

Social Indicator- Centre for Policy Alternatives
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## Introduction

Social Indicator (SI), the polling Unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) designed a pre-election public opinion poll to capture public opinion in the wake of dissolution of Parliament. Furthermore, SI believes that this study will empower the citizen of Sri Lanka, enabling them to focus the political debate on issues and policies of public concern rather than on rhetoric.

This report presents the basic findings of the first wave of a three-wave study that is being conducted throughout March 2004. The results of the next two surveys will be released on  $22^{nd}$  and  $27^{th}$  of March 2004 respectively.

SI appreciates the technical assistance of Professor William Mishler of the University of Arizona, USA and Professor Steven Finkel of the University of Virginia, USA in designing the survey tool and the financial support of the Academy for Educational Development.



# Methodology

This study is carried out in three waves using a structured questionnaire. It is administered through face-to face interviews across a countrywide sample of 1800 respondents. The sample includes respondents from 22 districts, excluding the areas of Amparai, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Jaffna, which are not under Government control. A multi stage stratified sampling technique is adopted to select the Grama Niladari divisions (GNDs) and systematic random sampling procedures are followed to select the Household. The KISH grid is used to randomly choose the respondent from the selected household. Both men and women over the age of 18 are eligible respondents for this study.

A team of 50 experienced and qualified SI field enumerators are being used for data collection and are provided with intensive training on how to accurately execute the questionnaire. The briefing for the 1<sup>st</sup> wave questionnaire was conducted on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and field work carried out from 5-12<sup>th</sup> March. The briefing for the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave occurred on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and fieldwork for the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave is being conducted from 13-16<sup>th</sup> March. The briefing for the final wave will commence on the 19<sup>th</sup> march and fieldwork will be completed by 25<sup>th</sup> March. 5% of the interviews are back-checked in addition to accompanied visits and spot checks to ensure the quality of the data collection. As a company policy, only the enumerators from the same community are used to interview respondents from respective communities.

Data set is weighted to reflect the actual ethno-geographical composition of the country before data analysis. Data Analysis is done using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Weighted nation-wide results are subject to a margin of error of  $\pm$ -3%.



# **Executive Summary**

This study identifies voter assessment of the issues that they feel need to be addressed in the General Elections and thereafter by the newly elected government. It consists of three waves, with the first wave determining voter behaviour based on their opinion of the UNF government's performance, the political party believed to be the most capable in handling the areas identified and the issues that the voting public feel need the immediate attention of the next government.

The second and third waves will capture voter response to changing political developments. Some of the most important findings from the first wave have been highlighted below.

The majority of Sri Lankan's (63.2%) express their dissatisfaction with the country's economic situation when compared to a year ago. When asked about their personal economic situation, 59% believe that it has worsened while only 17% believe it to have improved. Interestingly, the majority of the Tamil community (63.3%) believes that the economic situation of the Tamil community has improved since last year. However, only 26.7% of the Up Country Tamil community share the same view. 69.5% of the Sinhala community and 44% of the Muslim community indicate that the economic situation of their respective communities has worsened during the last year. Deep disappointment with the prevailing economic situation is reflected in 61.6% of respondents stating that the Cost of Living is the most important issue concerning them on a daily basis.

Opinion is divided regarding the UNF government's overall performance in the last two years with 38.6% saying that the UNF has done a good job with 44% saying they have done a bad job. In order to identify the areas in which the UNF has performed favorably and unfavorably, six main areas were individually classified. These areas are handling of the Peace Process, drawing on international support, reducing the cost of living, reducing unemployment, combating corruption and preserving law and order. There is a high level of satisfaction with the UNF's handling of the Peace Process and drawing international support –with 62.7% and 51.3% respectively. With regard to all the other issues, there is a high level of dissatisfaction, registering between 60.6% with regard to combating corruption to 72.5% with regard to reducing the cost of living and 75.3% with regard to reducing unemployment.

When questioned on the necessity of general elections at this juncture, 48.7% are in agreement while 34.1% disagree. When asked whether the president was justified in dissolving the parliament, 49.3% agree and 40.5% disagree. The survey also reveals that 89% of the Sri Lankans intend on voting on April 2, 2004.

