Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey

2024-17

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Pres. Anura Dissanayake and Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya see surge in favourability ratings post-election

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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Pres. Anura Dissanayake and Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya see surge in favourability ratings post-election
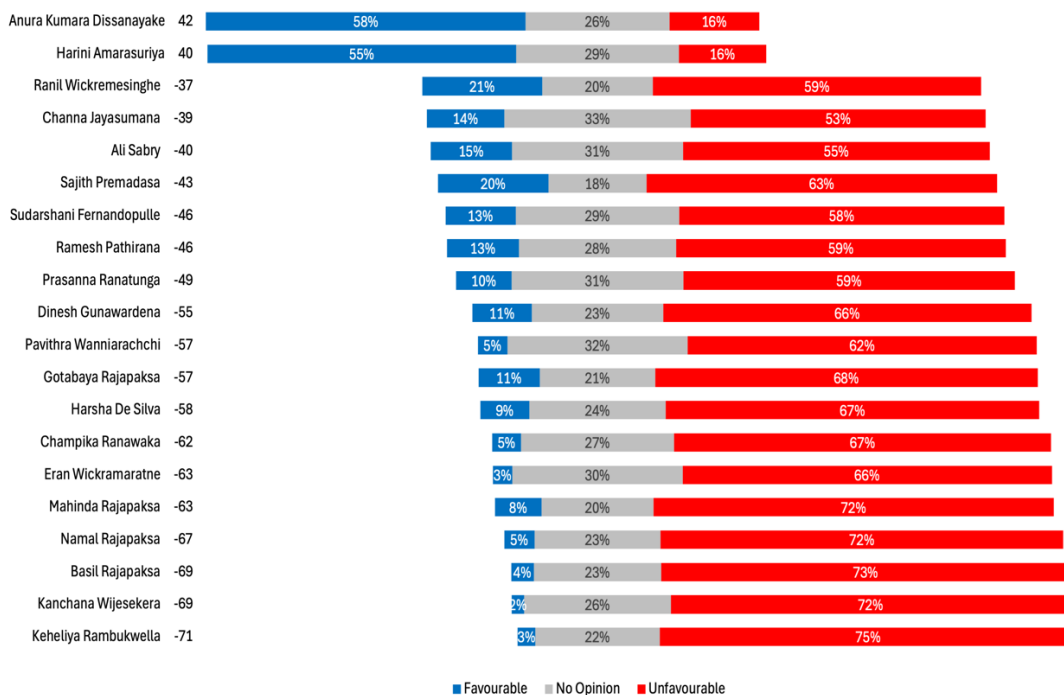
In post-election IHP SLOTS polling, net favourability ratings for President AK Dissanayake and Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya increased to +42% and +40%, respectively, up from -10% before the election. Over half of respondents expressed favourable views toward both leaders after the election.

However, all other politicians tracked by SLOTS had negative net ratings (below -35%), with over 50% of respondents viewing them unfavourably. Ranil Wickremesinghe (-37%) was the least unfavourable among them, followed by Channa Jayasumana (-39%), Ali Sabry (-40%), and Sajith Premadasa (-43%).

Since pre-election SLOTS polling, most politicians' net favourability ratings declined. Notably, Harsha De Silva's rating dropped significantly, from -39% to -58%, while Keheliya Rambukwella was rated most unfavourably, with a net rating of -71%.

Sri Lankans have negative views of most politicians

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

Politician	Net	Favourable	No Opinion	Unfavourable
Anura Kumara Dissanayake	42	58%	26%	16%
Harini Amarasuriya	40	55%	29%	16%
Ranil Wickremesinghe	-37	21%	20%	59%
Channa Jayasumana	-39	14%	33%	53%
Ali Sabry	-40	15%	31%	55%
Sajith Premadasa	-43	20%	18%	63%
Sudarshani Fernandopulle	-46	13%	29%	58%
Ramesh Pathirana	-46	13%	28%	59%
Prasanna Ranatunga	-49	10%	31%	59%
Dinesh Gunawardena	-55	11%	23%	66%
Pavithra Wanniarachchi	-57	5%	32%	62%
Gotabaya Rajapaksa	-57	11%	21%	68%
Harsha De Silva	-58	9%	24%	67%
Champika Ranawaka	-62	5%	27%	67%
Eran Wickramaratne	-63	3%	30%	66%
Mahinda Rajapaksa	-63	8%	20%	72%
Namal Rajapaksa	-67	5%	23%	72%
Basil Rajapaksa	-69	4%	23%	73%
Kanchana Wijesekera	-69	2%	26%	72%
Keheliya Rambukwella	-71	3%	22%	75%

■ Favourable ■ No Opinion ■ Unfavourable

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

Based on 1,190 interviews with adult respondents during Sep. 24, 2024–Nov. 3, 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.

