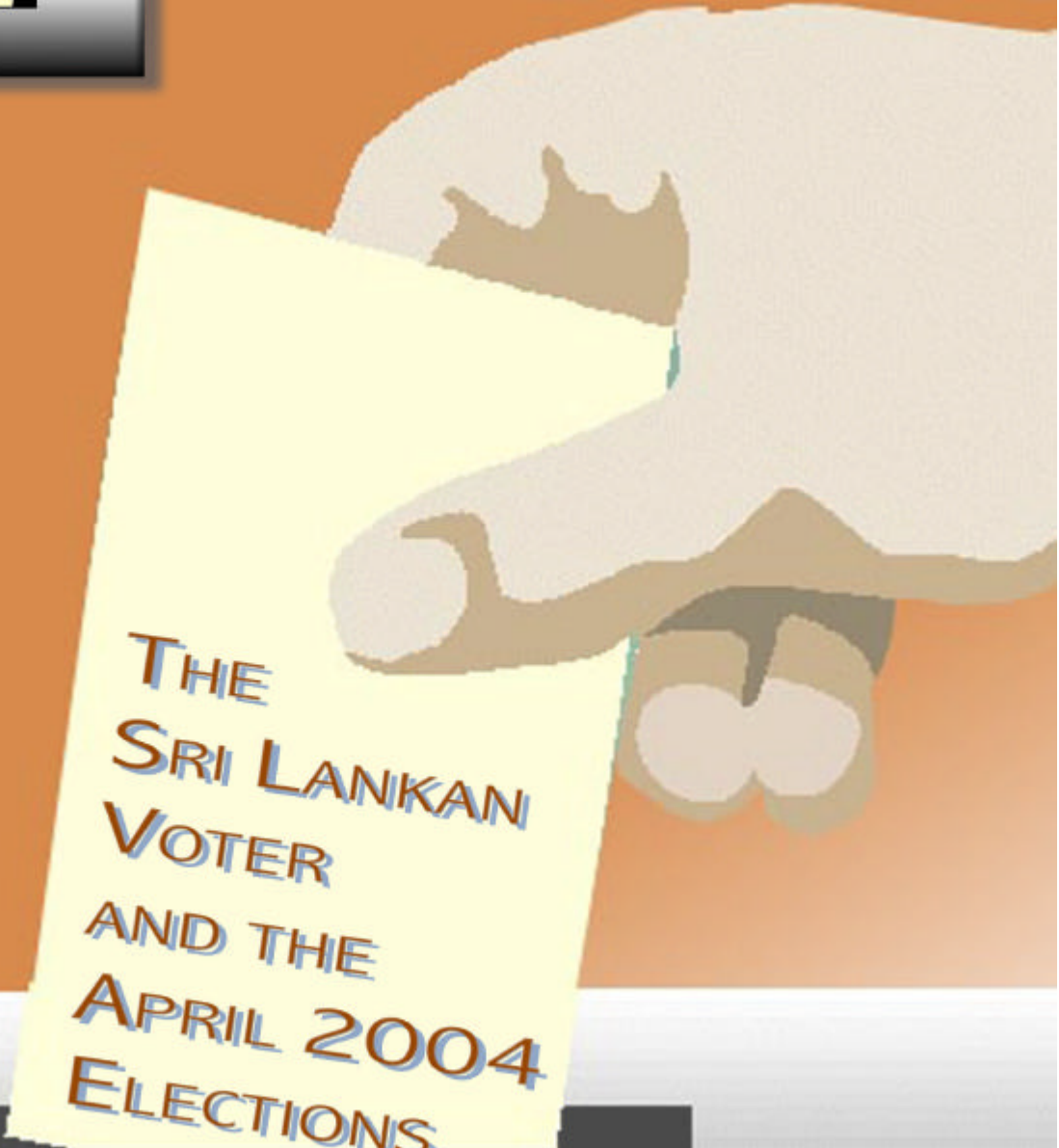




Wave 2

13-15 March, 2004

A large, stylized illustration of a hand holding a yellow ballot paper. The paper contains the title text.

THE
SRI LANKAN
VOTER
AND THE
APRIL 2004
ELECTIONS

SOCIAL INDICATOR- CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MARCH 2004



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 citizens 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 second wave of a three-wave study that is being conducted throughout March 2004. The results of the next survey will be released on 30th of March 2004.

