



## **HERITAGE PERCEPTION SURVEY**

A Survey of the owners of listed Heritage Buildings in Pondicherry  
Prepared by INTACH for Pondicherry Municipality under Asia Urbs Programme

February, 2003

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### **A Survey of the owners of listed Heritage-Buildings in Pondicherry**

Asia Urbs Programme, Pondicherry.

A heritage perception survey was conducted on October 2002 in the heritage precinct of Pondicherry (boulevard town) under the Asia Urbs Programme, Pondicherry. The survey was targeted towards the Heritage-Building owners, for which a random sample of 60 houses was considered spread over the heritage precinct area. 82% of the sample was located in the Tamil quarter, where as the remaining 18% constituted the French quarter.

The aims of the survey were:

- To find out the importance given for Heritage Preservation by Heritage-Building owners.
- To find out the condition and status of Heritage Preservation in Pondicherry.
- To find out the problems and advantages of owning Heritage-Buildings.
- To understand and device strategies for Heritage Preservation in Pondicherry.

The outcome of the survey is given as below:

#### **Sample classification:**

- 58% of the targeted Heritage-Building owners have been residing in this town for more than 50 years. This shows that the survey had mostly included the actual long-term residents of the town, instead of recent settlers (Refer fig - 4).

#### **Importance for heritage preservation:**

- 60% of the Heritage-Building owners gave high importance to preserving heritage in Pondicherry while 14% did not (Refer fig - 12). This clearly shows that the majority of people unanimously support Heritage preservation.
- The same scenario prevails, when it comes to preserving their own Heritage-Building. 55% of the sample placed high importance for preserving their own Heritage-Building, as against 15%, who were reluctant to do so (Refer fig – 19).
- Reiterating the above, 65% of the Heritage-Building owners support conserving a Heritage-Building through techniques such as adaptive reuse (for which hotel De L'orient was shown as example), while 20% of the Heritage-Building owners gave moderate appreciation. Importantly, only 15% sample did not support such an idea. (Refer fig- 2@P-11, fig- 1@P-10). This clearly establishes the importance of heritage preservation.

#### **Advantages, disadvantages of owning Heritage buildings:**

- Pride of owning a Heritage-Building, emotional attachment, and climatic benefits are found to be the major advantages of owning a Heritage-Building (Refer fig-10) while structural problems and difficulty in maintenance remain the major disadvantages (Refer fig - 9).

#### **Transformation of townscape:**

- 60% of the Heritage-Building owners believe that demolition or replacement of Heritage-Buildings result in loss of street character (Refer fig - 21).
- Modern architectural trend, maintenance difficulty, and high land value were the three major reasons for the demolition of Heritage-Buildings and hence loss of streetscapes

(Refer fig - 22).

- Lack of awareness about the importance of conserving our heritage is also found to be an important factor for the above (Refer fig - 22).

### **Public Awareness:**

- 78% of people interviewed were unaware about any organization that works towards preserving the heritage of the town (Refer fig - 15).
- Ironically, 53% of the Heritage-Building owners were unaware even about the listing status of their building (Refer fig - 7). This suggests that public awareness should be increased and that the Heritage-Building owners should be individually approached and informed about the listing status of their building.

### **Assistance and Incentives:**

- In continuance of the same, 30% of the Heritage-Building owners feel that they should be given incentives such as tax reduction, financial help etc as a strategy to preserve their Heritage-Buildings (Refer fig - 13).
- Also 25% of the sample believes that Heritage legislation is necessary for protecting the Heritage-Buildings from demolition (Refer fig - 13). They also expected assistance in the form of general information as well as construction details (Refer fig - 20).
- At the same time, majority of the Heritage-Building owners (61%) believe that they themselves should be responsible for maintaining their Heritage-Buildings. (Refer fig - 14).

### **People's Participation:**

- 60% of the sample did not show any willingness to spend their time - or put any work into - organizing local Heritage groups, etc, or in doing anything else needed, such as keeping at least the facades of their buildings in good condition (Refer fig - 17).
- Similarly half of the sample displayed reservations for participating in any kind of "Heritage preservation process" (Refer fig - 18). This suggests that suitable remedial measures should be taken so as to involve people in the heritage preservation process.

### **Tourism:**

- 59% of the sample believes that Heritage preservation will boost tourism in our town as against 29% who do not (Refer fig - 16). This shows that the Heritage-Building owners acknowledge the advantages and importance of preserving the Heritage-Buildings they own.

