

Vico Sotto Leads a Fragmented 2028 Senate Field at 41%, the Only Name Above 40 Points

A nationwide Pulso Intelligence tracker finds an open, fragmented Senate race in a sour national mood, with age emerging as a fault line as sharp as geography.

The race for the 2028 Philippine Senate is wide open, according to the first wave of the 2028 Senatorial Poll Survey, a nationwide tracker by Pulso Intelligence Labs, Inc. of 1,629 registered-voter respondents fielded in July 2026. Asked to select every candidate they would consider voting for, 41.1% of voters name Pasig City Mayor Vico Sotto (the only candidate to clear 40 points), followed by Senator Robin Padilla (32.6%) and Senator Alan Peter Cayetano (31.6%). Beneath the top three the field fragments quickly, with no other candidate above 23%.

The contest is unfolding against a sour national mood: 58.2% of voters say the country is on the wrong track against just 16.4% who say right track, a 41.8-point deficit that no candidate has yet turned to advantage. Recognition is not the constraint (every tracked name draws far higher aided preference than unaided recall), so growth depends on conviction rather than name-building.

Age has emerged as a fault line as sharp as geography. Cayetano's support nearly doubles from 18.9% among 18–30s to 38.5% among 31–59s, and Padilla shows a similar older skew, while Sotto's support is the flattest across age (38.0% to 43.2%). Geographically, Padilla and Cayetano dominate Mindanao (58.7% and 53.7% in South Mindanao) while Sotto's base is Luzon and Metro Manila (56.7% in South Luzon, 54.9% in NCR). On support quality, Chel Diokno's smaller base is the hardest in the race, with 95.3% rating their support firm.

KEY FIGURES

- Vico Sotto leads at 41.1%, the only candidate above 40 points; Robin Padilla 32.6%, Alan Peter Cayetano 31.6%.
- 58.2% say the country is on the wrong track; just 16.4% say right track, a 41.8-point deficit.
- Robin Padilla leads unaided recall (11.7%), but no single name dominates top-of-mind.
- Aided preference far exceeds unaided recall for every tracked name, recognition is not the constraint.
- Cayetano's support nearly doubles with age: 18.9% (18–30) to 38.5% (31–59); Sotto is flattest (38.0% to 43.2%).
- Padilla and Cayetano dominate Mindanao (58.7% / 53.7% in SMIN); Sotto's base is Luzon and NCR (56.7% SLUZ, 54.9% NCR).
- Chel Diokno's backers are the most certain (95.3% firm), despite a mid-pack 5th-place finish.
- On firm support alone, Sotto leads 37.0% to Cayetano's 27.1% and Padilla's 26.4%.

"The country doesn't like where it's headed, and the Senate race hasn't found its answer yet, and now we can see it splits by age as much as by geography."

Abraham Eleazar D. Quintos, Chief Executive Officer, Pulso Intelligence Labs, Inc.

About this report

This report presents the findings of the first wave of the 2028 Senatorial Poll Survey, a nationwide Pulso Intelligence tracker of the 2028 Philippine Senate race. It is published for the general public. The summary on the preceding page sets out the headline results; the full findings, including each question, the response distributions, and the demographic and regional breakdowns, follow in the pages after it. The methodology and the firm's independence statement appear at the end.

How to read the figures

Unless otherwise noted, all percentages are based on 1,629 approved registered-voter respondents surveyed through an online mobile-app panel in July 2026, and are weighted to COMELEC 2025 registered-voter benchmarks (Sex × Age × Region) so that the results reflect the national registered-voter population. The aided preference question is a select-all-that-apply measure, so its columns do not sum to 100%. Where a figure is based on a subgroup, the base and its size are stated beneath the relevant table; subgroups below thirty unweighted respondents (marked with an asterisk) are directional only. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Our methodology

Pulso Intelligence draws its respondents from a verified panel through quota-controlled sampling across demographic and regional cells, then weights the results so that they reflect the profile of the national registered voter population. The weighting combines calibration to official registered voter benchmarks with a propensity adjustment that corrects for differences between the composition of the panel and that of the target population. The full procedure (the sampling algorithm, the weight computation, the estimation procedure, and the validation framework) is documented in the firm's methodology paper published on our website.