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 Researchers is being used for data collection and provided with intensive training on how to accurately execute the questionnaire. The briefing for the 1st wave questionnaire was conducted on 4th March 2004 and fieldwork carried out from 5-12th March. The briefing for the 2nd wave occurred on 12th March 2004 and fieldwork was carried out from 13-15th 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 Field Researchers 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 +/-3%.

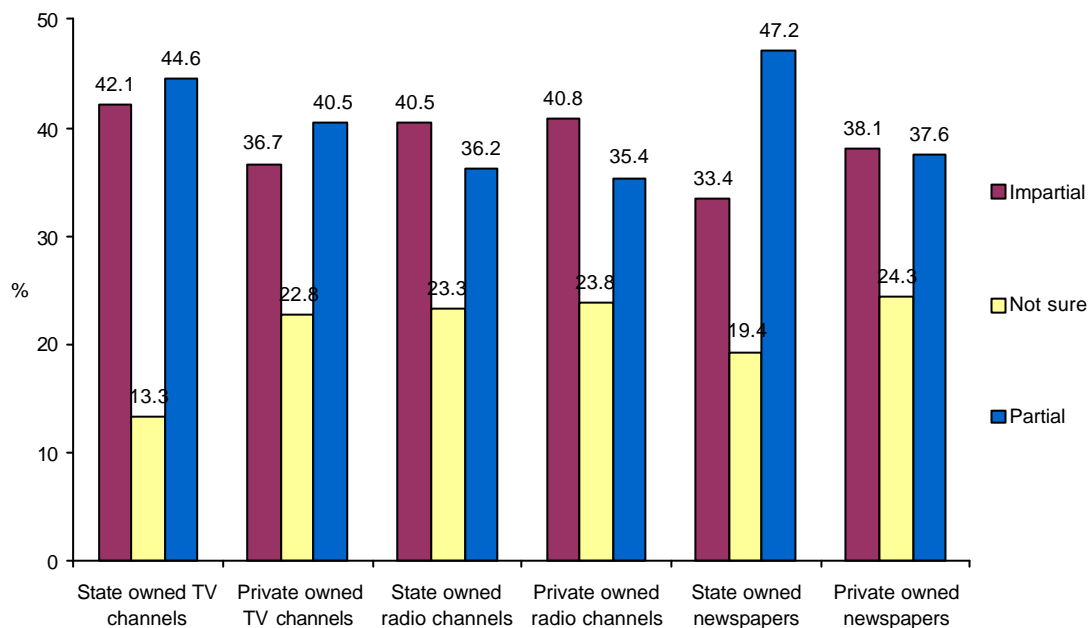


Executive Summary

In this second wave of the pre election poll, attention is paid to capture the public opinion on current political developments.

IMPARTIALITY OF MEDIA COVERAGE BY STATE AND PRIVATE OWNED MEDIA

Figure 1: Please state whether you feel the current media coverage of the election campaign by the following media is partial or impartial

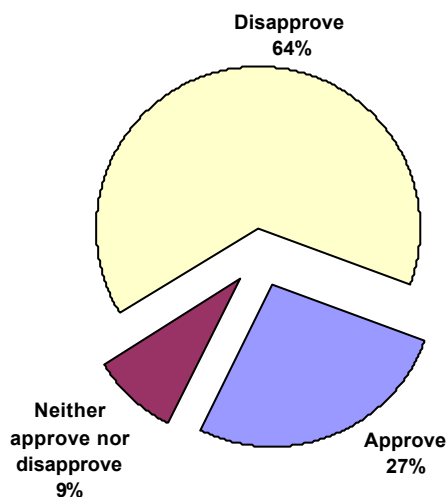


People were asked their perception of the impartiality of public and privately owned media channels in their coverage of the election campaign. The results show that a marginally higher percentage of Sri Lankans believe that irrespective of the type of ownership of the TV channel, coverage of election campaigning is biased. In addition, compared to state owned TV channels, a high percentage of people are unable to comment on the impartiality of the private owned TV channels. People believe that radio channels are more impartial in their coverage of election campaigning regardless of their type of ownership. It is worth noting that state owned newspapers are seen to be more biased than private owned newspapers.



