# Elections and quality of life | Inquirer Opinion

https://opinion.inquirer.net/177949/elections-and-quality-of-life

The results of the Third Quarter Social Weather Survey of the Social Weather Stations (SWS) are in and they are not looking good, with fewer Filipinos saying that their quality of life improved over the past year.

Based on the quality of life survey conducted from Sept. 14 to 23, 37 percent of respondents said that they got better off in the last year (gainers), from 39 percent in June. Plus, 24 percent said their lives worsened (losers)—from 23 percent in the previous quarter—while 38 percent said their lives stayed the same over the last 12 months.

These numbers translate to a Net Gainer score (the difference between winners and losers) of +13, a decline of 2-percentage points from +15 in the June 2024 survey, and also still far below the “very high” +18 recorded in December 2019 before the devastating COVID-19 pandemic struck in March 2020.

“The Net Gainer score was generally negative until 2015 when it rose to positive numbers until the sharp decline beginning with the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. It has since trended back upwards but has not fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels,” the SWS said.

SWS did not specify the reasons behind the decline in the score, but it will not take a genius to figure out why life got harder for more Filipinos. For one, prices of basic goods and services continue to increase every month, albeit at smaller increments over the past few months.

## Self-rated poverty

The country’s headline inflation further eased to 1.9 percent in September this year, the lowest recorded since 1.6 percent in May 2020. But still, this is not enough to ease the burden on consumers.

Indeed, the SWS released earlier reports saying that self-rated poverty rose to a record high of 59 percent in September from 58 percent in 2024, which means that three of every five of those surveyed considered themselves poor.

At the same time, 22.9 percent of Filipino families did not have anything to eat at least once in the past three months, according to a separate SWS survey.

This was 5.3 percentage points above the 17.6 percent recorded in June 2024 and was also the highest since the record high 30.7 percent seen during the COVID-19 lockdowns in September 2020.

The SWS also underscored that the hunger average of 18.2 percent for the first nine months of 2024 was a considerable 7.5 percentage points higher than the annual hunger average of 10.7 percent in 2023.

And with natural disasters such as the massive flooding caused by Severe Tropical Storm “Kristine” across southern Luzon, it is almost certain that even more Filipinos will say that their quality of life worsened year-on-year.

## Political stunts

Improving on these indicators—from self-rated poverty to involuntary hunger and quality of life—will certainly require the combined effort and resources of both the public and private sectors. And it will take years of dogged effort and unwavering commitment to addressing pervasive poverty before results will be seen and felt by the majority.

That is not the message being peddled, however, by those who had been swept by premature election fever.

Some of these unscrupulous candidates and politicians seeking to win in the midterm elections next year are painting themselves to be the saviors, offering quick fixes to daunting challenges such as poverty and inequality, and mouthing promises that if they get in position, then voters’ lives will just suddenly turn for the better.

Indeed, some have even used the massive flooding in many parts of Luzon, when so many are at their lowest and most desperate, as an occasion to mount political stunts such as distributing cash in a crass attempt to score points with the electorate.

## Proven track record

Which then brings up the hope and expectations that the upcoming elections will make the people realize that they actually have the power in their hands to change their fate by electing the right people to the government—those who have a proven track record in public service instead of those who have nothing to offer other than a popular name.

By rewarding the real public servants and punishing those who are in for themselves and for their families’ narrow interests by voting them out of power, then voters stand a better chance of changing not just their lives but also that of their communities.

As proven whenever there are major calamities such as Kristine, the competence and leadership of local officials can spell life and death for their constituents, and the speed of recovery for the many families rendered homeless.

Thus, citizens must take the lessons from the devastating effect of Kristine as they head to the polls next year to elect the next set of national and local officials.

This way, there can be some improvements in the lives of citizens such that more Filipinos can truthfully say that their lives have dramatically improved, and will continue to do so in the years to come.