In identifying reasons for voting for a particular party, the survey found that 35% of Sri Lankans vote for a particular party/alliance because they believe it is best suited to run the country, 25.2% vote for a party because they believe that no other party represents their beliefs and 12.7% vote according to family loyalty and tradition. Of the people surveyed, 34.6% of those who are undecided as to which party they will vote for indicate that the key factor in making up their minds will be a candidate/party's ability to run the country. UNF members are more likely to vote on the basis of loyalty and family tradition (23.7%)



and UPFA voters on the basis of ideology. The vast majority of Sri Lankans (74%) say they will vote against a candidate involved in election violence and/or malpractices.

Given the record of past election violence and malpractice, the study attempted to capture public perception and anticipation on this issue. The question was asked whether people agree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree with the statement that "The periods of preelection, election day and its aftermath will be very violent". The majority (67%) agrees with this statement, 20% disagree, while 13% neither agree nor disagree. When asked "There will be very few election malpractices in the forthcoming general election of April 2004" opinion was divided. 41% agree with the statement, 39% disagree with the statement, while 20% neither agree nor disagree.

A comparative survey of the UNF and UPFA reveals that people clearly believe the UNF has been the better party to handle the Peace Process (46.3%). With regard to combating corruption, the UPFA clearly scores higher than the UNF. The figures being 38.1% and 16.2% respectively. However, the majority of respondents (45.6%) believe that neither party is capable of combating corruption. The UPFA also scores higher than the UNF on the ability to reduce the cost of living, reduce unemployment, provide health and education and preserve law and order. Of particular note is that as many or more people indicate a lack of confidence in the ability of either party to tackle the aforementioned issues. The one notable exception is the Peace Process (Refer Fig 16).

On the topic of who is best suited to run the country, 34% feel that Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga is best suited to run the country, 29% believe that Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe is best suited to run the country, while 23% feel that neither Ranil nor Chandrika is suited to run the country. The study shows that Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe is popular amongst Tamil, Upcountry Tamil and Muslim communities. Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga's majority lies within the Sinhala community. There is a small group of UNF supporters who feel that Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga is best suited to run the country (Refer Fig 19). 37.7% of the undecided voters believe that neither Mr. Wickremesinghe nor Mrs. Kumaratunga is best suited to lead the country. Furthermore, Mrs. Kumaratunga appears to have a slight majority over Mr. Wickremesinghe amidst the undecided voters.

A majority of respondents (55.2%) indicate that the top priority of the next government should be a reduction in the price of essential goods. 21.2% believe that recommencement of the peace talks should be given priority. The maintenance of the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) receives 43.8% approval. When this is broken down into party affiliation, 69% of UNF supporters indicate that the CFA should be maintained. 25.8% UPFA supporters indicate that the CFA should be maintained while 36.8% of UPFA supporters indicate that the CFA should be maintained with some adjustments. In the "undecided" camp, 67.7% indicate that the CFA should be maintained with or without adjustments.

When surveyed on proposed constitutional changes, 43% support the abolition of the executive presidency and 37% agree that the PR electoral system should be changed. However, with regard to the former, 37% either have no opinion, are not sure or neither agree nor disagree. In the case of the Proportional Representation electoral system, the figure for this category is 43%.



On the question of Sri Lanka needing a Federal Constitution, 46% fall in to the Don't know/Not Sure category. Only 17% support this proposition and 26% disagree.

The survey shows a high percentage of the people, who express their inability to comment on the impartiality and efficiency of the election commissioner, 41.8% believe that the election commissioner is impartial, and 49% feel that he is efficient. An overwhelming majority of Sri Lankans express that it is essential to have both local and foreign monitors in the forthcoming general elections and 82% Sri Lankans believe that this combination will contribute positively to a free and fair election.

In conclusion, it is clear that whatever the outcome of the general election, the majority of Sri Lankans want economic relief, in particular the cost of living to be reduced and the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) to hold.