CLERGY AS CANDIDATES

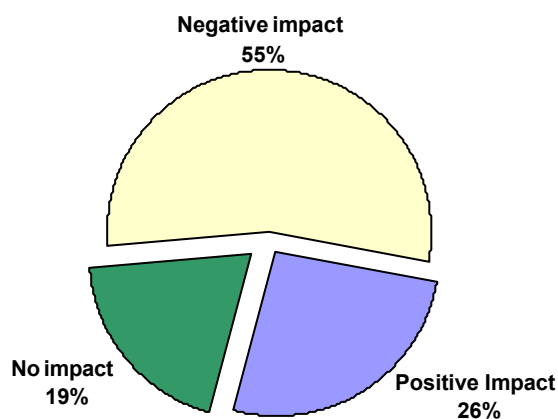
Figure 2: Do you approve or disapprove of clergy campaigning as candidates in the general elections? (general opinion)



A majority (64%) of Sri Lankans disapprove of clergy as candidates in the general elections, while in contrast, only 27% of the population approve.

SPLIT IN THE LTTE

Figure 3: Impact of the LTTE's split on the Peace Process

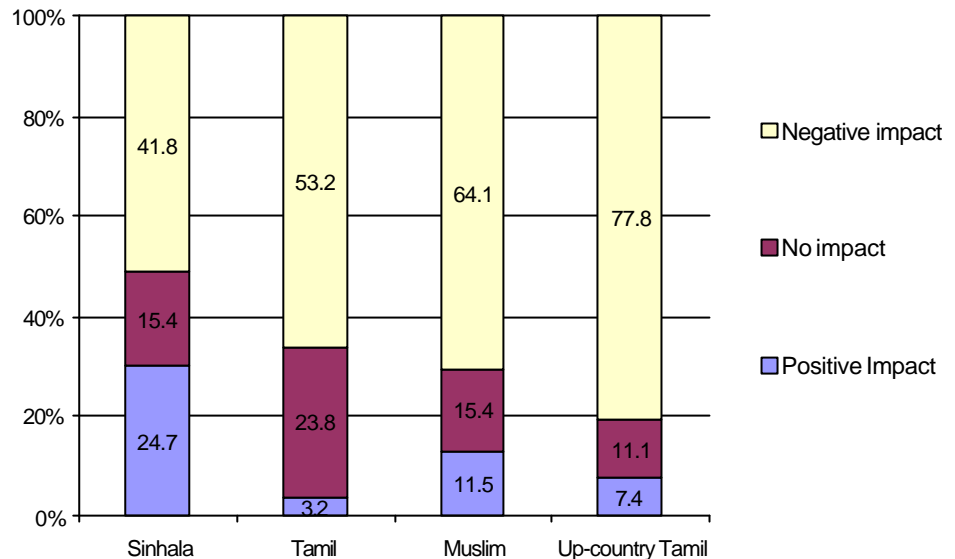


Of those who are aware of the split in the LTTE, a majority believes that this split will have a negative impact on the peace process. While over one quarter of the population believe that it will have a positive impact, 19% believe that there will be no impact on the peace process.



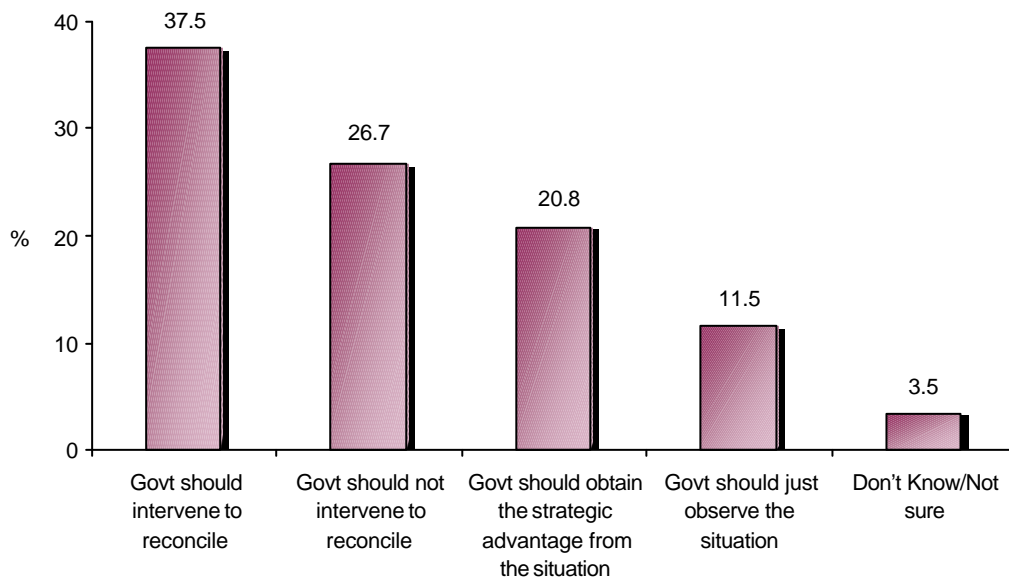
Specifically the Up-country Tamil (77.8%) and the Muslim (64.1%) communities believe that the split in the LTTE will have a negative impact. The belief that the split in the LTTE will have a positive impact on the peace process, stems mainly from the Sinhala community. 23.8% of the Tamil community believe that there will be no impact on the peace process.

