

Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey

2024-05

FOR RELEASE MAY 14, 2024

3 in 4 Sri Lankans think the country is headed in the wrong direction

More than in any other country with similar polling

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

Institute for Health Policy, May 2024, "3 in 4 Sri Lankans think the country is headed in the wrong direction", SLOTS Report #2024-05.

About the IHP Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey

The IHP Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS) was launched to track public experience and opinion during the recovery from COVID-19. It is run by the Institute for Health Policy (IHP), which is an independent, non-partisan research centre based in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on behalf of the Sri Lanka Health and Ageing Study (SLHAS) consortium of Sri Lankan academic and research institutions. 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 numerous opinion surveys over three decades.

SLOTS interviews representative samples of Sri Lankan adults every day by telephone to gather their current views and situation. All interviews include a core set of common questions, with additional rotating sets of other questions that examine issues of topical importance. The survey has previously been funded by the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, the UK National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the Asia Foundation, and others. Current fieldwork is financed by the IHP Public Interest Research Fund and others. The sponsors play no role in the study design, analysis, or interpretation of findings. Furthermore, the survey findings 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 re-interviewed, 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.

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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3 in 4 Sri Lankans think the country is headed in the wrong direction

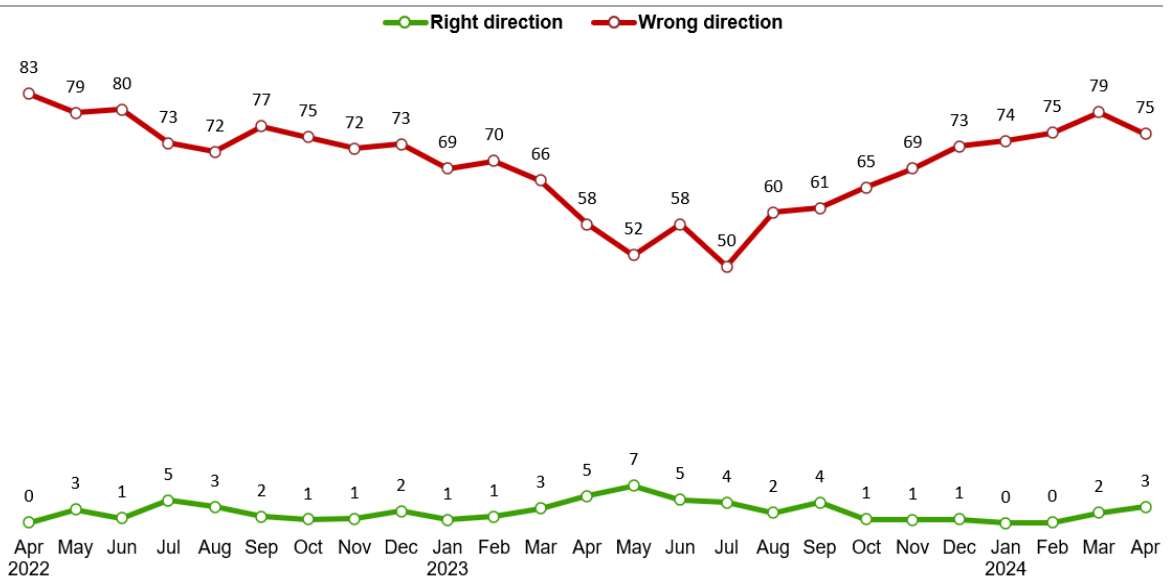
More than in any other country with similar polling

Three out of four Sri Lankan adults (75%) say that the country is heading in the wrong direction in the latest SLOTS polling in April 2024. Almost none (3%) say it is on the right track.

Public views about whether the country is headed in the right direction or not have remained negative since SLOTS started polling this in early 2022. But after improving initially, views have become more negative since July 2023. This is due to a steady decline in uncommitted respondents since the numbers who think the country is on the right direction have remained below 5%.

Direction of the country (%)

Would you say things in the country are headed in the right direction or in the wrong direction?