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These results may be reproduced, quoted, and disseminated freely, including by news organisations, researchers, students, and the general public, provided the findings are attributed to Pulso Intelligence Labs, Inc. and are not presented in a way that misstates them. The full report is available at www.pulsointelligence.com.

About Pulso Intelligence

Pulso Intelligence Labs, Inc. ("Pulso Intelligence") is an independent public opinion and market sentiment research firm, and the research arm of Geronimo Law. It maintains a verified respondent network of more than 1.6 million panel members across all 17 regions of the Philippines, and conducts socio-political and policy polling, brand and market research, and qualitative and deliberative studies.

This survey was designed, conducted, and funded solely by Pulso Intelligence Labs, Inc. No partisan group, candidate, political party, or commissioning interest influenced the survey or the reporting of its results.

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Signed,

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THE FULL FINDINGS

2028 Senatorial Poll Survey (July 2026 Nationwide Survey, Wave 1)

The results below report the full study behind the findings summarized above. Figures are drawn from a nationwide survey of 1,629 approved registered-voter respondents (July 2026); all bases are weighted to COMELEC 2025 registered-voter benchmarks unless otherwise noted. The aided preference question allows multiple responses. Detailed methodology and the firm's independence statement appear at the end.

SECTION I

The National Mood

Nearly six in ten say the country is on the wrong track (58%)

The national mood is sour as the Senate field takes shape, and no candidate yet owns it. Nearly six in ten registered voters (58.2%) say the Philippines is generally headed in the wrong direction, against only about one in six (16.4%) who say right track; a further quarter (25.4%) are not sure. The resulting 41.8-point wrong-track deficit sets a demanding backdrop for the entire field and closely tracks the reading from the concurrent presidential wave, indicating a stable rather than a spiking mood. The open question for candidates is which of them can credibly speak to that discontent first.

TABLE 1

Q. Do you think the Philippines is generally headed in the right direction or the wrong direction? Total (in %)

Response	%
Wrong track	58.2
Not sure	25.4
Right track	16.4

Base: All approved respondents, weighted (n=1,629; effective n=1,287.6). Questionnaire wording reconstructed to standard convention; exact field wording not supplied with the dataset.

SECTION II

The Senate Race

Robin Padilla leads unaided recall, but no single name dominates top-of-mind

Asked to name, without any list, the first senatorial candidate that comes to mind, voters return a strikingly fragmented field. Senator Robin Padilla leads at just 11.7%, and the Duterte family rivals any senatorial name: 9.7% name "Duterte" without specifying a family member and a further 9.0% name Sara Duterte directly. Alan Peter Cayetano (8.7%) and Bam Aquino (8.5%) follow, ahead of Sotto family mentions (6.8%), Risa Hontiveros (6.8%), Rodante Marcoleta (6.6%), Chel Diokno (6.6%), and Vico Sotto (5.8%). That the leading name barely exceeds one in ten underscores how unconsolidated top-of-mind awareness remains. (Please refer to Table 2.)

TABLE 2

Q. Who is the first senatorial candidate that comes to mind, without any list to choose from? (unaided, top 15, in %)

Candidate	%
Robin Padilla	11.7
Duterte (unspecified)	9.7
Sara / Sarah Duterte	9.0
Cayetano (unspecified)	8.7
Bam Aquino	8.5
Sotto (unspecified)	6.8
Risa Hontiveros	6.8
Rodante Marcoleta	6.6
Chel Diokno	6.6
Vico Sotto	5.8
Tulfo (unspecified)	4.4
Kiko Pangilinan	4.1
Bong Go	3.2
Raffy Tulfo	3.2
Leni Robredo	3.0

Base: All approved respondents, weighted. Mentions counted individually, % of respondents (not of mentions). Names not on the 53-name aided ballot are write-in mentions.