Figure 4: Impact of the split in the LTTE on the peace process - Ethnic Perspective



WHAT SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT DO?

Figure 5: Regarding the current crisis between the two LTTE groups, what do you think the Government should do?

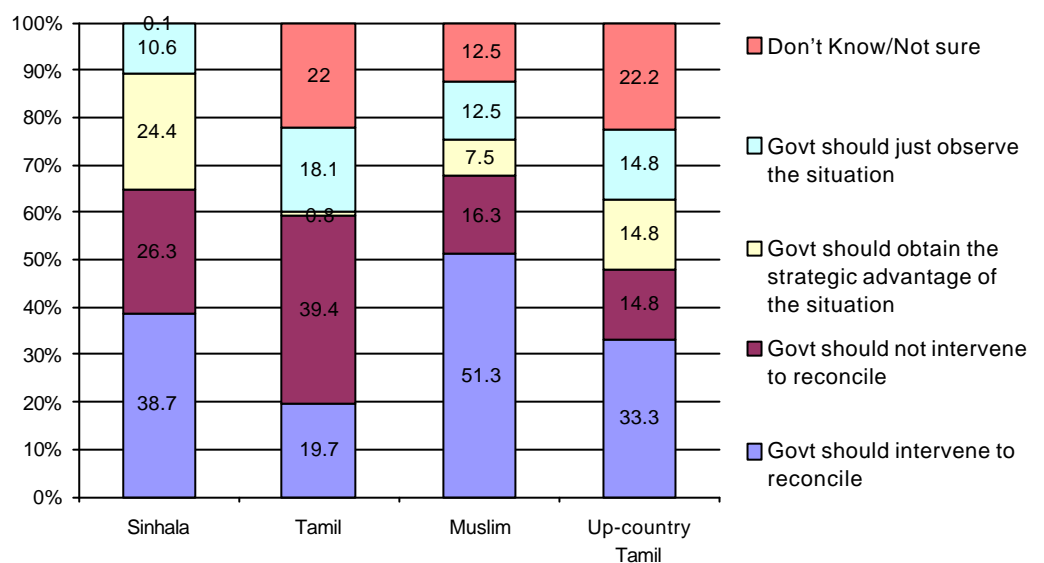


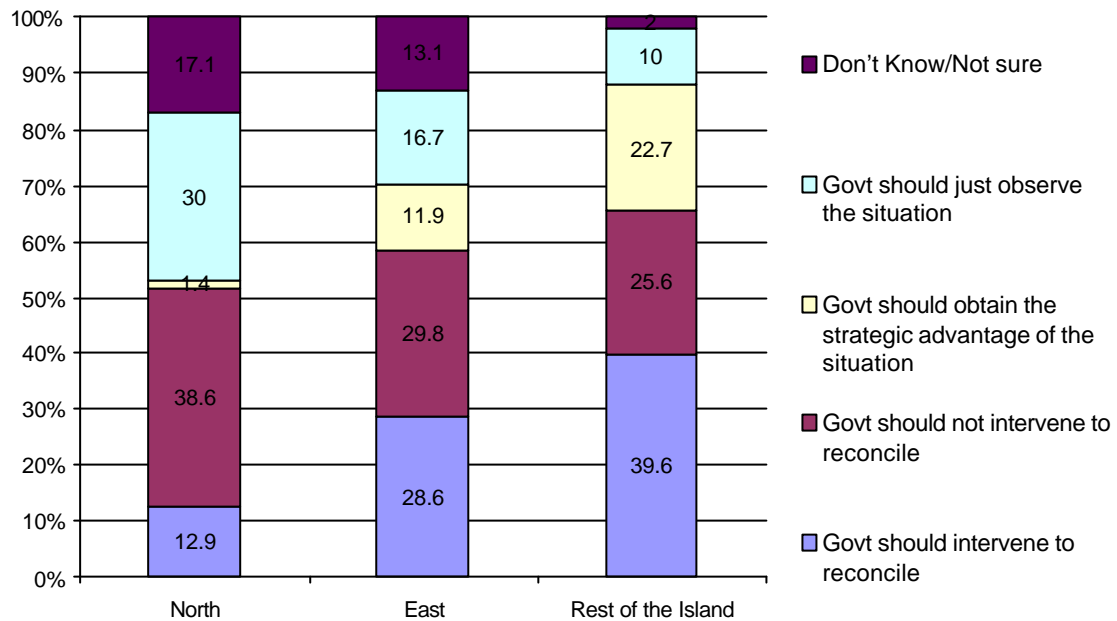


When questioned on what the government's response should be to the split in the LTTE, the majority (37.5%) indicates that the government should intervene to reconcile the two parties. On the other hand, 26.7% says the government should not intervene while 11.5% believe the government should just observe the situation. Meanwhile, 20.8% want the government to obtain strategic advantage from the situation.

When looking at the ethnic perspectives, 51.3% of Muslims and 38.7% of Sinhala and 33.3% of Up-country Tamil communities feel that government should intervene to reconcile the split. Interestingly, 57.5% of the Tamil community feel that the government should either just observe the situation or simply not intervene at all.