IHP tracked favourability for 20 active politicians throughout the year, including recent Presidents, Prime Ministers, key party leaders, current and recent health ministers, and selected MPs. This list is not exhaustive and may omit other popular politicians. 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, post 9/21

Politician	N	Net favourability (%)	95% CI
Anura Kumara Dissanayake	539	42.1	32.7 – 51.6
Harini Amarasuriya	927	39.6	32.9 – 46.4
Ranil Wickremesinghe	535	-37.3	-48.6 – -26.0
Channa Jayasumana	168	-38.9	-56.7 – -21.1
Ali Sabry	164	-40.3	-58.7 – -21.9
Sajith Premadasa	535	-42.9	-53.6 – -32.2
Sudarshani Fernandopulle	257	-45.6	-58.5 – -32.6
Ramesh Pathirana	307	-46.1	-57.1 – -35.1
Prasanna Ranatunga	175	-49.3	-64.4 – -34.2
Dinesh Gunawardena	533	-55.3	-64.5 – -46.1
Pavithra Wanniarachchi	281	-57.1	-66.8 – -47.5
Gotabaya Rajapaksa	535	-57.4	-66.2 – -48.7
Harsha De Silva	245	-58.0	-70.0 – -46.1
Champika Ranawaka	256	-62.3	-72.1 – -52.4
Eran Wickramaratne	267	-62.6	-72.4 – -52.8
Mahinda Rajapaksa	266	-63.3	-76.2 – -50.3
Namal Rajapaksa	1,050	-66.6	-71.6 – -61.7
Basil Rajapaksa	182	-69.1	-82.6 – -55.5
Kanchana Wijesekera	246	-69.3	-78.7 – -59.8
Keheliya Rambukwella	258	-71.4	-80.9 – -62.0

Note: Based on 1,190 interviews with adult respondents during Sep. 24, 2024–Nov. 3, 2024. N = Number of respondents

Appendix 2: Favourability of politicians – Composition of samples, post 9/21

		Keheliya Rambukwella			Pavithra Wanniarachchi			Sudarshani Fernandopulle			Channa Jayasumana		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		258	258	100.0	281	281	100.0	257	257	100.0	168	168	100.0
Sex	Male	138	142	55.2	143	122	43.3	134	140	54.3	86	89	52.7
	Female	120	116	44.8	138	159	56.7	123	117	45.7	82	79	47.3
Age (years)	18–29	52	80	31.0	58	83	29.4	52	84	32.7	30	55	32.6
	30–39	62	38	14.8	74	43	15.2	61	40	15.6	38	27	15.9
	40–49	60	51	19.8	56	53	18.8	62	39	15.3	40	29	17.2
	50–59	39	43	16.5	42	40	14.1	39	44	17.0	32	28	16.6
	60–69	27	24	9.2	35	35	12.3	30	29	11.3	19	17	10.1
	70–79	15	15	5.9	15	26	9.3	11	17	6.5	9	13	7.6
	80+	3	7	2.8	1	3	0.9	3	4	1.6	0	0	0.0
Ethnicity	Sinhala	220	188	72.7	241	218	77.5	219	189	73.4	142	123	73.5
	SL Tamil	15	30	11.7	21	35	12.6	15	32	12.5	12	19	11.5
	Estate Tamil	4	7	2.6	2	3	1.1	4	7	2.9	2	3	1.8
	Muslim	15	33	12.6	13	19	6.9	19	28	10.8	10	22	13.0
	Other	4	1	0.3	4	5	1.8	1	1	0.4	2	0	0.2
Province	WP	84	67	26.0	89	67	23.8	76	74	29.0	57	46	27.7
	CP	26	40	15.6	38	28	9.8	28	42	16.2	19	21	12.4
	SP	38	36	14.1	32	45	16.0	33	27	10.6	15	28	16.6
	NP	8	10	3.8	8	16	5.8	11	6	2.5	5	10	5.9
	EP	11	19	7.2	10	31	10.9	15	21	8.3	10	18	10.8
	NWP	31	31	12.0	32	31	11.1	29	30	11.5	18	10	6.1
	NCP	17	17	6.5	18	20	6.9	14	17	6.7	11	13	8.0
	Uva	14	12	4.6	23	12	4.3	15	20	7.6	11	6	3.5
	Sab	29	27	10.4	31	32	11.4	37	20	7.6	22	15	9.1
Sector	Urban	65	66	25.5	68	70	25.0	68	54	21.1	47	38	22.8
	Rural	193	192	74.5	213	211	75.0	190	203	78.9	121	130	77.2
SES Tertile	Lower Income	50	77	30.0	67	96	34.3	56	82	31.8	35	54	32.0
	Middle Income	67	87	33.8	75	91	32.6	72	88	34.3	35	50	29.9
	Upper Income	141	93	36.2	139	93	33.2	130	87	33.9	98	64	38.2