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

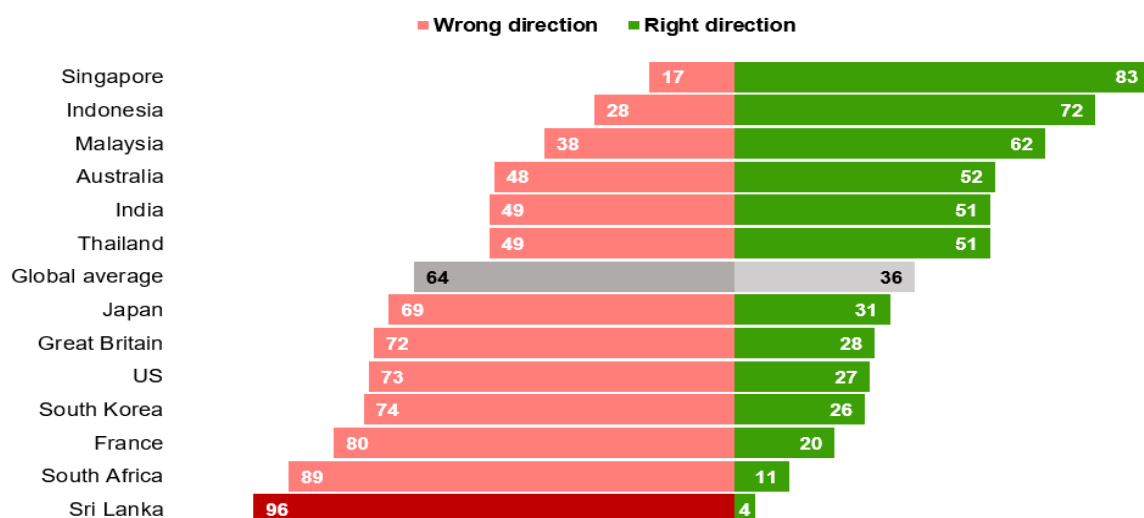
Estimates are based on 12,411 interviews conducted during Apr. 7, 2022–Apr. 30, 2024, including 436 interviews in April 2024.

Sri Lankans are more likely to think the country is headed in the wrong direction than in any other country where this is polled. In March–April 2024, a global average of 64% of adults polled in 29 countries thought their country was headed in the wrong direction compared with 96% in Sri Lanka.¹

These negative views are widely held, with little difference by gender, income level, urban and rural areas, voting preferences, and people’s views of Aragalaya. But younger Sri Lankans have been increasingly more likely than older adults to say the country is on the wrong track.

Right Direction or Wrong Direction

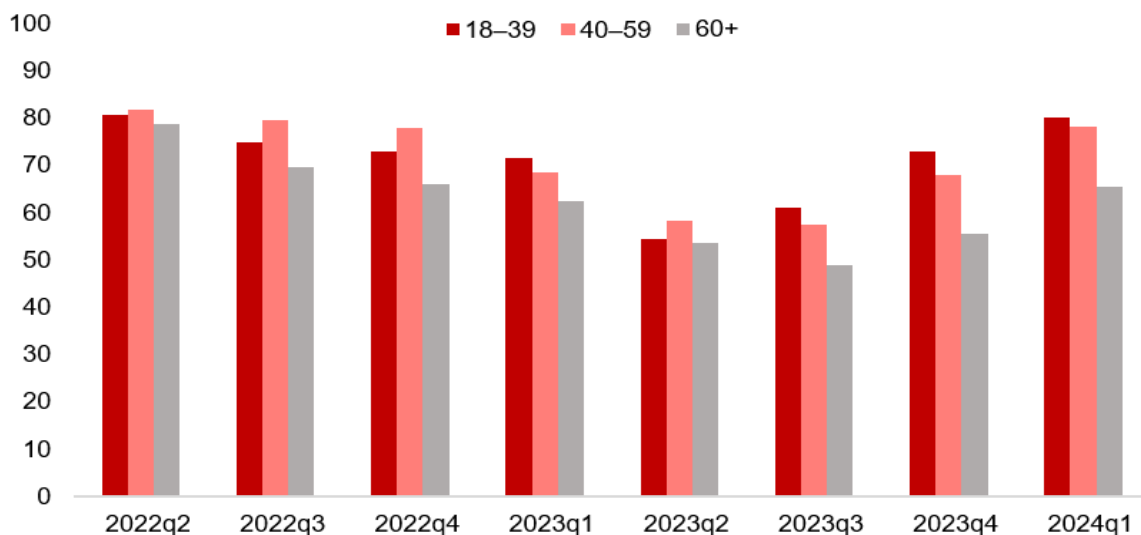
% of adults saying their country is off on the wrong track and % saying it is headed in the right direction, Mar-Apr 2024