Figure 6: Ethnic perspective on the role the government should play in the current LTTE crisis within the two groups



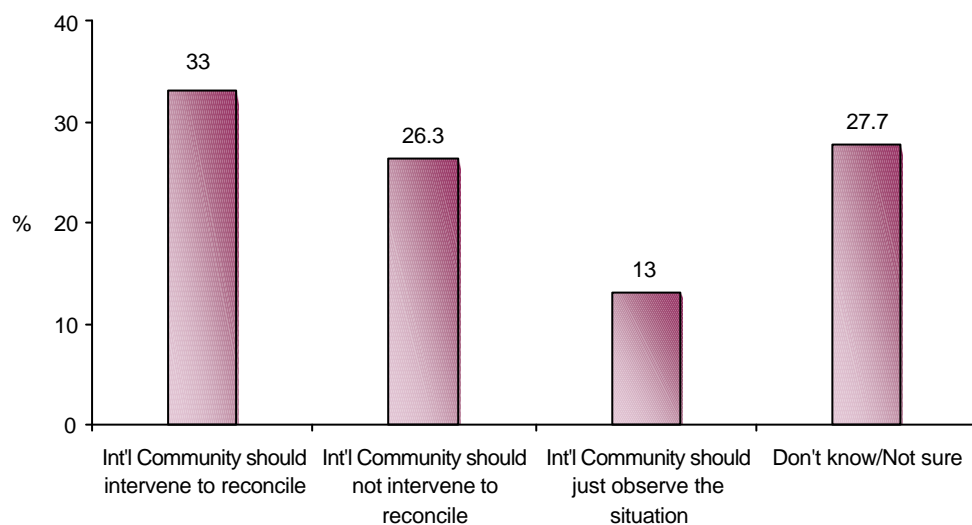
**Figure 7: Government's role in the LTTE split - Provincial Perspective**

In the Eastern Province, opinion is divided as to whether the government should or should not intervene to reconcile the split in the LTTE. However, in the North, people feel more strongly about the government not intervening (38.6%), and their role as observers (30%). The view that the government should intervene to reconcile or should take strategic advantage of the situation mainly prevails amongst the people outside of the Northern and Eastern provinces.



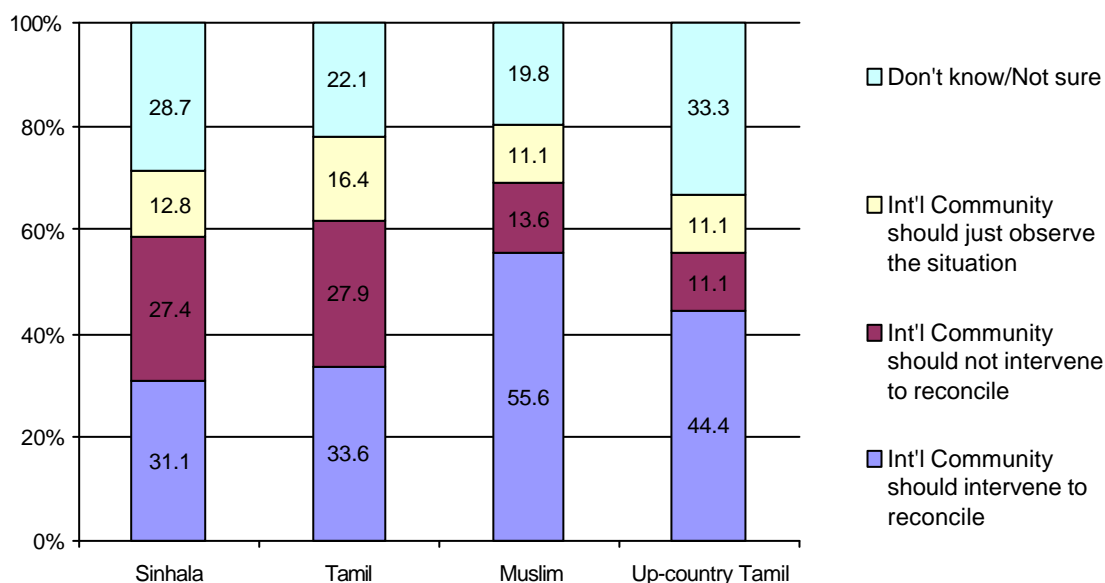
WHAT SHOULD THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DO?