## Quality of Life

Fig. 1 Compared to a year ago, in your opinion, the economic situation in the country has ...

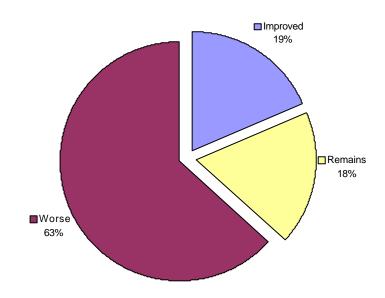


Fig. 2 Compared to a year ago, in your opinion, your personal economic situation has...

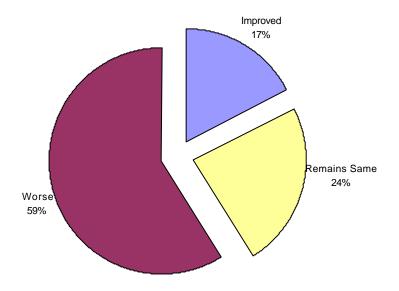
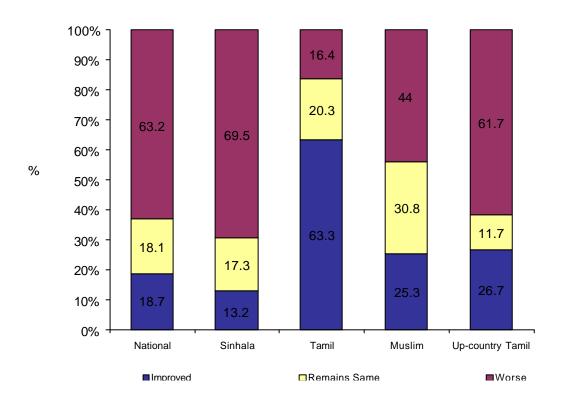
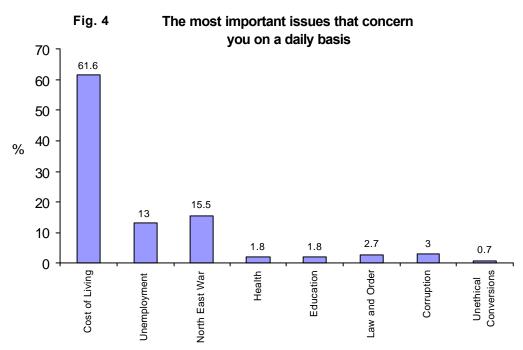




Fig. 3 Compared to a year ago, the economic situation of the ethnic group you belong to...(By Ethnicity)







## Performance of the UNF Government

Fig. 5 Since the last general elections of 2001, how good or a bad job do you think the UNF government has done?

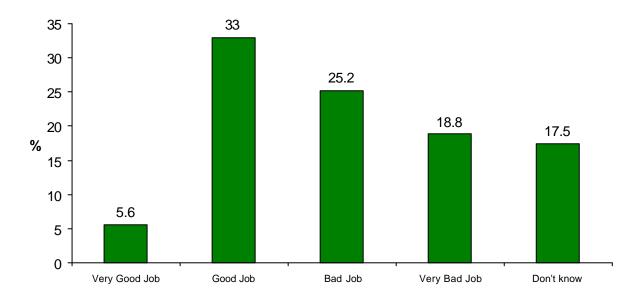
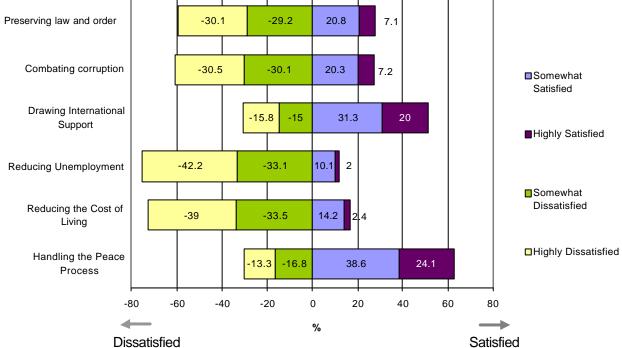


Fig. 6 UNF Government's Performance on...