Ipsos Global Advisor Survey and IHP Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS)

To ensure comparability with the Ipsos estimates for other countries, the Sri Lanka estimates exclude "Don't know" responses from the total. The Sri Lanka estimates are based on responses from adults aged 18–74 years, while the Ipsos estimates are based on responses from adults aged 16–74 years.

Adults who say country is heading in the wrong direction by age group and quarter (%)



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

Estimates are based on 12,411 interviews conducted during Apr. 7, 2022–Apr. 30, 2024.

But as the country heads closer to elections, such consensus about the country's wrong trajectory does not appear to imply any consensus about the reasons. Negative views about the country's direction differ little by voting preferences and views of the Aragalaya, indicating that the public agrees that the direction of the country is not good, but disagrees about why.

Methodology

Question wording

SLOTS polls the public's outlook on the overall direction of the country by asking people: ***“Would you say things in the country are headed in the right direction or the wrong direction?”***. Respondents are also allowed not to answer or to say they ***“Don’t know”*** or are ***“Not sure”***. The percentages saying the country is moving in the right or wrong directions is based on all those who were interviewed, so numbers for right and wrong tracks will not sum to 100% because of don't knows and refusals.

The SLOTS right direction/wrong direction question wording follows that of well-regarded national surveys in other countries, including Ipsos and Morning Consult. An alternative approach is to ask people if they are “satisfied” with the way things are going in the country, which is the approach used by Gallup, Pew, and others. Data from the United States show that these two alternative measures usually track each other closely, but there have been short periods when they differ. The commonest reason appears to be partisan differences in how the public views the government's ability to manage current problems.²

Weighting

SLOTS uses a hybrid sample of an existing national panel that was recruited face-to-face in 2019 and a sample of respondents reached by random-digit dialling (RDD) of mobile numbers. To minimize sample bias, estimates are based on weighting respondents to match the national population for age, sex, sector, ethnicity, religion, education, socioeconomic status ranking, and geographical location. Weighting is done by propensity weighting and iterative proportional fitting (raking).

The composition of the monthly samples by key characteristics and their weighted distribution is given in the Appendix tables.

Technical notes

¹ These numbers differ from the preceding ones as they exclude don't knows and refusals from the denominator when computing the percentages. This is to ensure comparability with the Ipsos estimates for other countries.

² As discussed in Pew Research Center. *Unusually Wide Gap in 'Satisfaction,' 'Right Direction' Measures*. 2009/03/26. 25 April 2024. Available from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2009/03/26/unusually-wide-gap-in-satisfaction-right-direction-measures/>

Acknowledgments

The authors thank their many colleagues at IHP who contributed to the design, management and implementation of the SLOTS survey, and related data analyses.