Figure 8: What do you think the role of the international community should be in the current crisis between the two LTTE groups?



There is a divided opinion with regard to the involvement of the international community in the reconciliation of the split between the two LTTE groups. 33% of people feel that the international community should intervene to reconcile, while 26.3% feel that they should not intervene at all. There is a noteworthy percentage (27.7%) of people who are not sure of the international role in this situation.

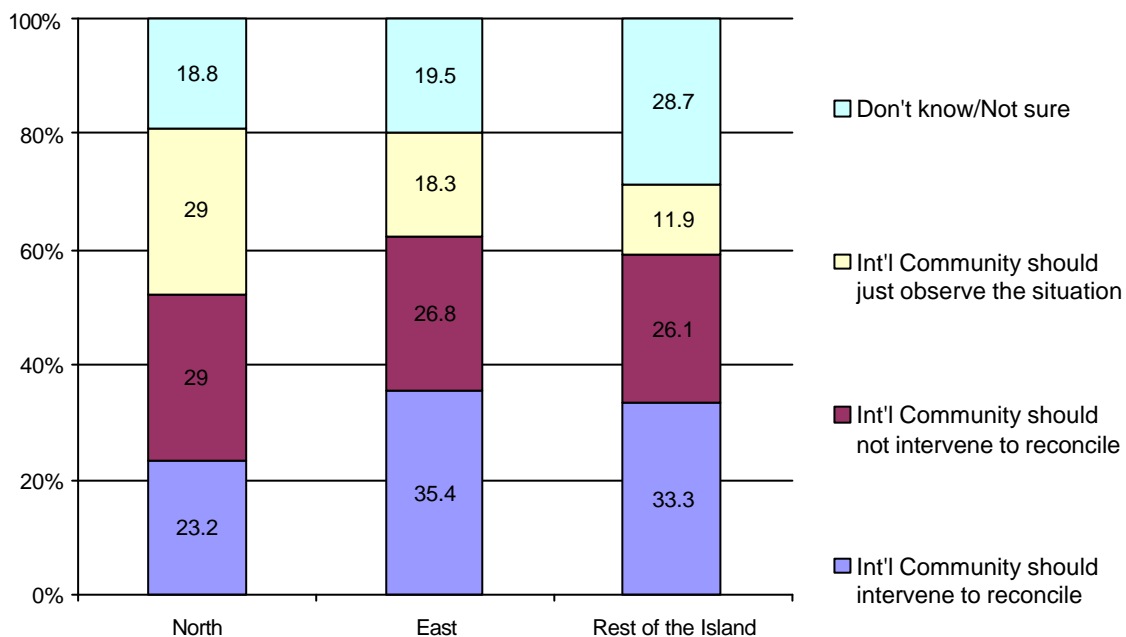
Figure 9: Ethnic Perspective on what the role of the international community should be in the crisis between the two LTTE groups





Compared with the other communities, 55.6% of the Muslim community feel that the international community should intervene to reconcile this split. There is also a high percentage of Up-country Tamils who feel that international involvement in the reconciliation of the split in the LTTE is necessary. The Tamil (27.3%) and Sinhala (27.4%) communities share the same view that the international community should not intervene to reconcile. Interestingly, the levels of uncertainty of the international community's role is quite high (Sinhala – 26.7%, Tamil – 22.1%, Muslim – 19.8%, Up Country Tamil – 33.3%).