		Prasanna Ranatunga			Basil Rajapaksa			Namal Rajapaksa			Ali Sabry		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		175	175	100.0	182	182	100.0	1,050	1,050	100.0	164	164	100.0
Sex	Male	105	82	46.8	95	79	43.5	553	514	48.9	84	78	47.4
	Female	70	93	53.2	87	103	56.5	497	536	51.1	80	86	52.6
Age (years)	18–29	30	32	18.0	36	52	28.8	209	284	27.0	41	38	23.2
	30–39	47	32	18.2	34	30	16.6	249	176	16.7	39	25	15.4
	40–49	43	41	23.4	51	32	17.5	256	191	18.2	43	23	13.9
	50–59	26	34	19.3	28	24	13.1	159	164	15.7	23	32	19.7
	60–69	18	22	12.5	21	24	13.3	119	142	13.5	11	38	23.2
	70–79	6	9	5.3	11	15	8.0	47	70	6.6	7	8	4.6
	80+	5	6	3.4	1	5	2.7	12	24	2.3	0	0	0.0
Ethnicity	Sinhala	139	131	74.8	160	144	79.1	884	797	75.9	138	127	77.2
	SL Tamil	16	24	13.5	13	21	11.7	80	121	11.5	11	11	6.5
	Estate Tamil	2	5	3.0	0	0	0.0	10	23	2.2	2	4	2.7
	Muslim	13	14	8.0	8	15	8.3	62	104	9.9	10	22	13.2
	Other	5	1	0.8	1	2	0.9	15	5	0.5	3	1	0.4
Province	WP	69	49	27.8	58	35	19.1	336	262	24.9	47	44	26.9
	CP	13	26	14.8	25	18	9.7	122	131	12.5	20	17	10.5
	SP	19	28	15.9	20	26	14.5	133	148	14.1	24	18	10.8
	NP	8	9	4.9	4	13	7.1	39	49	4.7	6	6	3.7
	EP	14	16	9.3	10	19	10.6	55	91	8.7	10	15	9.0
	NWP	20	12	7.1	21	26	14.4	121	133	12.7	19	27	16.4
	NCP	7	12	6.7	9	12	6.7	58	85	8.1	6	15	9.1
	Uva	9	9	5.0	14	10	5.3	67	53	5.0	12	13	8.0
	Sab	16	15	8.5	21	23	12.5	120	98	9.4	20	9	5.7
Sector	Urban	44	54	30.9	47	34	18.5	276	231	22.0	45	34	20.7
	Rural	131	121	69.1	135	148	81.5	775	819	78.0	119	130	79.3
SES Tertile	Lower Income	37	62	35.2	37	53	29.2	232	345	32.8	37	60	36.9
	Middle Income	42	59	33.5	51	64	35.3	280	358	34.1	50	60	36.4
	Upper Income	96	55	31.3	94	65	35.5	539	347	33.1	77	44	26.7