Appendix 1: Public opinion about the country's direction, April 2022 to April 2024

	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	No Opinion
APR 2022	0	83	17
MAY 2022	3	79	18
JUN 2022	1	80	19
JUL 2022	5	74	21
AUG 2022	3	72	25
SEP 2022	2	77	21
OCT 2022	1	75	24
NOV 2022	1	72	27
DEC 2022	2	73	25
JAN 2023	1	68	31
FEB 2023	1	70	29
MAR 2023	3	66	31
APR 2023	5	58	37

	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	No Opinion
MAY 2023	8	52	40
JUN 2023	5	58	37
JUL 2023	4	50	46
AUG 2023	2	60	38
SEP 2023	4	61	35
OCT 2023	1	65	34
NOV 2023	1	69	30
DEC 2023	1	73	26
JAN 2024	0	74	26
FEB 2024	2	75	23
MAR 2024	2	79	19
APR 2024	3	75	12

Note: Monthly values derived after weighting responses to be nationally representative according to gender, age, ethnicity, education, sector, province, and socioeconomic status.

Appendix 2: Composition of monthly samples, April 2022 to April 2024

Composition of sample, April 2022 to August 2022

		Apr-22			May-22			Jun-22			Jul-22			Aug-22		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		293	293	100.0	487	487	100.0	281	281	100.0	367	367	100.0	513	513	100.0
Sex	Male	152	135	46.1	247	231	47.3	148	136	48.3	181	165	44.9	266	258	50.3
	Female	141	158	53.9	240	256	52.7	133	145	51.7	186	202	55.1	247	255	49.7
Age (years)	18-34	47	99	33.7	85	155	31.8	62	88	31.3	84	117	31.9	90	147	28.7
	35-54	108	105	36.0	171	186	38.1	124	109	38.9	140	147	40.0	215	216	42.1
	55+	138	89	30.3	231	147	30.1	95	84	29.8	143	103	28.2	208	150	29.2
Ethnicity	Sinhala	202	216	73.8	344	375	77.0	254	227	80.8	301	276	75.3	406	380	74.2
	SL Tamil	64	35	12.1	89	44	9.0	15	25	9.1	44	43	11.6	67	61	11.9
	Estate Tamil	5	12	4.2	9	18	3.8	2	10	3.5	4	12	3.3	8	22	4.3
	Muslim	21	28	9.6	42	46	9.5	7	15	5.2	16	31	8.5	26	45	8.8
	Other	1	1	0.3	3	3	0.7	3	4	1.4	2	5	1.3	6	4	0.9
Province	WP	65	82	28.1	106	138	28.4	64	79	28.0	96	95	25.9	119	130	25.4
	CP	53	39	13.4	61	64	13.2	40	31	11.2	48	49	13.5	67	66	12.9
	SP	32	37	12.5	60	62	12.8	48	34	12.0	52	48	13.0	82	66	12.9
	NP	42	17	5.7	56	23	4.8	7	16	5.8	22	21	5.8	41	30	5.8
	EP	15	27	9.1	49	44	9.0	8	15	5.3	17	31	8.4	33	47	9.2
	NWP	20	33	11.4	38	55	11.3	31	36	12.8	33	43	11.6	48	62	12.0
	NCP	19	20	6.8	41	27	5.5	25	21	7.3	33	25	6.9	33	35	6.9
	Uva	17	19	6.5	39	24	4.8	22	20	7.0	22	23	6.2	44	34	6.6
	Sab	30	19	6.5	37	49	10.1	36	30	10.6	44	32	8.8	46	42	8.2
Sector	Urban	99	60	20.5	170	94	19.4	108	61	21.7	121	76	20.6	159	83	16.2
	Rural	194	233	79.5	317	393	80.6	173	220	78.3	246	291	79.4	354	430	83.8
SES Tertile	Poor	111	101	34.4	185	157	32.2	70	75	26.7	116	127	34.7	153	180	35.0
	Middle	76	101	34.5	141	177	36.2	96	105	37.2	100	132	36.1	153	181	35.2
	Better off	106	91	31.0	161	154	31.5	115	101	36.1	151	107	29.2	207	153	29.8