Figure 10: Role of international community in LTTE crisis - Provincial Perspective

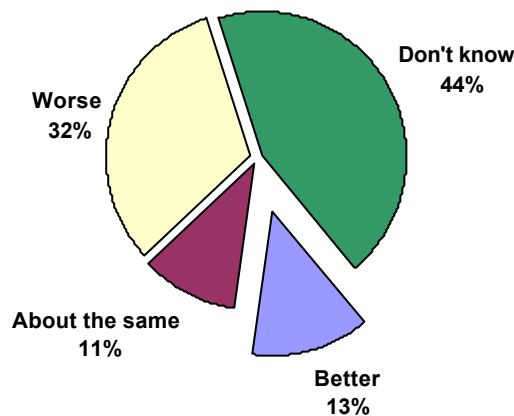


There is greater support for the international community to intervene to reconcile the LTTE situation in the Eastern province (35.4%) than in the Northern province (23.2%). The view that the international community should not intervene to reconcile the split in the LTTE groups is one shared almost equally across all provinces.



WILL THE CRISIS WITHIN THE LTTE GET BETTER?

Figure 11: Do you think the crisis between the two LTTE parties will improve or worsen in the next few months?



The majority (44%) of Sri Lankans express uncertainty as to whether the situation between the two LTTE parties will improve or worsen, while 32% believe that it will worsen.

From the Sinhala community perspective, 52.2% are uncertain whether the situation will improve or worsen between the two LTTE groups in the future. Amongst the Tamil community the opinions are evenly divided, where 42.5% express that the situation will get better, while 41.7% think that it will worsen. Majority of the Muslim community feel that the situation will remain the same and there is a mixed opinion from the Up-country Tamil community when asked about the future of the LTTE crisis.

Figure 12: Ethnic perspective on whether the crisis between the two LTTE groups will improve or worsen

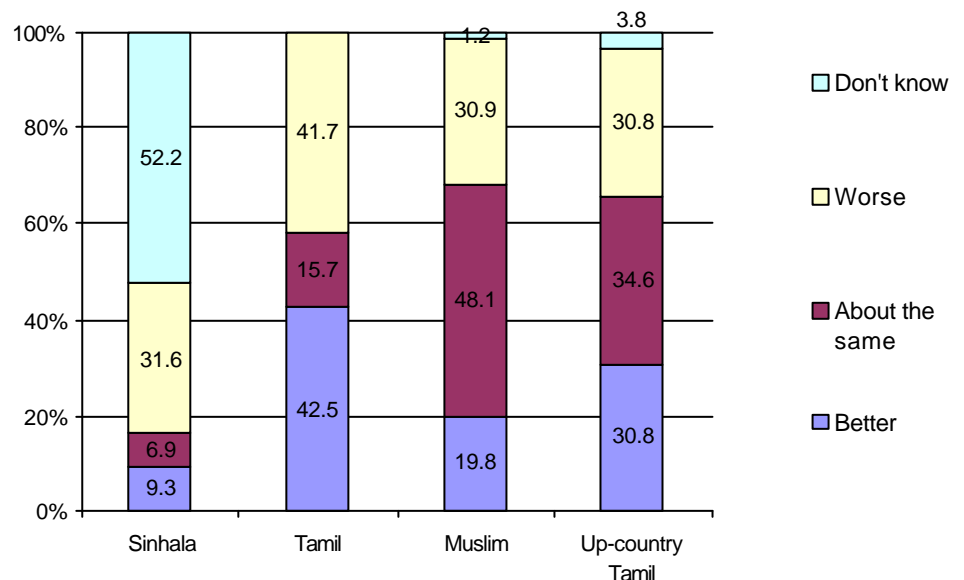
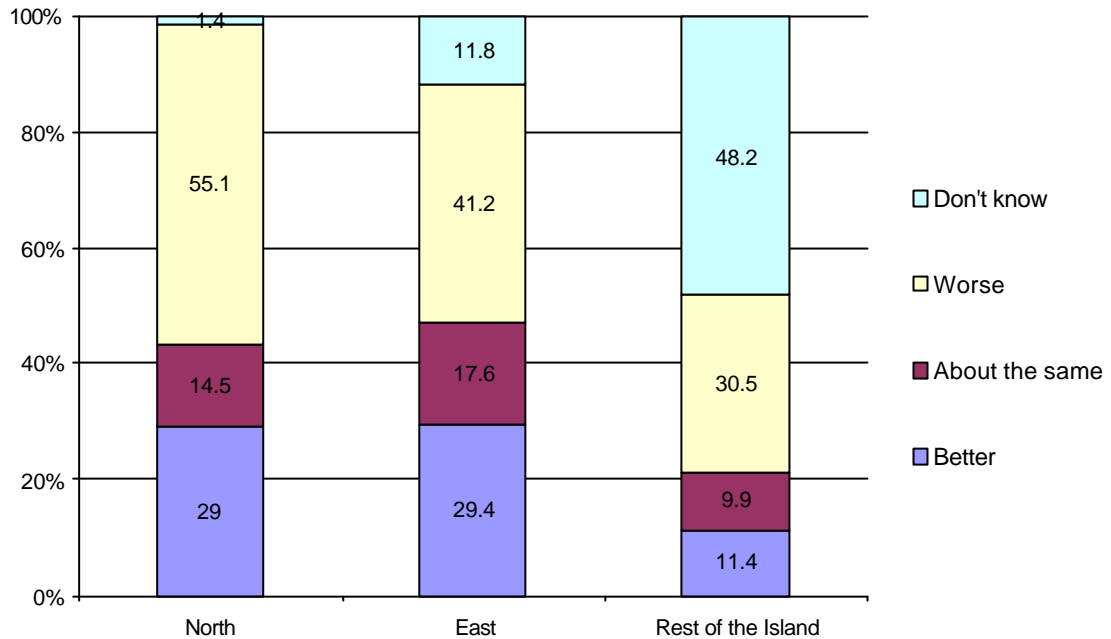