Vico Sotto leads a fragmented field at 41%, the only name above 40 points

Shown the full 53-candidate list and asked to select every name they would consider voting for, 41.1% of voters choose Vico Sotto, the only candidate above 40 points. Robin Padilla (32.6%) and Alan Peter Cayetano (31.6%) form a close second tier, after which the field thins quickly: Loren Legarda (22.5%), Chel Diokno (21.1%), Raffy Tulfo (20.0%), Chiz Escudero (18.4%), and Manny Pacquiao (17.5%) trail, with the rest of the twelve-name shortlist below 15%. Because voters may pick as many names as they like, these shares do not sum to 100%; the picture is one of a genuinely open, fragmented contest rather than a settled slate. (Please refer to Table 3.)

TABLE 3

Q. From this list, please select all senatorial candidates you would consider voting for. Top 12 (in %, multiple response)

Candidate	% considering
Vico Sotto	41.1
Robin Padilla	32.6
Alan Peter Cayetano	31.6
Loren Legarda	22.5
Chel Diokno	21.1
Raffy Tulfo	20.0
Chiz Escudero	18.4
Manny Pacquiao	17.5
Sonny Angara	13.9
Mike Defensor	12.8
Jimmy Bondoc	12.0
Leila De Lima	11.9

Base: All approved respondents, weighted (n=1,629; effective n=1,287.6). Select-all-that-apply (columns do not sum to 100%). Full 53-candidate ranking in the Appendix.

Cayetano and Padilla skew far older; Sotto holds up best among 18–30s

Age divides the leaders sharply. Alan Peter Cayetano’s consideration nearly doubles from 18.9% among 18–30s to 38.5% among 31–59s (the steepest age skew of any frontrunner), and Robin Padilla shows a similar climb (24.0% to 37.6%), as does Loren Legarda (11.1% to 29.5%). Vico Sotto, by contrast, is the flattest of the leaders (38.0% to 43.2%) and holds up best with younger voters, while Chel Diokno and Raffy Tulfo lean marginally younger. Whether the older skew for Cayetano and Padilla is a generational ceiling or merely slower name-building among younger voters is a question for later waves. (Please refer to Table 4.)

TABLE 4

Q. Senatorial consideration by age (in %, multiple response)

Candidate	18–30	31–59
Vico Sotto	38.0	43.2
Robin Padilla	24.0	37.6
Alan Peter Cayetano	18.9	38.5
Loren Legarda	11.1	29.5
Chel Diokno	23.8	19.9
Raffy Tulfo	20.5	19.9

Bases (unweighted, both ≥30): 18–30 n=919, 31–59 n=696. Voters aged 60+ (n=14) excluded from this cut (directional only, see Methodology).

Padilla and Cayetano dominate Mindanao; Sotto’s base is Luzon and NCR

Geography splits the top tier cleanly. Vico Sotto leads across Luzon and the capital, peaking at 56.7% in South Luzon, 54.9% in Metro Manila, and 52.7% in Central Luzon, but his support falls to 23.7% in North Mindanao and 17.8% in South Mindanao. Robin Padilla and Alan Peter Cayetano run the opposite pattern, dominating Mindanao (58.7% and 53.7% respectively in South Mindanao; 47.4% and 47.9% in North Mindanao) while trailing in Sotto’s Luzon strongholds. Loren Legarda’s support is comparatively even across regions. The result is a race with clearly delineated regional bailiwicks rather than a single national frontrunner. (Please refer to Table 5.)

TABLE 5

Q. Senatorial consideration, top four candidates, by region (in %, multiple response)

Region	Sotto	Padilla	Cayetano	Legarda
NCR	54.9	19.1	20.7	19.0
NLUZ	38.8	22.2	20.4	21.5
CLUZ	52.7	26.5	23.4	20.3
SLUZ	56.7	21.1	22.1	19.6
WVIS	39.9	29.8	29.6	26.4
EVIS	30.9	43.0	39.9	24.6
NMIN	23.7	47.4	47.9	21.7
SMIN	17.8	58.7	53.7	29.7

Bases (unweighted, all ≥30): NCR 228, NLUZ 181, CLUZ 203, SLUZ 295, WVIS 113, EVIS 260, NMIN 182, SMIN 167.

