

Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey

2024-11

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Sri Lankans believe the economy and inflation are the most pressing national issues, followed by unemployment

Views on key problems differ between poorer and better-off Sri Lankans

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FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES

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About the IHP Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker

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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Sri Lankans believe the economy and inflation are the most pressing national issues, followed by unemployment

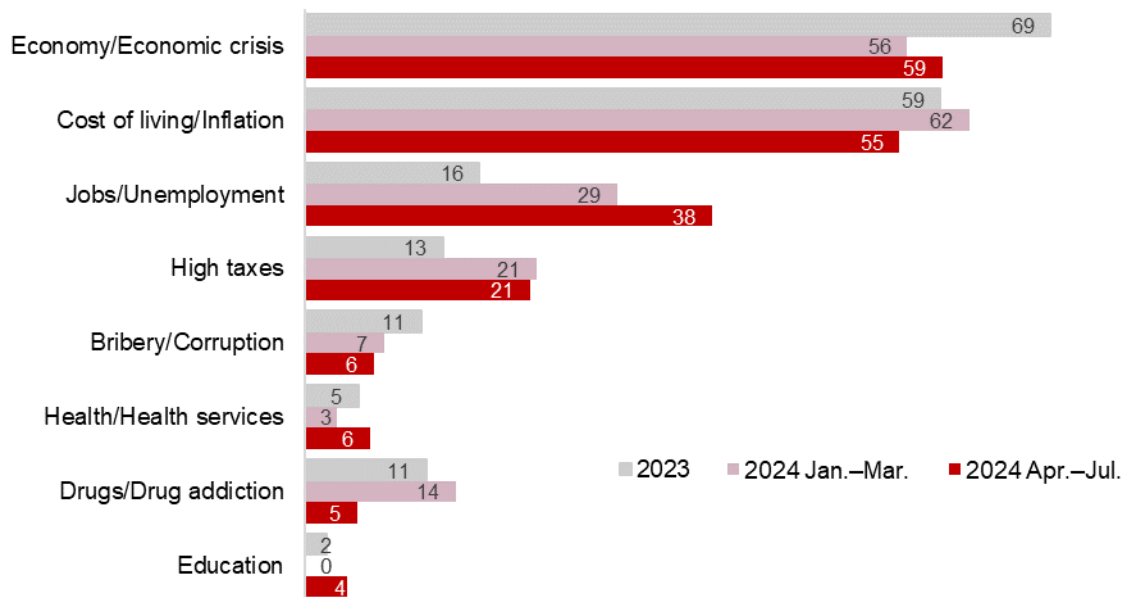
Views on key problems differ between poorer and better-off Sri Lankans

Sri Lankans overwhelmingly cite the economy and inflation as their biggest concerns going into the September Presidential Election in the latest IHP Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS) polling during April to July 2024. However, concerns about unemployment have been rising since the start of the year, whilst the numbers of Sri Lankans citing corruption and drugs as top national problems have been declining.

The SLOTS poll asks respondents to name the top two problems facing the country, with responses being unprompted. During April–July 2024, 59% named the economy (+3 points from Jan.–Mar. 2024) and 55% inflation (-7pts) as their top concerns. This was followed by 38% mentioning unemployment (+9pts) and 21% high taxes (-0.5pts). Smaller numbers of Sri Lankans cited corruption (6%), health (6%), drugs (5%), and education (4%) as in their top two concerns.

Priority issues facing the country (%)

% who think _____ is one of the top two problems facing the country right now



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

Estimates based on 7,767 interviews conducted by SLOTS from Jan. 1, 2023–Jul. 31, 2024, including 1,054 interviews from Apr. 1–Jul. 31, 2024, with estimates adjusted for gender, age, ethnicity, education, sector, province, and socioeconomic status. “Don’t know” responses are excluded from the calculations.

Whilst the overall economy and inflation remain the biggest concerns, there has been a large increase (22pts since 2023) in Sri Lankans thinking unemployment is one of the top problems facing the country, a larger increase than in those citing high taxes as a top problem (+8pts). In contrast, concerns with corruption (-5pts) and drugs (-6pts) have declined.