Figure 13: Provincial perspective on whether the crisis between the two LTTE groups will improve or worsen by Province

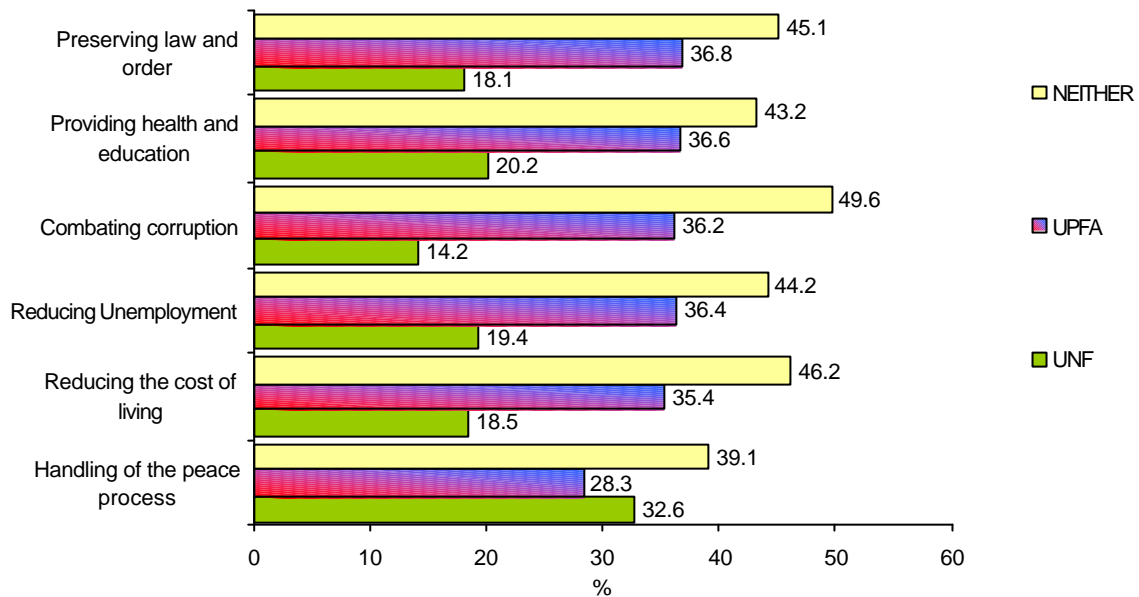


Although a majority in the Northern and Eastern provinces feels that the crisis between the two LTTE groups will worsen, the opinion is higher amongst the people in the North (55.1%) than in the east (41.2%). A majority (48.2%) of those who live outside of these two provinces are unsure of what will be the future of this crisis.



UNF Vs. UPFA

Figure 14: Which party do you feel is most capable of handling the following issues?



The peace process apart, people have more faith in the UPFA's ability to handle other issues than in the UNP's. It is interesting that there is an increase in the view that neither party is capable of handling the issues mentioned when compared with the figures of the first wave.

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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