Sotto peaks among the middle class; Legarda thins toward D and E

Across socioeconomic class, Vico Sotto peaks sharply in Class C1 (59.9%) and stays strong through C2 (47.7%) before easing in the lower-income D and E segments (37.9% and 36.1%). Robin Padilla’s support is comparatively flat across class (25.2% to 39.7%), while Alan Peter Cayetano peaks in Class B (46.5%). Loren Legarda’s support thins steadily down the ladder, from 38.9% in Class B to 21.8% in Class D and 19.1% in Class E. Class A figures are directional only given the small base. (Please refer to Table 6.)

TABLE 6

Q. Senatorial consideration, top four candidates, by socioeconomic class (in %, multiple response)

SEC	Sotto	Padilla	Cayetano	Legarda
A*	42.1	35.1	25.6	26.6
B	38.1	39.7	46.5	38.9
C1	59.9	25.2	34.1	30.4
C2	47.7	32.8	36.8	24.4
D	37.9	30.8	29.9	21.8
E	36.1	33.9	28.3	19.1

Bases (unweighted): A 21, B 49, C1 117, C2 364, D 278, E 800. *Class A below n=30, directional only.*

SECTION III

Support Quality & Conversion

Diokno’s supporters are the most certain in the race, despite a mid-pack base

Support quality does not follow support size. Among those who would consider Chel Diokno (a fifth-place finisher on raw preference), 95.3% rate their certainty a 4 or 5, the hardest base in the field. Vico Sotto (89.9%) and Leila De Lima (89.7%) follow, with the remaining frontrunners clustered in the low-to-mid 80s. Notably, Robin Padilla posts the softest support among the leaders (80.9% firm), suggesting his broad reach is somewhat less locked in than his ranking implies. (Please refer to Table 7.)

TABLE 7

Q. How certain are you that you would vote for [candidate]? Firm (4–5) vs soft (1–3), among each candidate’s own supporters (in %)

Candidate	Firm (4–5)	Soft (1–3)
Chel Diokno	95.3	4.7
Vico Sotto	89.9	10.1
Leila De Lima	89.7	10.3
Alan Peter Cayetano	85.9	14.1
Mike Defensor	85.9	13.9
Loren Legarda	84.2	15.8
Sonny Angara	83.6	16.4
Manny Pacquiao	83.2	16.8
Chiz Escudero	82.9	17.1
Jimmy Bondoc	82.5	17.5
Raffy Tulfo	82.2	17.8
Robin Padilla	80.9	19.1

Base: Respondents who selected each candidate in the aided list, weighted. Firm = certainty 4–5; Soft = 1–3. See Appendix for n per candidate.

Aided preference far exceeds unaided recall: recognition, not conviction, is the gap

Unlike the presidential race, the Senate contest shows a large reminder gap for every tracked name. Across the eight leading candidates, average recall rises from just 4.5% unaided to 25.6% aided once the list is shown. The jump is steepest for Alan Peter Cayetano (2.9% to 31.6%) and Loren Legarda (1.5% to 22.5%), and substantial even for the recall leader, Robin Padilla (12.7% to 32.6%). That aided preference so far outruns spontaneous recall for all names indicates the binding constraint is recognition rather than conviction: voters recognize and would consider far more candidates than they can name unprompted. (Please refer to Table 8.)

TABLE 8

Q. Conversion from unaided recall to aided preference, leading candidates (in %)

Candidate	Unaided recall	Aided preference	Lift
Vico Sotto	5.9	41.1	+35.2
Robin Padilla	12.7	32.6	+19.9
Alan Peter Cayetano	2.9	31.6	+28.7
Loren Legarda	1.5	22.5	+21.0
Chel Diokno	6.4	21.1	+14.7
Raffy Tulfo	2.9	20.0	+17.1
Chiz Escudero	2.8	18.4	+15.6
Manny Pacquiao	1.3	17.5	+16.2

Average across the eight leading candidates: 4.5% unaided, 25.6% aided. Unaided = named top-of-mind without a list; aided = selected from the full list. Base: all approved respondents, weighted.