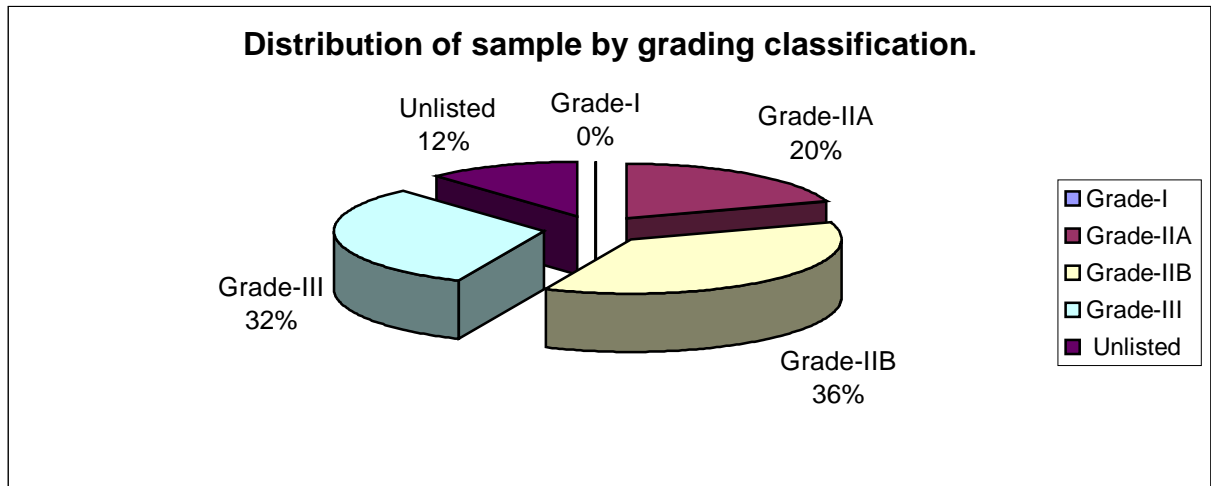
### **Conclusion:**

- Preserving the built heritage of Pondicherry has received very high support and importance from the Heritage-Building owners as seen from the outcome of the survey.
- At the same time
- Heritage-Building owners should participate in the heritage preservation process. For this to be effected, the building owners should be met in person and made aware of the importance of preserving their Heritage-Buildings. This would not only clear the misconceptions that people generally seem to have in preserving their Heritage-Buildings but will also have a multiplier effect.
- People believe that Heritage legislation is a must for protecting the Heritage-Buildings from demolition.
- Incentives should be given to the Heritage-Building owners for preserving their

buildings.

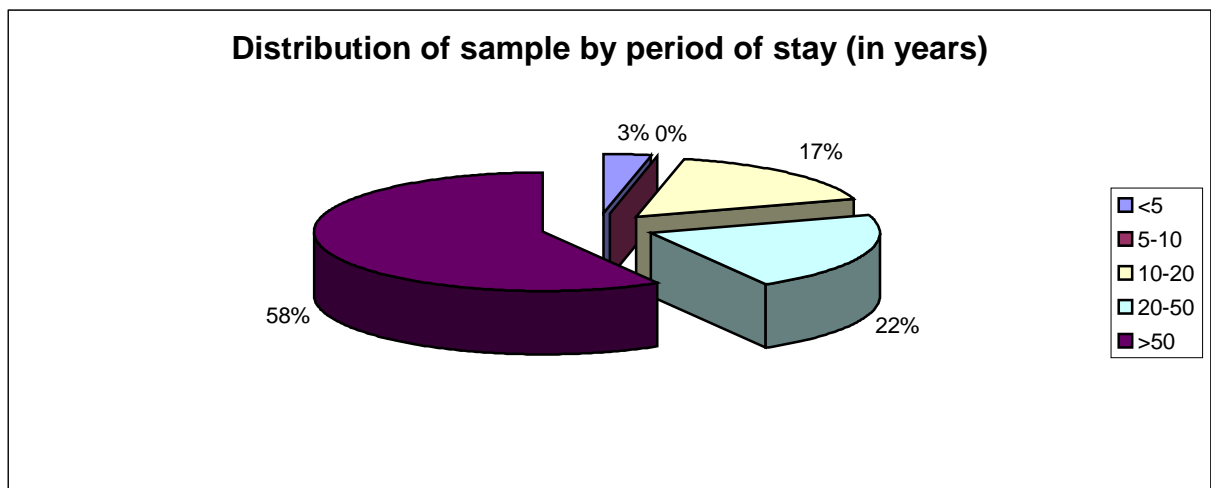
- General information about Heritage-Buildings, and as well as traditional construction techniques, methods of repair etc should be made available to the public.