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

Composition of sample, September 2022 to January 2023

		Sep-22			Oct-22			Nov-22			Dec-22			Jan-23		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		436	436	100.0	406	406	100.0	456	456	100.0	706	706	100.0	701	701	100.0
Sex	Male	228	206	47.2	196	205	50.6	225	231	50.6	339	334	47.3	346	329	46.9
	Female	208	230	52.8	210	201	49.4	231	225	49.4	367	372	52.7	355	372	53.1
Age (years)	18-34	76	145	33.1	66	130	32.0	63	141	31.0	98	201	28.5	136	219	31.2
	35-54	161	163	37.3	164	153	37.7	184	188	41.2	277	298	42.2	259	282	40.2
	55+	199	129	29.6	176	123	30.3	209	127	27.8	331	208	29.4	306	200	28.6
Ethnicity	Sinhala	366	321	73.6	354	307	75.7	371	336	73.7	505	514	72.8	498	526	75.0
	SL Tamil	49	62	14.2	36	48	11.8	53	54	11.8	132	91	12.9	132	79	11.2
	Estate Tamil	10	14	3.2	3	14	3.5	5	17	3.7	17	19	2.7	15	27	3.9
	Muslim	10	36	8.3	12	36	8.9	22	43	9.5	48	79	11.2	48	66	9.4
	Other	1	3	0.7	1	1	0.2	5	6	1.3	4	3	0.4	8	4	0.5
Province	WP	99	133	30.5	108	97	23.9	121	131	28.7	153	190	27.0	152	196	28.0
	CP	71	54	12.3	49	55	13.7	47	62	13.6	96	86	12.2	108	92	13.1
	SP	84	51	11.6	68	50	12.4	66	56	12.4	94	78	11.1	87	84	11.9
	NP	24	26	6.0	13	21	5.1	32	26	5.8	87	43	6.1	86	39	5.6
	EP	17	31	7.0	23	37	9.1	30	42	9.2	54	71	10.1	56	59	8.4
	NWP	41	50	11.4	42	49	12.0	45	54	11.9	51	72	10.2	66	74	10.5
	NCP	26	20	4.7	22	28	6.9	34	7	1.5	58	49	6.9	39	47	6.7
	Uva	20	28	6.4	28	27	6.6	28	30	6.6	45	51	7.2	38	43	6.2
	Sab	54	44	10.2	53	42	10.4	53	47	10.4	68	65	9.2	69	67	9.6
Sector	Urban	124	77	17.7	131	82	20.1	151	95	20.8	234	132	18.7	216	137	19.5
	Rural	312	359	82.3	275	324	79.9	305	361	79.2	472	574	81.3	485	564	80.5
SES Tertile	Poor	136	162	37.2	110	128	31.6	134	152	33.2	249	238	33.7	244	228	32.6
	Middle	133	135	30.9	130	157	38.6	123	160	35.1	185	238	33.7	222	248	35.3
	Better off	167	139	31.9	166	121	29.8	199	144	31.6	272	230	32.6	235	225	32.1