On locked-in support alone, Sotto's lead widens to 37% versus 27%

Combining consideration with certainty sharpens the ranking. Counting only voters who both selected a candidate and rated their certainty a 4 or 5, Vico Sotto's firm-support rate is 37.0% of the entire weighted base, ahead of Alan Peter Cayetano (27.1%) and Robin Padilla (26.4%). Chel Diokno rises on this measure relative to his raw ranking, to 20.1%, reflecting the exceptional firmness of his base. Locked-in support therefore preserves Sotto's lead while reshuffling the chasing pack. (Please refer to Table 9.)

TABLE 9

Q. Firm support rate: selected the candidate AND rated certainty 4–5, as a share of the total base (in %)

Candidate	%
Vico Sotto	37.0
Alan Peter Cayetano	27.1
Robin Padilla	26.4
Chel Diokno	20.1
Loren Legarda	18.9
Raffy Tulfo	16.5
Chiz Escudero	15.2
Manny Pacquiao	14.6
Sonny Angara	11.7
Mike Defensor	11.0
Leila De Lima	10.6
Jimmy Bondoc	9.9

Firm Support Rate = % of the total weighted base who both selected the candidate and rated certainty 4–5. Base: n=1,629; effective n=1,287.6.

SECTION IV

Strategic Takeaways

A fragmented field in a sour mood, now split by age as much as geography

Three readings define this wave. First, the mood and the field point the same way: 58.2% wrong-track sentiment coexists with a fragmented race in which Vico Sotto's 41.1% is the only figure above 40 points; no candidate yet owns the national discontent. Second, recognition rather than conviction is the constraint, as aided preference far outruns unaided recall for every tracked name. Third, the race now divides by age as sharply as by geography: Cayetano and Padilla draw their strength from older, Mindanao voters, while Sotto's flatter, younger, Luzon-and-NCR coalition anchors the top of the field.

Recommendations

1. Claim the change narrative now. With a 41.8-point wrong-track deficit (58.2% versus 16.4%) and no candidate yet speaking to it, the first camp to credibly own the mood has room to move; the risk of inaction is that a rival claims it first.
2. Cayetano's camp should invest in younger voters. His consideration nearly doubles between 18–30 and 31–59 (18.9% to 38.5%), the sharpest age skew of any frontrunner and a structural ceiling with the next generation of voters if left unaddressed.
3. Resource by proven bailiwick. Cayetano and Padilla should defend Mindanao (53.7% and 58.7% in South Mindanao), while Sotto should prioritize consolidating and expanding his Luzon and NCR base before contesting Mindanao; the risk otherwise is resources misallocated to already-secure or unwinnable turf.

APPENDIX

Full Aided Preference Ranking (53 candidates)

The complete select-all-that-apply consideration ranking for all 53 candidates on the aided ballot. Candidates below the n=30 reporting floor are marked with an asterisk and shown for completeness only.

TABLE A1

Q. From this list, please select all senatorial candidates you would consider voting for. Full ranking (in %, multiple response)

Rank	Candidate	% considering	n
1	Vico Sotto	41.1	654
2	Robin Padilla	32.6	483
3	Alan Peter Cayetano	31.6	446
4	Loren Legarda	22.5	308
5	Chel Diokno	21.1	362
6	Raffy Tulfo	20.0	336
7	Chiz Escudero	18.4	277
8	Manny Pacquiao	17.5	278
9	Sonny Angara	13.9	203