*Prepared by INTACH for Pondicherry Municipality under AsiaUrbs Programme.*



*Fig: 3*

- The random survey has predominantly included Grade-II buildings.



*Fig: 4*

- More than half of the targeted Heritage-Building owners have been residing in their Heritage-Building for more than 50 years.

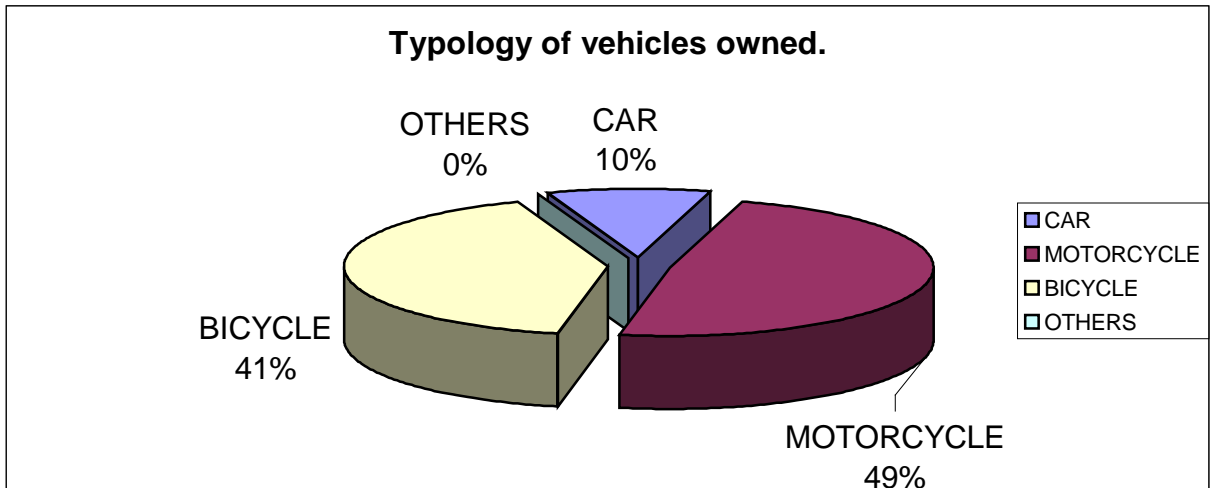


Fig: 5

- Though cars ownership remains less, this is likely to grow in future and space for parking remains to be a crucial design issue.

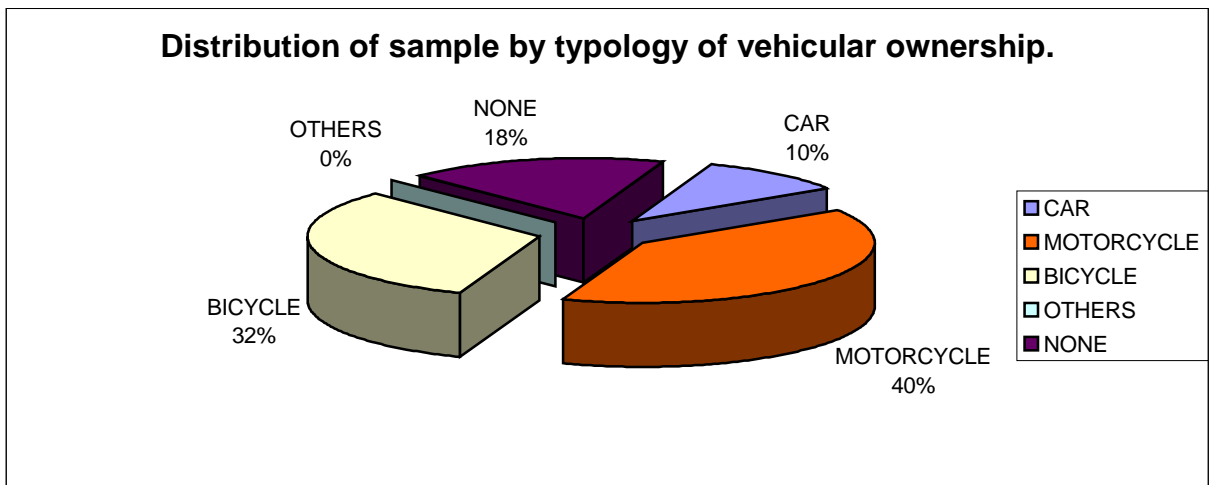


Fig: 6

- Two-wheeler parking remains to be the general need. However car-parking requirement is expected to rise in future, which will have an influence in the façade design.

