

Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey

2023-07

FOR RELEASE MARCH 29, 2023

Public continue to hold deeply unfavourable views of almost all politicians across all parties

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FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

Institute for Health Policy, March 2023, *“Public continue to hold deeply unfavourable views of almost all politicians across all parties”*, SLOTS Report #2023-07.

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 been funded by the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, the UK National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the Asia Foundation, and others. 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.

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.

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Public continue to hold deeply unfavourable views of almost all politicians across all parties

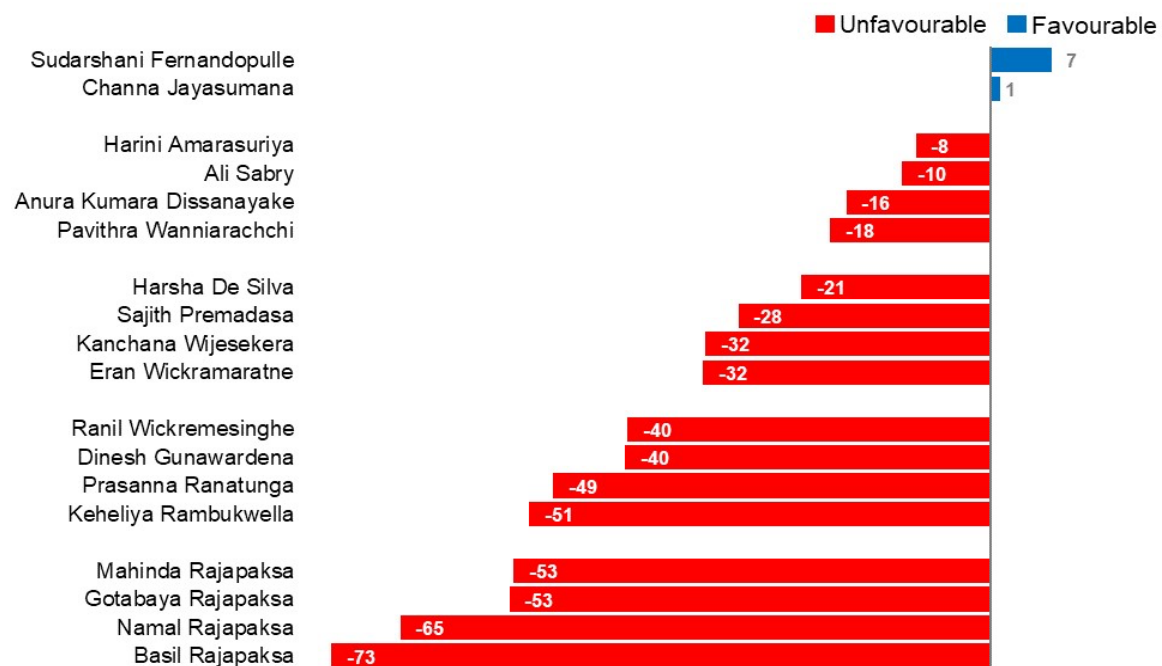
Sri Lankans continue to have deeply unfavourable views of most politicians a year after the economic and political collapse in early 2022, and despite progress in recent months in stabilizing the economy and in negotiations with the IMF.

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 them as or more unpopular than French President Macron today.

Dr Sudarshini Fernandopulle, former State Minister for COVID-19, retained her status as the politician with the most positive net favourability rating that SLOTS tracks, but at an average +7 this was still substantially down from late 2021 when it was typically +50 – +70. Notably, 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).

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.

At the other end of the scale, the most unpopular politicians tracked were members of the Rajapaksa family. Basil Rajapaksa was the most unpopular politician tracked during the survey period with a net favourability rating of -73, means there were more than five Sri Lankans who had an unfavourable view of him for everyone who had a favourable view. He was closely followed by Namal Rajapaksa (-

65), and former Presidents Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Mahinda Rajapaksa both with net favourability ratings of -53.

Other politicians had negative net 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), both of whom still had negative net ratings.