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	%
Total		245	245	100.0	267	267	100.0	535	535	100.0	266	266	100.0
Sex	Male	129	100	40.7	136	148	55.4	294	286	53.5	138	122	46.0
	Female	116	145	59.3	131	119	44.6	241	249	46.5	128	144	54.0
Age (years)	18–29	54	68	27.6	45	79	29.7	103	144	27.0	50	72	27.0
	30–39	54	47	19.2	69	38	14.3	125	93	17.4	71	45	17.0
	40–49	54	38	15.6	72	59	22.0	142	96	18.0	57	50	18.6
	50–59	35	29	11.7	33	38	14.3	82	90	16.7	43	39	14.7
	60–69	32	42	17.1	30	30	11.1	55	68	12.8	35	37	14.0
	70–79	15	20	8.3	15	17	6.2	20	29	5.4	8	20	7.3
	80+	1	2	0.6	3	6	2.4	9	14	2.7	2	3	1.2
Ethnicity	Sinhala	208	192	78.2	225	197	73.7	443	395	73.8	219	209	78.5
	SL Tamil	19	25	10.4	18	34	12.7	43	71	13.2	23	29	10.8
	Estate Tamil	3	5	2.2	2	7	2.7	6	14	2.6	4	4	1.4
	Muslim	8	22	8.8	21	28	10.6	38	53	10.0	14	22	8.4
	Other	7	1	0.4	1	1	0.3	6	2	0.4	6	2	0.8
Province	WP	72	53	21.8	89	68	25.4	180	146	27.4	85	74	27.6
	CP	28	29	11.7	23	43	15.9	56	74	13.8	36	31	11.6
	SP	29	42	17.0	33	38	14.2	64	60	11.2	30	36	13.4
	NP	11	15	6.3	11	8	3.0	24	24	4.5	11	11	4.3
	EP	13	18	7.5	15	21	7.7	35	49	9.1	9	25	9.4
	NWP	29	35	14.3	37	27	10.0	57	62	11.5	29	29	10.9
	NCP	14	22	9.0	13	24	8.9	26	39	7.3	21	21	8.0
	Uva	20	11	4.5	18	11	4.1	30	33	6.2	19	13	4.8
	Sab	29	20	8.0	28	29	10.8	64	48	9.0	26	27	10.0
Sector	Urban	73	43	17.4	65	64	24.0	138	119	22.3	67	64	24.0
	Rural	172	202	82.6	202	203	76.0	398	416	77.7	199	202	76.0
SES Tertile	Lower Income	64	82	33.4	52	79	29.6	114	164	30.6	65	90	33.7
	Middle Income	63	83	34.0	65	92	34.3	142	186	34.8	71	84	31.7
	Upper Income	118	80	32.6	150	96	36.1	280	185	34.5	130	92	34.6

		Sajith Premadasa			Anura Kumara Dissanayake			Ranil Wickremesinghe			Dinesh Gunawardena		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		535	535	100.0	539	539	100.0	535	535	100.0	533	533	100.0
Sex	Male	294	287	53.7	299	289	53.6	294	286	53.5	293	284	53.3
	Female	241	248	46.3	240	250	46.4	241	249	46.5	240	249	46.7
Age (years)	18–29	102	144	27.0	104	145	26.9	103	144	27.0	103	144	27.1
	30–39	125	93	17.4	125	95	17.6	125	93	17.4	124	90	16.9
	40–49	142	95	17.8	143	97	18.0	142	96	18.0	142	96	18.0
	50–59	83	91	16.9	80	91	16.8	82	90	16.7	81	90	16.9
	60–69	55	68	12.7	59	67	12.5	55	68	12.8	55	68	12.8
	70–79	20	29	5.4	20	30	5.5	20	29	5.4	20	29	5.5
	80+	9	14	2.7	9	15	2.7	9	14	2.7	9	14	2.7
Ethnicity	Sinhala	442	396	73.9	446	399	74.0	443	395	73.8	443	396	74.4
	SL Tamil	43	70	13.1	43	70	12.9	43	71	13.2	41	68	12.8
	Estate Tamil	7	14	2.6	6	14	2.6	6	14	2.6	6	14	2.6
	Muslim	38	53	9.9	39	54	10.1	38	53	10.0	38	53	9.9
	Other	6	2	0.4	6	2	0.4	6	2	0.4	6	2	0.4
Province	WP	180	148	27.7	180	149	27.6	180	146	27.4	180	145	27.3
	CP	56	74	13.8	57	74	13.7	56	74	13.8	55	72	13.5
	SP	64	60	11.2	65	61	11.3	64	60	11.2	64	60	11.2
	NP	24	23	4.4	24	24	4.4	24	24	4.5	23	24	4.5
	EP	35	48	8.9	35	49	9.2	35	49	9.1	35	49	9.1
	NWP	57	62	11.6	56	61	11.4	57	62	11.5	57	62	11.6
	NCP	26	39	7.3	26	40	7.5	26	39	7.3	26	39	7.4
	Uva	30	33	6.2	31	33	6.1	30	33	6.2	30	34	6.4
	Sab	64	48	9.0	66	48	8.9	64	48	9.0	64	49	9.1
Sector	Urban	139	120	22.5	146	119	22.0	138	119	22.3	136	118	22.1
	Rural	397	415	77.5	394	420	78.0	398	416	77.7	398	415	77.9
SES Tertile	Lower Income	114	163	30.4	114	165	30.6	114	164	30.6	113	165	31.0
	Middle Income	143	187	35.0	141	188	34.9	142	186	34.8	141	183	34.4
	Upper Income	279	185	34.6	285	186	34.5	280	185	34.5	280	185	34.6