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

Composition of sample, February 2023 to June 2023

		Feb-23			Mar-23			Apr-23			May-23			Jun-23		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		413	413	100.0	514	514	100.0	563	563	100.0	607	607	100.0	494	494	100.0
Sex	Male	192	194	47.1	271	243	47.3	295	259	46.0	327	293	48.3	246	224	45.3
	Female	221	219	52.9	243	271	52.7	268	304	54.0	280	314	51.7	248	270	54.7
Age (years)	18-34	115	138	33.4	109	165	32.1	95	177	31.5	106	203	33.5	124	161	32.5
	35-54	129	157	37.9	181	189	36.8	229	224	39.7	244	226	37.2	223	194	39.3
	55+	169	118	28.7	224	160	31.1	239	162	28.8	257	178	29.4	147	139	28.2
Ethnicity	Sinhala	301	311	75.4	332	383	74.5	429	419	74.4	510	469	77.3	393	391	79.1
	SL Tamil	58	46	11.1	119	60	11.6	81	66	11.7	69	72	11.8	70	54	10.8
	Estate Tamil	9	17	4.1	15	21	4.2	11	24	4.2	7	22	3.6	1	5	1.0
	Muslim	41	36	8.7	45	47	9.2	35	49	8.7	20	40	6.5	23	43	8.7
	Other	4	3	0.8	3	2	0.5	7	5	1.0	1	5	0.8	7	2	0.3
Province	WP	85	109	26.3	121	140	27.2	128	149	26.5	138	152	25.0	140	140	28.2
	CP	56	53	12.8	63	67	13.1	74	75	13.2	79	83	13.7	63	50	10.1
	SP	46	52	12.5	64	58	11.2	90	72	12.9	105	79	13.0	74	63	12.7
	NP	29	23	5.6	72	29	5.7	48	32	5.8	37	35	5.8	31	25	5.0
	EP	45	37	8.9	45	46	9.0	41	49	8.7	28	52	8.6	33	43	8.8
	NWP	35	47	11.3	40	56	10.9	44	65	11.5	64	73	12.0	51	58	11.7
	NCP	39	27	6.6	42	35	6.7	31	32	5.7	40	42	6.9	25	34	6.8
	Uva	40	26	6.2	25	33	6.3	45	37	6.5	37	40	6.6	31	32	6.5
	Sab	38	40	9.7	42	51	9.9	62	52	9.2	79	52	8.5	46	50	10.1
Sector	Urban	141	82	19.8	169	96	18.7	147	103	18.3	184	106	17.5	153	97	19.6
	Rural	272	331	80.2	345	418	81.3	416	460	81.7	423	501	82.5	341	397	80.4
SES Tertile	Poor	132	136	32.9	186	184	35.8	182	199	35.4	194	202	33.2	125	150	30.4
	Middle	140	146	35.3	161	167	32.6	190	186	33.0	201	211	34.8	156	168	34.1
	Better off	141	131	31.8	167	162	31.6	191	178	31.6	212	194	32.0	213	175	35.5

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

Composition of sample, July 2023 to November 2023

		Jul-23			Aug-23			Sep-23			Oct-23			Nov-23		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		456	456	100.0	549	549	100.0	588	588	100.0	551	551	100.0	503	503	100.0
Sex	Male	247	219	47.9	274	254	46.3	291	261	44.4	264	262	47.6	244	258	51.3
	Female	209	237	52.1	275	295	53.7	297	327	55.6	287	289	52.4	259	245	48.7
Age (years)	18-34	118	154	33.7	79	156	28.4	114	189	32.1	78	175	31.8	84	154	30.6
	35-54	194	174	38.3	232	237	43.1	262	230	39.1	205	201	36.4	203	192	38.2
	55+	144	128	28.0	238	156	28.4	212	169	28.8	268	175	31.8	216	157	31.3
Ethnicity	Sinhala	363	347	76.2	410	408	74.3	491	438	74.5	415	422	76.5	423	373	74.2
	SL Tamil	62	54	11.8	90	65	11.8	55	69	11.7	87	67	12.3	46	63	12.4
	Estate Tamil	3	13	2.9	12	14	2.5	9	20	3.4	13	13	2.3	4	12	2.4
	Muslim	25	39	8.6	31	56	10.2	31	55	9.3	31	47	8.5	27	52	10.4
	Other	3	3	0.6	6	6	1.1	2	7	1.1	5	2	0.4	3	3	0.6
Province	WP	127	120	26.4	149	143	26.1	144	165	28.0	127	162	29.4	113	158	31.4
	CP	57	63	13.7	82	71	12.9	66	63	10.7	71	69	12.6	68	60	12.0
	SP	73	59	13.0	44	72	13.2	92	64	10.9	80	62	11.2	74	60	11.9
	NP	39	27	5.8	56	31	5.6	30	34	5.7	59	27	4.9	25	23	4.5
	EP	24	37	8.1	37	43	7.9	34	54	9.2	38	45	8.2	29	42	8.3
	NWP	46	48	10.6	53	63	11.5	59	70	11.9	51	67	12.1	53	58	11.6
	NCP	24	31	6.8	37	38	6.8	50	40	6.9	36	38	6.8	51	33	6.5
	Uva	21	25	5.5	39	39	7.1	46	39	6.6	30	27	5.0	35	28	5.7
	Sab	45	45	10.0	52	49	8.9	67	59	10.1	59	54	9.8	55	41	8.2
Sector	Urban	152	91	20.0	182	113	20.6	208	123	20.9	191	98	17.8	149	94	18.7
	Rural	304	365	80.0	367	436	79.4	380	465	79.1	360	453	82.2	354	409	81.3
SES Tertile	Poor	104	153	33.5	158	192	34.9	181	192	32.6	181	161	29.3	158	169	33.5
	Middle	148	152	33.4	182	186	34.0	179	190	32.3	174	188	34.1	159	148	29.4
	Better off	204	151	33.1	209	171	31.1	228	206	35.1	196	201	36.6	186	186	37.1