Amongst the other party leaders, as previously reported by SLOTS, Anura Dissanayake (NPP/JVP) was less unpopular (-16) than SJB leader Sajith Premadasa (-28), who was more popular than UNP leader President Ranil Wickremasinghe (-40).

How we did this

This analysis uses data collected by the Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS) between August 23, 2022 and March 22, 2023. 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.

Net favourability is the average rating having scored positive responses as +100, negative ones as -100, and neutral or no opinion responses as zero.

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.

Acknowledgements

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

Statistical Appendix

Appendix 1: Net favourability estimates

Politician	N	Net favourability (%)	95% CI
Keheliya Rambukwella	1,659	-51.1	-55.1—47.1
Pavithra Wanniarachchi	546	-17.7	-26.8—8.7
Sudarshani Fernandopulle	1,111	6.8	0.4—13.2
Channa Jayasumana	550	1.1	-7.5—9.6
Prasanna Ranatunga	540	-48.5	-55.5—41.5
Basil Rajapaksa	555	-73.1	-77.9—68.3
Namal Rajapaksa	565	-65.4	-71.6—59.2
Ali Sabry	1,112	-9.8	-16.0—3.6
Harsha De Silva	1,084	-21.0	-26.7—15.2
Eran Wickramaratne	1,070	-31.8	-37.2—26.5
Gotabaya Rajapaksa	481	-53.3	-62.2—44.4
Mahinda Rajapaksa	543	-52.8	-61.2—44.5
Sajith Premadasa	1,666	-27.9	-32.9—23.0
Anura Kumara Dissanayake	1,660	-16.0	-20.6—11.3
Ranil Wickremesinghe	1,670	-40.2	-44.7—35.8
Dinesh Gunawardena	1,658	-40.5	-44.8—36.1
Kanchana Wijesekera	1,103	-31.6	-37.3—25.9
Harini Amarasuriya	538	-8.3	-18.0—1.4

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	%
Total		1,659	1,659	100.0	546	546	100.0	1,111	1,111	100.0	550	550	100.0
Sex	Male	824	788	47.5	270	263	48.1	551	528	47.6	263	261	47.5
	Female	835	871	52.5	276	283	51.9	560	583	52.4	287	289	52.5
Age (years)	18–29	213	360	21.7	58	119	21.8	155	240	21.6	79	119	21.7
	30–39	213	357	21.5	68	117	21.4	149	241	21.7	81	120	21.7
	40–49	353	315	19.0	120	104	19.1	229	212	19.0	102	104	18.9
	50–59	296	281	17.0	108	93	17.0	190	187	16.9	99	93	16.9
	60–69	300	204	12.3	95	66	12.1	204	137	12.3	93	67	12.2
	70–79	232	106	6.4	78	35	6.4	152	71	6.4	77	35	6.4
	80+	52	36	2.2	19	12	2.2	32	24	2.2	19	12	2.2
Ethnicity	Sinhala	1,307	1,263	76.2	437	416	76.2	870	843	75.9	429	424	77.1
	SL Tamil	210	185	11.1	62	64	11.7	147	120	10.8	72	55	10.1
	Estate Tamil	32	62	3.7	10	20	3.8	22	44	4.0	14	22	4.1
	Muslim	99	143	8.6	34	44	8.1	64	100	9.0	34	48	8.7
	Other	11	6	0.4	3	2	0.3	8	4	0.4	1	0	0.1
Province	WP	379	446	26.9	130	136	25.0	251	313	28.2	119	154	28.0
	CP	249	224	13.5	81	74	13.5	167	150	13.5	87	74	13.4
	SP	254	200	12.1	92	70	12.8	163	134	12.1	77	70	12.7
	NP	120	95	5.7	41	32	5.8	78	63	5.7	33	31	5.6
	EP	115	141	8.5	31	49	8.9	84	91	8.2	39	41	7.5
	NWP	146	177	10.7	54	57	10.5	91	118	10.7	52	58	10.6
	NCP	112	108	6.5	30	37	6.8	82	67	6.1	46	37	6.8
	Uva	104	106	6.4	24	35	6.4	80	71	6.4	39	35	6.4
	Sab	180	162	9.8	63	56	10.3	115	103	9.3	58	50	9.1
Sector	Urban	510	318	19.2	168	101	18.5	344	220	19.8	150	106	19.3
	Rural	1,149	1,341	80.8	378	445	81.5	767	891	80.2	400	444	80.7
SES Quintile	Poorest	254	346	20.9	78	114	20.9	172	232	20.9	88	114	20.7
	Lower middle	333	342	20.6	112	113	20.6	219	229	20.6	112	112	20.3
	Middle	336	322	19.4	100	114	20.8	237	200	18.0	119	94	17.1
	Upper middle	361	342	20.6	126	114	20.8	237	225	20.3	114	115	20.9
	Richest	375	307	18.5	130	92	16.8	246	225	20.3	117	115	20.9