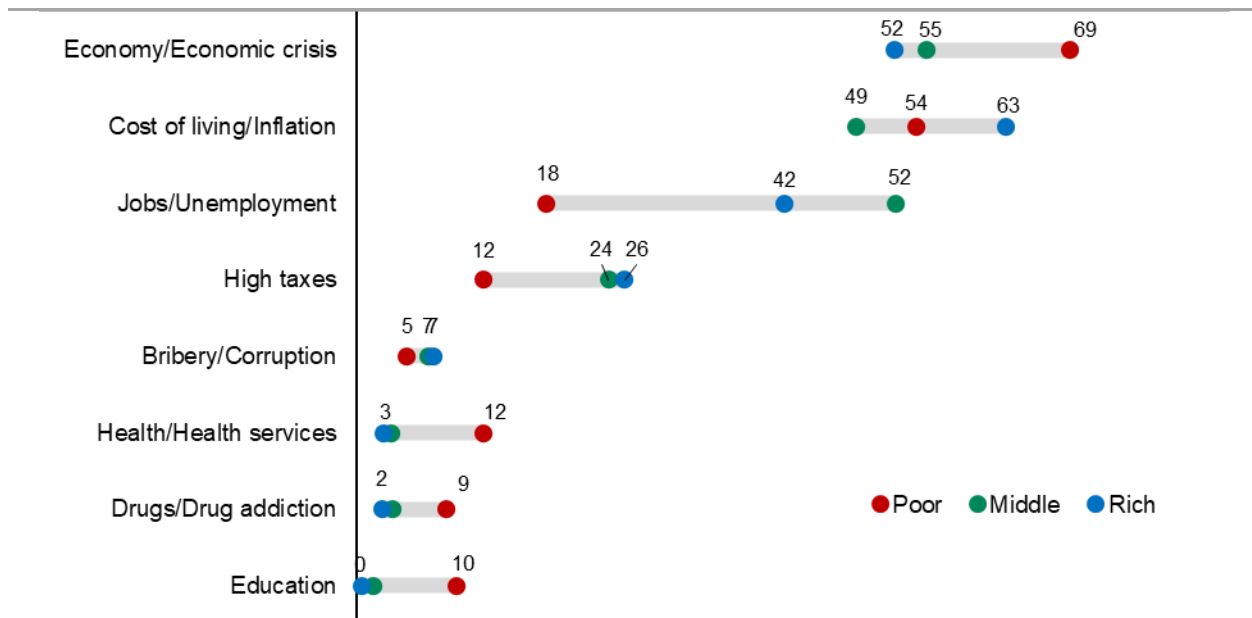
Whilst there is broad consensus that the economy is the most pressing national problem, better-off and poorer Sri Lankans differ in their perceptions about what is important. The least affluent third of

Sri Lankans are more likely (69%) than the richest third (52%) to think the economy is a top priority. In contrast, poorer Sri Lankans are less likely (54%) than the better-off (63%) to cite inflation as a top problem. An even bigger contrast is seen with unemployment, which only one in five (18%) of poorest Sri Lankans cite as a top priority compared with one in two of the middle and most affluent Sri Lankans.

The poorest one third of Sri Lankans differ in their concerns in other ways compared with the most affluent third. High taxes appear to be a problem that vexes the better-off more, with twice as many of the middle and most affluent Sri Lankans (25%) citing it as a top problem compared to the poorest third (12%). In contrast, the poorest one third of Sri Lankans are much more likely to cite health (12%) and education (10%)—areas where government spending is critical—as being national problems than the better-off (health 3%, education 1%). Poorer Sri Lankans are also much more likely (9%) to cite the drug problem as a top issue than the most affluent do (2%).

Priority issues facing the country by socioeconomic status (%)

% who think _____ is one of the top two problems facing the country right now, Apr.–Jul. 2024



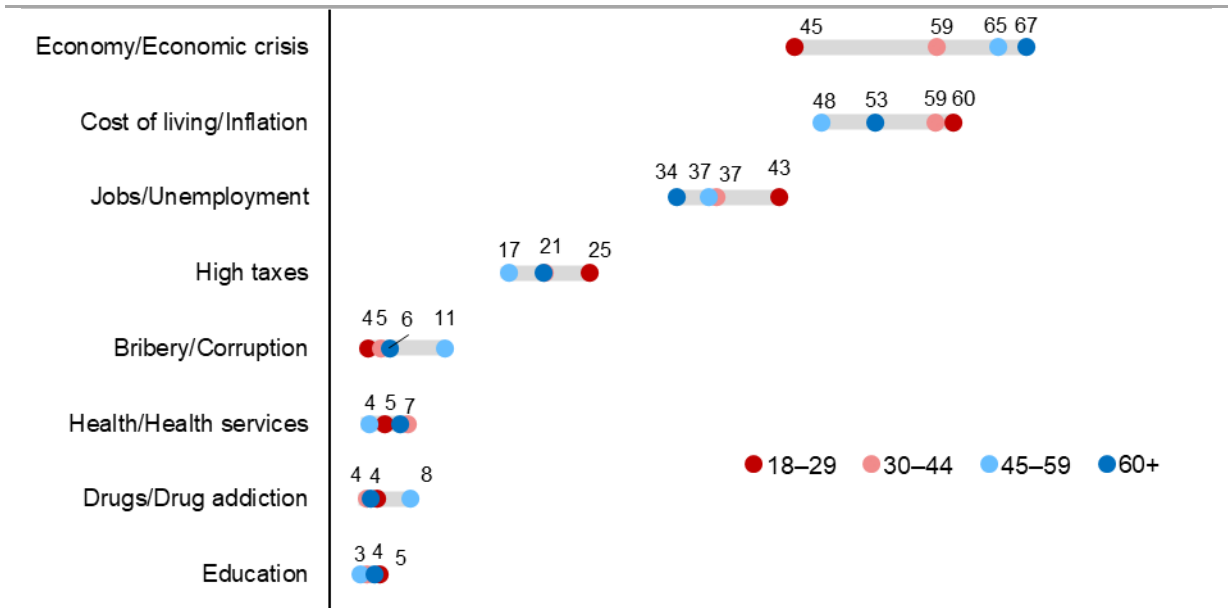
Institute for Health Policy Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS)