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

Composition of sample, December 2023 to April 2024

Appendix 3: Economic Situation – Composition of samples

		Dec-23			Jan-24			Feb-24			Mar-24			Apr-24		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		510	510	100.0	497	497	100.0	565	565	100.0	520	520	100.0	436	436	100.0
Sex	Male	263	243	47.6	247	240	48.3	278	271	48.0	268	246	47.4	205	220	50.4
	Female	247	267	52.4	250	257	51.7	287	294	52.0	252	274	52.6	231	216	49.6
Age (years)	18–34	99	154	30.2	118	171	34.3	104	175	30.9	141	192	36.8	106	140	32.2
	35–54	194	196	38.5	212	190	38.2	249	230	40.7	187	175	33.6	179	172	39.5
	55+	217	160	31.3	167	136	27.4	212	160	28.3	192	154	29.6	151	124	28.4
Ethnicity	Sinhala	402	385	75.6	437	404	81.3	467	425	75.3	426	399	76.8	372	347	79.5
	SL Tamil	74	60	11.8	34	42	8.4	49	61	10.8	53	58	11.1	34	47	10.9
	Estate Tamil	7	15	3.0	1	6	1.2	8	23	4.1	9	20	3.8	11	16	3.6
	Muslim	23	45	8.7	22	41	8.2	32	52	9.3	27	40	7.7	16	22	5.1
	Other	4	4	0.9	3	5	1.0	9	3	0.5	5	3	0.6	3	4	0.9
Province	WP	117	139	27.3	128	142	28.6	142	143	25.2	157	142	27.3	106	114	26.2
	CP	75	63	12.4	58	55	11.0	84	71	12.5	72	68	13.0	49	55	12.7
	SP	80	66	12.9	85	67	13.4	78	73	12.9	59	65	12.5	76	57	13.1
	NP	45	30	5.8	19	22	4.5	32	33	5.8	34	28	5.5	23	24	5.6
	EP	31	39	7.6	29	39	7.9	42	48	8.6	21	39	7.4	24	32	7.3
	NWP	43	60	11.7	62	56	11.2	47	66	11.7	53	59	11.3	61	51	11.7
	NCP	34	33	6.4	30	35	7.1	41	36	6.4	35	35	6.7	32	30	6.9
	Uva	24	33	6.5	39	28	5.5	38	37	6.5	29	32	6.1	28	27	6.1
	Sab	61	48	9.3	47	54	10.8	61	58	10.3	60	53	10.1	37	46	10.5
Sector	Urban	164	105	20.5	137	93	18.7	178	110	19.5	135	101	19.4	111	83	19.1
	Rural	346	405	79.5	360	404	81.3	387	455	80.5	385	419	80.6	325	353	80.9
SES Tertile	Poor	158	172	33.7	103	143	28.8	150	185	32.8	113	164	31.6	104	124	28.5
	Middle	140	171	33.5	171	179	36.0	172	205	36.3	170	183	35.2	164	155	35.6
	Better off	212	167	32.8	223	175	35.2	243	175	31.0	237	173	33.2	168	156	35.8

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