# Approval for Elections

Fig. 7 Do you think that a general election is necessary at this juncture?

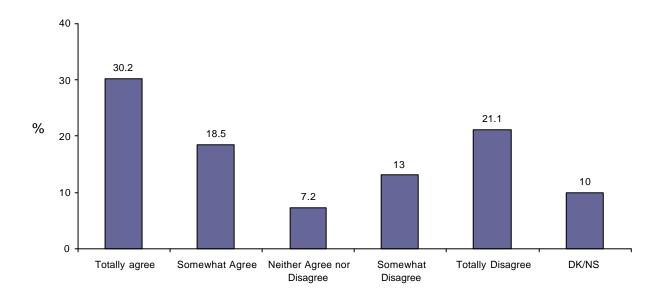
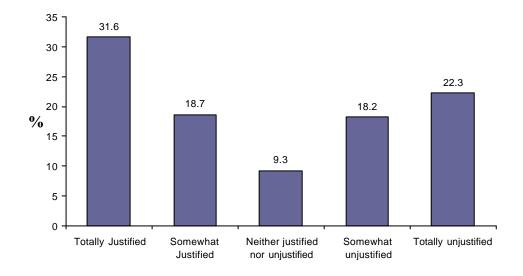


Fig. 8 Was the President justified in dissolving the Parliament at this juncture?





### Voter Behaviour

Fig. 9 Do you intend to vote in the forthcoming General Elections of April 2, 2004 ?

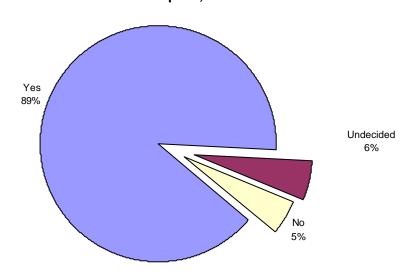
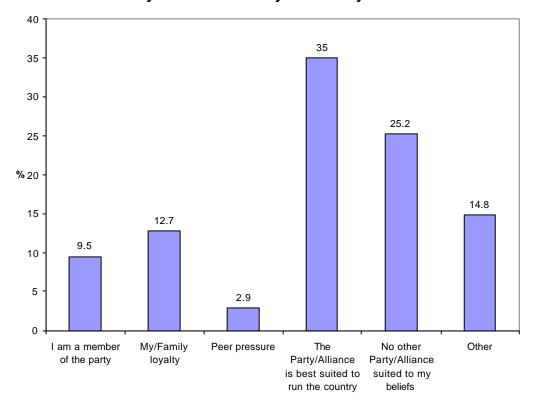


Fig. 10 What makes you vote for the Party/Alliance of your choice?





# What makes you vote for the Party/Alliance of your choice? (Breakdown, Political Party-wise)

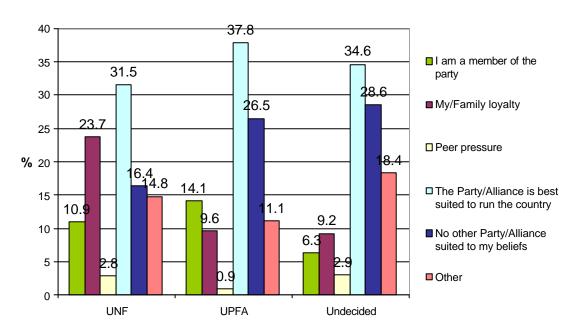


Fig. 12 Will you vote against candidates involved in violence and/or election malpractices?

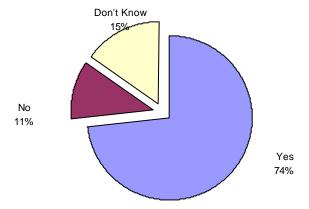
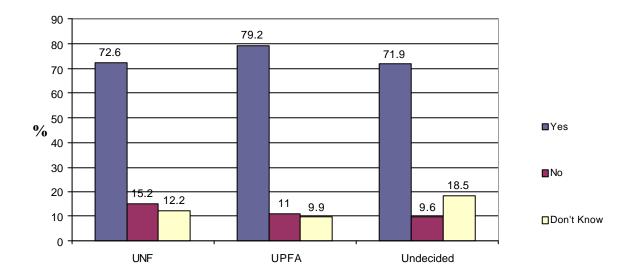




Fig. 13 Will you vote against candidates involved in violence and/or malpractices?