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	%
Total		246	246	100.0	927	927	100.0	256	256	100.0	307	307	100.0
Sex	Male	130	121	49.0	492	449	48.4	124	115	44.8	171	143	46.5
	Female	116	125	51.0	435	478	51.6	132	141	55.2	136	164	53.5
Age (years)	18–29	46	66	26.9	190	242	26.1	57	73	28.4	48	71	23.3
	30–39	51	39	15.7	225	158	17.1	56	39	15.1	65	50	16.2
	40–49	72	40	16.1	223	168	18.1	57	48	18.8	91	68	22.2
	50–59	42	39	15.9	129	161	17.4	36	38	14.9	45	43	13.9
	60–69	26	46	18.8	108	113	12.2	31	33	12.7	41	47	15.2
	70–79	7	9	3.9	42	63	6.8	18	20	7.9	13	20	6.4
	80+	2	7	2.7	11	22	2.3	1	6	2.2	5	9	2.9
Ethnicity	Sinhala	206	187	76.1	779	686	74.0	225	192	75.2	256	235	76.5
	SL Tamil	18	22	9.1	69	122	13.2	16	25	9.7	27	34	11.1
	Estate Tamil	3	5	1.9	9	21	2.2	1	6	2.2	2	9	2.8
	Muslim	16	30	12.3	58	92	9.9	10	33	12.7	20	28	9.3
	Other	3	1	0.5	13	6	0.6	4	1	0.2	3	1	0.4
Province	WP	75	69	28.2	298	227	24.5	72	53	20.7	103	74	24.2
	CP	33	24	9.6	113	118	12.8	31	30	11.7	35	44	14.4
	SP	30	21	8.4	113	133	14.3	38	45	17.7	33	30	9.9
	NP	9	13	5.2	34	49	5.3	6	15	5.7	13	18	6.0
	EP	13	23	9.4	45	87	9.4	11	20	7.7	22	30	9.6
	NWP	31	37	15.1	109	113	12.2	35	38	14.7	31	33	10.7
	NCP	14	20	8.0	47	69	7.4	12	20	7.9	16	30	9.7
	Uva	15	19	7.8	63	48	5.1	21	12	4.7	19	19	6.2
	Sab	26	21	8.3	106	83	9.0	30	23	9.1	36	29	9.3
Sector	Urban	65	47	18.9	231	228	24.6	71	47	18.5	84	60	19.4
	Rural	181	199	81.1	697	699	75.4	185	209	81.5	224	247	80.6
SES Tertile	Lower Income	50	80	32.6	210	319	34.4	57	80	31.1	65	95	30.9
	Middle Income	75	89	36.3	250	319	34.4	70	94	36.8	81	102	33.1
	Upper Income	121	77	31.1	468	289	31.2	129	82	32.1	162	111	36.1

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