Rank	Candidate	% considering	n
10	Mike Defensor	12.8	175
11	Jimmy Bondoc	12.0	152
12	Leila De Lima	11.9	197
13	Mark Villar	11.5	168
14	Heidi Mendoza	11.4	213
15	Jinggoy Estrada	9.5	137
16	Nancy Binay	8.9	143
17	Ben Tulfo	8.7	147
18	Mar Roxas	8.1	121
19	Joy Belmonte	8.1	131
20	Vic Rodriguez	8.1	109
21	Rex Gatchalian	7.4	115
22	Bing Guanzon	6.6	88
23	Francis Tolentino	6.5	99
24	Luke Espiritu	6.5	126
25	Willie Revillame	6.2	100
26	JV Ejercito	6.2	94
27	Korina Sanchez	6.1	97
28	Vince Dizon	5.6	84
29	Leody De Guzman	5.2	102
30	Philip Salvador	5.0	79
31	Doc Marites Mata	4.5	62
32	Ralph Recto	4.4	65
33	Benhur Abalos	4.0	61
34	Mark Lapid	3.7	56
35	Gerville Luistro	3.5	55
36	Ramon Bong Revilla	3.4	60
37	Raul Lambino	3.3	42
38	Jonvic Remulla	3.1	48
39	Francis Zamora	3.1	48
40	Ferdinand Topacio	3.1	45
41	Teddy Casiño	3.0	49
42	Cielo Magno	2.9	46
43	Trixie Cruz Angeles	2.2	31
44	Ronald Llamas	1.8	27*
45	Jesus Falcis	1.8	30
46	Jayvee Hinlo	1.7	25*
47	Sarah Elago	1.6	28*
48	Amenah Pangandaman	1.4	24*
49	Barry Gutierrez	1.4	22*
50	Erwin Lacierda	1.1	20*

Rank	Candidate	% considering	n
51	Rafaela David	1.1	20*
52	Antonio Tinio	1.0	17*
53	Ted Herbosa	0.7	16*

Base: All approved respondents, weighted (n=1,629). Select-all-that-apply. *n<30, directional only, not for standalone reporting.

Methodology & Independence

Methodology

The findings reported here are based on the first wave of the 2028 Senatorial Poll Survey, a nationwide Senate-race tracker conducted by Pulso Intelligence Labs, Inc. in July 2026 through an online mobile application-based respondent panel. A total of 1,649 respondents were screened, of whom 1,629 were eligible and approved; 20 respondents who showed fraudulent behaviour were removed and blacklisted. The cleaned dataset was confirmed to contain no duplicate profile numbers, emails, or mobile numbers, giving an approved base of 1,629.

Results are calibration-weighted to COMELEC 2025 National and Local Elections registered-voter counts by Sex × Age × Region, using cell weights $w_c = N_c / n_c$ (where N_c is the registered-voter count and n_c the approved respondents in cell c) and a weighted estimate $\hat{Y} = \sum(w_i \cdot y_i) / \sum w_i$. The design comprises 32 regular cells (Sex × Age [18–30 / 31–59] × 8 macro-regions) plus one collapsed-and-capped national 60+ cell, for 33 cells in total. The effective sample size is 1,287.6 (design effect 1.27).

Two caveats apply to small cells. Voters aged 60+ number only 14 of 1,629 respondents (0.9%) against 16.8% of registered voters; this cell is collapsed to a single national weight capped at the highest regular-cell weight to prevent it from crashing the effective sample size, and 60+ subgroup reads are directional only. Class A (n=21) and four regular cells in Western Visayas fall below thirty unweighted respondents and are likewise flagged directional rather than collapsed further. The aided preference question is a select-all-that-apply measure, so its columns do not sum to 100%. Exact questionnaire wording was not supplied with the dataset for one measure (direction of the country); its phrasing follows standard convention for that measure type.

The sampling and estimation procedures applied in this survey follow the firm’s published methodology paper, “*The Pulso Sampling and Estimation Method: Quota-Controlled Panel Sampling and Calibration Weighting for National and Local Survey Estimates*” by Leonard Allan F. Almero, Mark Jay P. Dating, and Marie Joy L. Relente, which sets out the sampling algorithm, the weight computation, the estimation procedure, and the validation framework, together with the reporting standards that govern the publication of results.

Independence and disclosure

Pulso Intelligence Labs, Inc.’s research team takes full responsibility for the design and conduct of the survey, including the formulation of the questionnaire, the drawing and weighting of the sample, the fieldwork, the processing of the data, and the analysis and interpretation of the findings. No partisan group, candidate, political party, or commissioning interest influenced any of these processes or the reporting of the results. The

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