		Prasanna Ranatunga			Basil Rajapaksa			Namal Rajapaksa			Ali Sabry		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		540	540	100.0	555	555	100.0	565	565	100.0	1,112	1,112	100.0
Sex	Male	267	260	48.1	267	264	47.6	287	268	47.4	551	526	47.3
	Female	273	280	51.9	288	291	52.4	278	297	52.6	561	586	52.7
Age (years)	18–29	57	118	21.8	80	121	21.7	77	122	21.6	155	242	21.8
	30–39	68	116	21.4	81	121	21.7	67	123	21.7	148	240	21.6
	40–49	120	103	19.1	104	105	18.9	126	108	19.1	229	211	19.0
	50–59	106	92	17.0	99	94	16.9	92	94	16.7	189	187	16.8
	60–69	94	66	12.1	94	68	12.2	110	69	12.2	203	136	12.3
	70–79	76	35	6.4	78	35	6.4	79	36	6.4	155	71	6.4
	80+	19	12	2.2	19	12	2.2	14	12	2.2	33	24	2.2
Ethnicity	Sinhala	433	411	76.2	429	428	77.1	443	423	74.9	868	844	75.9
	SL Tamil	60	63	11.7	76	56	10.1	76	64	11.4	148	120	10.8
	Estate Tamil	10	20	3.8	14	22	4.0	8	23	4.1	22	44	4.0
	Muslim	34	44	8.1	35	48	8.7	31	51	9.1	66	100	9.0
	Other	3	2	0.3	1	0	0.1	7	3	0.5	8	4	0.4
Province	WP	130	135	25.0	118	155	28.0	132	159	28.1	249	312	28.0
	CP	81	73	13.5	86	75	13.4	81	76	13.5	165	150	13.5
	SP	90	69	12.8	77	71	12.7	84	59	10.4	162	129	11.6
	NP	39	31	5.8	35	31	5.6	47	33	5.8	79	63	5.7
	EP	31	48	9.0	40	41	7.4	43	50	8.8	85	91	8.2
	NWP	53	56	10.4	55	59	10.7	38	66	11.6	93	121	10.9
	NCP	29	36	6.7	47	38	6.8	37	28	5.0	82	70	6.3
	Uva	24	35	6.4	38	35	6.4	43	36	6.4	80	71	6.4
	Sab	63	56	10.3	59	50	9.0	60	58	10.3	117	105	9.5
Sector	Urban	167	100	18.5	155	107	19.3	195	116	20.6	343	220	19.7
	Rural	373	440	81.5	400	448	80.7	370	449	79.4	769	892	80.3
SES Quintile	Poorest	77	113	20.9	87	115	20.7	90	117	20.7	175	231	20.8
	Lower middle	112	111	20.6	116	113	20.3	107	117	20.7	220	229	20.6
	Middle	99	112	20.8	120	95	17.1	117	117	20.7	238	205	18.4
	Upper middle	125	112	20.8	114	116	20.9	123	111	19.7	236	227	20.4
	Richest	127	91	16.8	118	116	20.9	128	103	18.2	243	220	19.8