By political party choice





## **Election Violence and Malpractices**

Fig. 14 "The periods of pre-election, election day and its aftermath will be very violent"

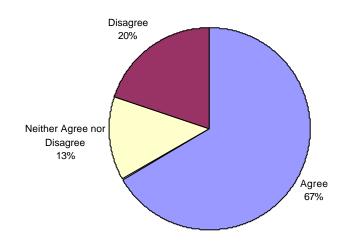
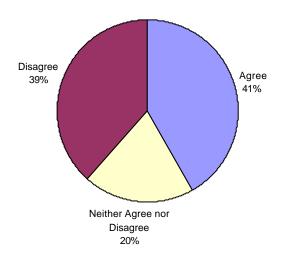


Fig. 15 "There will be very few election malpractices in the forthcoming general elections of April 2, 2004"





#### UNF Vs. UPFA

Fig. 16 Please indicate one political party/alliance which you believe will best handle each of the following if they were to form the government after the elections;

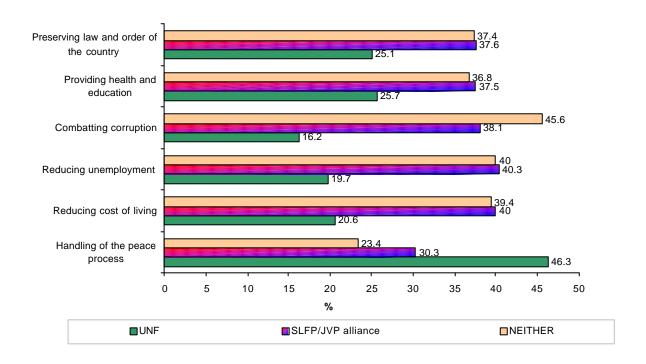


Fig. 17 In your opinion, who do you think is best suited to lead the country?

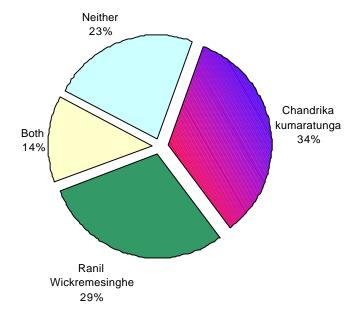




Fig. 18 Who do you think is best suited to lead the country? (Ethnic breakdown)

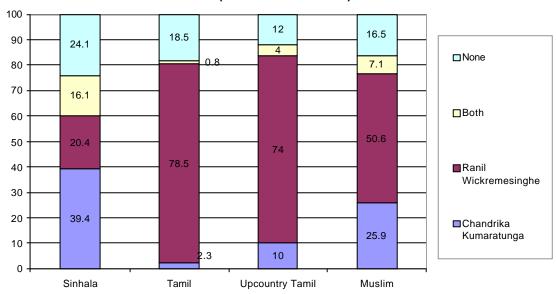
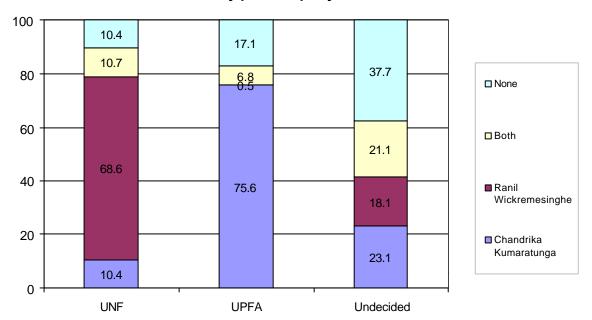


Fig.19 Who do you think is best suited to lead the country?

By political party choice





#### Priorities for the New Government

Fig. 20 In your opinion, the most important issue that should receive immediate attention by the newly elected party/alliance/coalition in the forthcoming general elections of 2 April 2004 is...

