	1,510	1,288	73.8	1,050	888	73.9	884	781	74.3	2,384	2,070	74.6
	SL Tamil	121	244	14.0	78	160	13.3	82	124	11.8	199	369	13.3
	Estate Tamil	20	59	3.4	18	49	4.1	12	35	3.3	35	87	3.1
	Muslim	81	149	8.5	42	99	8.2	56	108	10.2	124	238	8.6
	Other	14	6	0.3	14	5	0.4	18	4	0.4	31	9	0.3
<b>Province</b>	WP	469	469	26.8	338	276	23.0	296	269	25.5	755	693	25.0
	CP	221	242	13.9	156	166	13.8	146	148	14.1	371	415	14.9
	SP	281	224	12.8	182	157	13.0	163	137	13.0	431	342	12.3
	NP	77	101	5.8	43	69	5.7	48	55	5.3	133	145	5.2
	EP	81	131	7.5	56	105	8.7	50	78	7.4	127	211	7.6
	NWP	199	191	10.9	147	145	12.1	114	113	10.8	314	306	11.0
	NCP	118	112	6.4	68	80	6.6	63	89	8.4	175	186	6.7
	Uva	125	117	6.7	93	79	6.6	76	54	5.2	188	182	6.6
	Sab	175	159	9.1	119	125	10.4	96	109	10.3	279	294	10.6
<b>Sector</b>	Urban	462	340	19.5	286	218	18.1	288	198	18.8	721	525	18.9
	Rural	1,284	1,406	80.5	916	983	81.9	764	854	81.2	2,052	2,248	81.1
<b>SES Tertile</b>	Lower Income	370	605	34.6	253	432	35.9	221	350	33.3	596	950	34.3
	Middle Income	507	545	31.2	351	388	32.3	314	351	33.3	812	891	32.1
	Upper Income	869	597	34.2	598	381	31.7	517	351	33.4	1,365	932	33.6

Note: N = Unweighted number of respondents; Nw = Weighted number of respondents.