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		1,084	1,084	100.0	1,070	1,070	100.0	481	481	100.0	543	543	100.0
Sex	Male	530	518	47.8	542	513	48.0	239	238	49.5	268	261	48.1
	Female	554	566	52.2	528	557	52.0	242	243	50.5	275	282	51.9
Age (years)	18–29	135	234	21.6	125	231	21.6	50	104	21.7	59	118	21.8
	30–39	146	234	21.6	130	228	21.3	57	100	20.8	67	117	21.5
	40–49	223	206	19.0	243	205	19.1	105	93	19.3	119	103	19.1
	50–59	204	184	16.9	192	182	17.0	93	82	17.1	106	92	17.0
	60–69	184	133	12.3	199	132	12.3	85	60	12.5	94	66	12.1
	70–79	154	69	6.4	150	69	6.4	71	31	6.4	78	35	6.4
	80+	38	24	2.2	31	23	2.2	20	11	2.2	20	12	2.2
Ethnicity	Sinhala	854	831	76.6	851	810	75.7	429	367	76.4	429	413	76.1
	SL Tamil	133	118	10.9	128	125	11.7	27	53	11.0	66	63	11.7
	Estate Tamil	24	42	3.9	18	39	3.6	5	18	3.7	11	21	3.8
	Muslim	69	91	8.4	63	91	8.5	19	43	8.9	34	44	8.1
	Other	4	3	0.3	10	5	0.5	1	0	0.1	3	2	0.3
Province	WP	246	290	26.8	252	277	25.9	125	118	24.5	128	136	25.0
	CP	167	146	13.5	154	145	13.6	69	61	12.7	81	73	13.5
	SP	165	138	12.8	171	128	12.0	89	63	13.0	91	69	12.8
	NP	73	62	5.7	80	62	5.8	14	28	5.8	43	31	5.8
	EP	70	89	8.3	74	96	9.0	23	41	8.4	32	49	9.0
	NWP	107	113	10.4	88	117	10.9	49	57	11.8	52	57	10.4
	NCP	75	74	6.8	65	65	6.1	29	33	6.9	29	37	6.8
	Uva	61	69	6.3	65	69	6.4	22	30	6.3	24	35	6.4
	Sab	120	103	9.5	121	110	10.3	61	50	10.5	63	56	10.3
Sector	Urban	317	204	18.8	346	205	19.1	145	94	19.5	168	100	18.5
	Rural	767	880	81.2	724	865	80.9	336	387	80.5	375	443	81.5
SES Quintile	Poorest	163	225	20.8	159	224	21.0	57	99	20.5	79	114	20.9
	Lower middle	224	224	20.7	215	220	20.6	98	101	21.0	113	112	20.7
	Middle	217	205	18.9	212	225	21.0	91	98	20.5	100	113	20.8
	Upper middle	237	225	20.7	238	216	20.1	116	102	21.2	126	113	20.8
	Richest	243	205	18.9	246	185	17.3	119	81	16.9	125	91	16.8