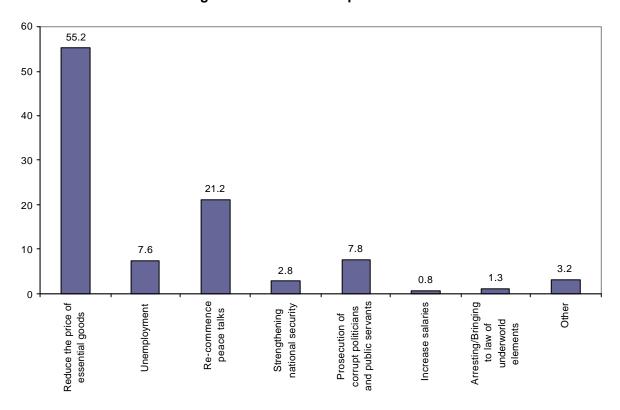


Fig. 21 When it comes to the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA), the newly elected government of the forthcoming general elections of 2 April 2004 should...

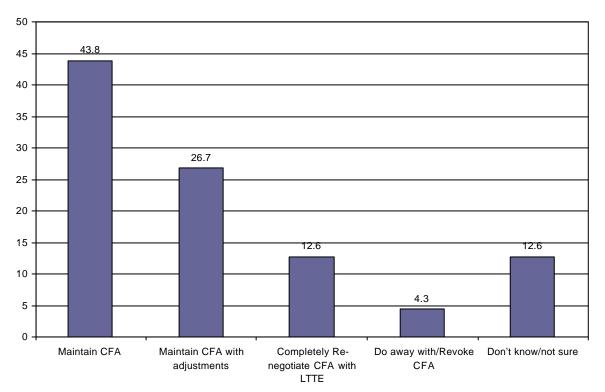
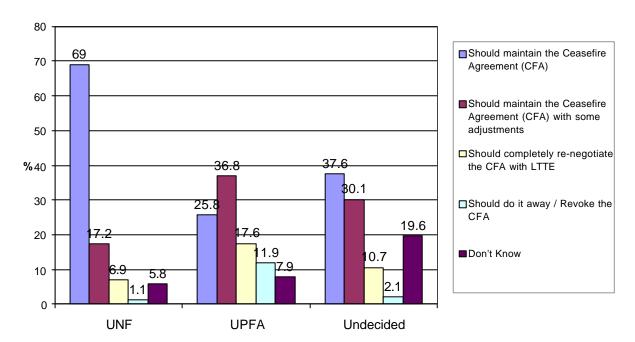




Fig. 22 What should the newly elected government do with the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA)? By political party choice





# **Constitutional Changes**

Fig. 23 "The Executive Presidency should be abolished"

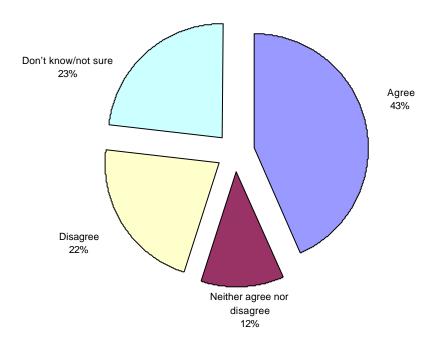


Fig. 24 "The Proportional Representation (PR) Electoral System should be changed"

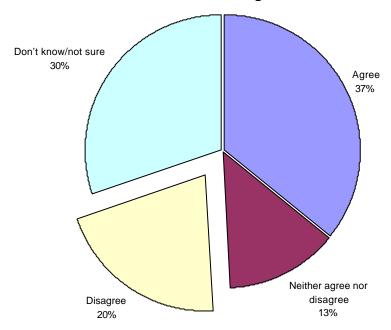
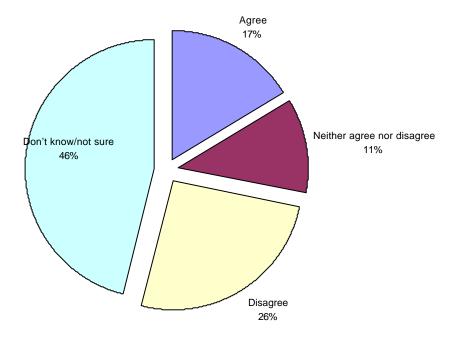