Estimates based on 1,054 interviews from Apr. 1–Jul. 31, 2024, with estimates adjusted for gender, age, ethnicity, education, sector, province, and socioeconomic status. “Poor”, “Middle”, and “Rich” refer to the poorest one third, middle third, and richest third of the population in terms of overall affluence. “Don’t know” responses are excluded from the calculations.

Economic issues and inflation are the top concerns across all age groups. Younger Sri Lankans (18–29 years) are most concerned about inflation (60%), while concern about the economic crisis increases with age, reaching 67% among those aged 60 and older. Job-related concerns are most common among the younger population but decrease with age.

Priority issues facing the country by age group (%)

% who think _____ is one of the top two problems facing the country right now, Apr.– Jul. 2024



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

Estimates based on 1,054 interviews from Apr. 1–Jul. 31, 2024, with estimates adjusted for gender, age, ethnicity, education, sector, province, and socioeconomic status. “Poor”, “Middle”, and “Rich” refer to the poorest one third, middle third, and richest third of the population in terms of overall affluence. “Don’t know” responses are excluded from the calculations.

Appendix: Composition of samples

Composition of samples for 2023, Jan.–Mar. 2024 and Apr.–Jul. 2024

		2023			Jan–Mar 2024			Apr–July 2024		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		5,599	5,599	100.0	1,114	1,114	100.0	1,054	1,054	100.0
Sex	Male	2,830	2,642	47.2	558	498	44.7	515	498	47.2
	Female	2,769	2,957	52.8	556	616	55.3	539	556	52.8
Age (years)	18–29	621	1,207	20.5	103	225	20.2	119	222	21.1
	30–44	1,463	1,764	30.0	315	359	32.2	297	358	33.9
	45–59	1,583	1,459	24.8	329	294	26.4	276	249	23.6
	60+	1,932	1,459	24.8	367	236	21.1	362	225	21.3
Ethnicity	Sinhala	4,280	4,242	75.8	911	836	75.0	905	808	76.7
	SL Tamil	836	631	11.3	117	130	11.7	96	117	11.1
	Estate Tamil	101	213	3.8	16	46	4.1	15	43	4.1
	Muslim	338	491	8.8	61	99	8.9	33	83	7.9
	Other	44	22	0.4	9	3	0.3	5	2	0.2
Province	WP	1,330	1,540	27.5	297	302	27.1	271	296	28.1
	CP	743	734	13.1	144	113	10.2	118	141	13.4
	SP	776	687	12.3	160	140	12.6	180	125	11.8
	NP	498	316	5.6	76	64	5.7	62	61	5.8
	EP	396	470	8.4	66	98	8.8	49	82	7.8
	NWP	505	616	11.0	106	132	11.9	109	96	9.1
	NCP	394	372	6.6	74	76	6.8	75	74	7.0
	Uva	369	345	6.2	70	72	6.5	71	69	6.5
	Sab	588	520	9.3	121	116	10.4	119	111	10.5
Sector	Urban	1,806	1,075	19.2	356	205	18.4	319	204	19.4
	Rural	3,793	4,524	80.8	758	909	81.6	735	850	80.6
SES Tertile	Poor	1,781	1,913	34.2	268	379	34.0	245	352	33.4
	Middle	1,762	1,868	33.4	383	407	36.5	425	374	35.5
	Better off	2,056	1,818	32.5	463	328	29.5	384	329	31.2

Note: N = Unweighted sample size; Nw = Weighted sample size.