		Sajith Premadasa			Anura Kumara Dissanayake			Ranil Wickremesinghe			Dinesh Gunawardena		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		1,666	1,666	100.0	1,660	1,660	100.0	1,670	1,670	100.0	1,658	1,658	100.0
Sex	Male	825	792	47.6	821	789	47.5	824	794	47.6	823	788	47.5
	Female	841	874	52.4	839	871	52.5	846	876	52.4	835	870	52.5
Age (years)	18–29	219	361	21.6	217	360	21.7	219	362	21.6	217	360	21.7
	30–39	218	359	21.6	216	357	21.5	219	360	21.6	216	356	21.5
	40–49	350	317	19.0	350	316	19.0	351	317	19.0	350	315	19.0
	50–59	296	282	16.9	296	281	17.0	297	283	16.9	295	281	17.0
	60–69	296	204	12.3	296	204	12.3	299	205	12.3	296	204	12.3
	70–79	234	107	6.4	233	106	6.4	233	107	6.4	231	106	6.4
	80+	53	36	2.2	52	36	2.2	52	36	2.2	53	36	2.2
Ethnicity	Sinhala	1,302	1,267	76.0	1,302	1,263	76.1	1,301	1,269	76.0	1,301	1,262	76.1
	SL Tamil	220	186	11.2	215	185	11.2	220	187	11.2	213	185	11.2
	Estate Tamil	32	63	3.8	31	62	3.7	34	64	3.8	31	62	3.7
	Muslim	101	144	8.6	101	144	8.7	104	144	8.6	102	144	8.7
	Other	11	6	0.3	11	6	0.4	11	6	0.4	11	6	0.4
Province	WP	376	448	26.9	377	446	26.9	376	449	26.9	376	445	26.9
	CP	247	224	13.5	247	224	13.5	250	225	13.5	246	223	13.5
	SP	254	201	12.1	253	201	12.1	253	202	12.1	254	200	12.1
	NP	126	96	5.7	123	95	5.7	125	96	5.7	121	95	5.7
	EP	119	142	8.5	118	142	8.6	121	142	8.5	119	142	8.5
	NWP	144	178	10.7	145	177	10.7	145	178	10.7	145	178	10.7
	NCP	113	108	6.5	111	108	6.5	113	109	6.5	112	108	6.5
	Uva	106	106	6.4	106	105	6.4	106	106	6.4	105	105	6.4
	Sab	181	162	9.7	180	162	9.7	181	162	9.7	180	162	9.7
Sector	Urban	515	320	19.2	510	319	19.2	515	320	19.2	514	318	19.2
	Rural	1,151	1,346	80.8	1,150	1,341	80.8	1,155	1,350	80.8	1,144	1,340	80.8
SES Quintile	Poorest	246	331	20.9	242	330	20.9	244	331	20.9	238	330	20.9
	Lower middle	308	325	20.6	308	324	20.6	310	326	20.6	309	324	20.6
	Middle	318	307	19.4	317	305	19.4	319	307	19.4	319	305	19.4
	Upper middle	351	327	20.7	352	326	20.7	354	328	20.7	352	325	20.7
	Richest	359	292	18.5	357	291	18.5	359	293	18.5	357	291	18.5

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

		Kanchana Wijesekera			Harini Amarasuriya		
		N	Nw	%	N	Nw	%
Total		1,103	1,103	100.0	538	538	100.0
Sex	Male	548	520	47.1	277	258	47.9
	Female	555	583	52.9	261	280	52.1
Age (years)	18–29	154	240	21.8	72	114	21.2
	30–39	145	238	21.6	65	118	21.9
	40–49	229	209	19.0	122	103	19.2
	50–59	188	186	16.8	87	90	16.8
	60–69	201	135	12.3	107	66	12.3
	70–79	154	70	6.4	73	35	6.4
	80+	32	24	2.2	12	12	2.2
Ethnicity	Sinhala	865	836	75.8	427	403	75.0
	SL Tamil	144	119	10.8	68	62	11.6
	Estate Tamil	21	44	4.0	7	22	4.1
	Muslim	65	99	9.0	29	47	8.8
	Other	8	4	0.4	7	3	0.6
Province	WP	248	308	28.0	128	153	28.5
	CP	167	148	13.5	76	72	13.5
	SP	159	128	11.6	81	57	10.5
	NP	75	64	5.8	40	31	5.8
	EP	83	90	8.2	43	47	8.7
	NWP	92	120	10.8	37	63	11.7
	NCP	82	69	6.3	34	24	4.4
	Uva	80	70	6.4	42	35	6.5
	Sab	117	105	9.5	57	56	10.4
Sector	Urban	340	218	19.7	184	110	20.5
	Rural	763	885	80.3	354	428	79.5
SES Quintile	Poorest	171	231	20.9	81	112	20.9
	Lower middle	218	226	20.5	102	111	20.6
	Middle	236	203	18.4	114	113	21.1
	Upper middle	235	225	20.4	120	100	18.7
	Richest	243	218	19.8	121	101	18.8

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