Fig. 25 "Sri Lanka needs a federal constitution"





### **Elections Commissioner**

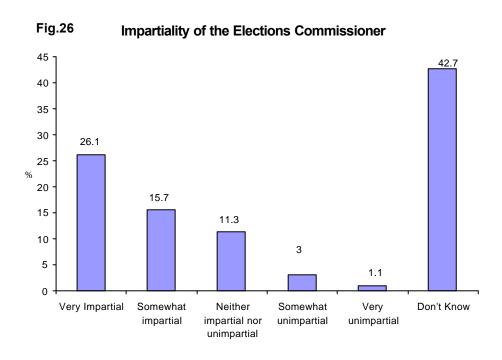
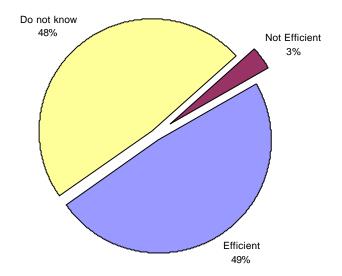


Fig. 27 Efficiency of the Elections Commissioner





### **Election Monitors**

Fig. 28 In the forthcoming general elections, both local and foreign Election Monitors are..

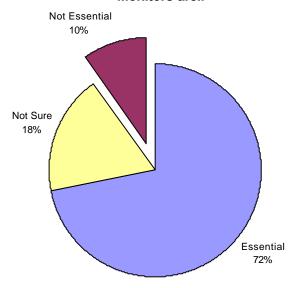
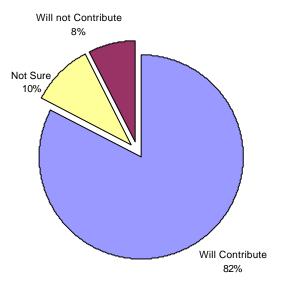


Fig. 29 Will both local and foreign Election Monitors contribute to the forthcoming general elections?





## Annex

### District sample (weighted) distribution in March 2004

DISTRICT	TOTAL
Colombo	13.6%
Gampaha	11.3%
Kalutara	6.0%
Kandy	6.9%
Matale	2.5%
Nuwar Eliya	3.8%
Galle	5.7%
Hambantota	2.8%
Matara	4.3%
Anuradhapura	4.0%
Polonnaruwa	1.9%
Kurunegala	8.4%
Puttlam	3.8%
Badulla	3.7%
Monaragala	2.0%
Ratnapura	5.6%
Kegalle	4.1%
Amparai	2.9%
Batticoloa	1.6%
Trincomalee	1.0%
Vavuniya	.7%
Jaffna	3.5%
NATIONAL	100.0%

### Ethnic sample (weighted) distribution in March 2004

ETHNICITY	TOTAL
Sinhala	82.6%
Tamil	8.2%
Muslim	3.7%
Up-country Tamil	5.5%
NATIONAL	100.0%



### Age sample (weighted) distribution in March 2004

AGE GROUP	TOTAL
First Time Voters	7.5%
22-25	7.5%
26-35	22.2%
36-45	27.3%
46-55	20.4%
Above 55	15.0%
NATIONAL	100.0%

### Gender sample (weighted) distribution in March 2004

GENDER	TOTAL
Male	49.6%
Female	50.4%
NATIONAL	100.0%

Social Indicator (SI) is an independent social research organisation, which conducts polls on socio-economic and political issues.

Operating under the Board of Directors of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), SI was established in September 1999, and filled a longstanding vacuum for a permanent, professional and independent polling facility in Sri Lanka on social and political issues.

Polling is an instrument of empowerment, a means by which the silent majority of the public can express their opinions on issues affecting them. Our mission is to conduct surveys on key social issues, thereby providing a means through which public opinion can influence the public policy debate.



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