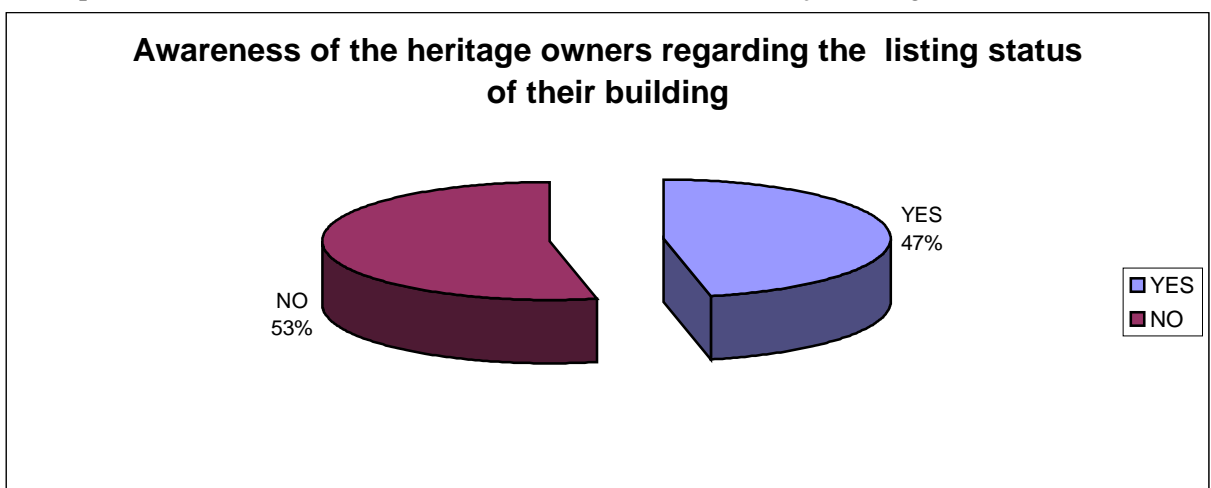


Fig: 7

- More than half of the Heritage-Building owners were unaware that their building was listed as Heritage-Building.

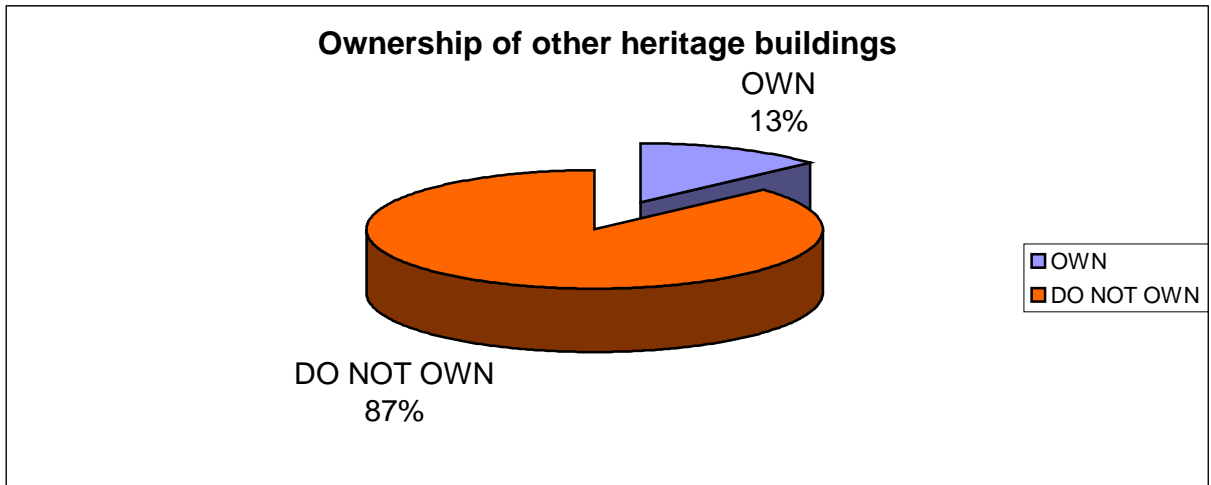


Fig: 8

- 13% of the heritage-building owners interviewed also owned other Heritage-Buildings within the heritage precinct.

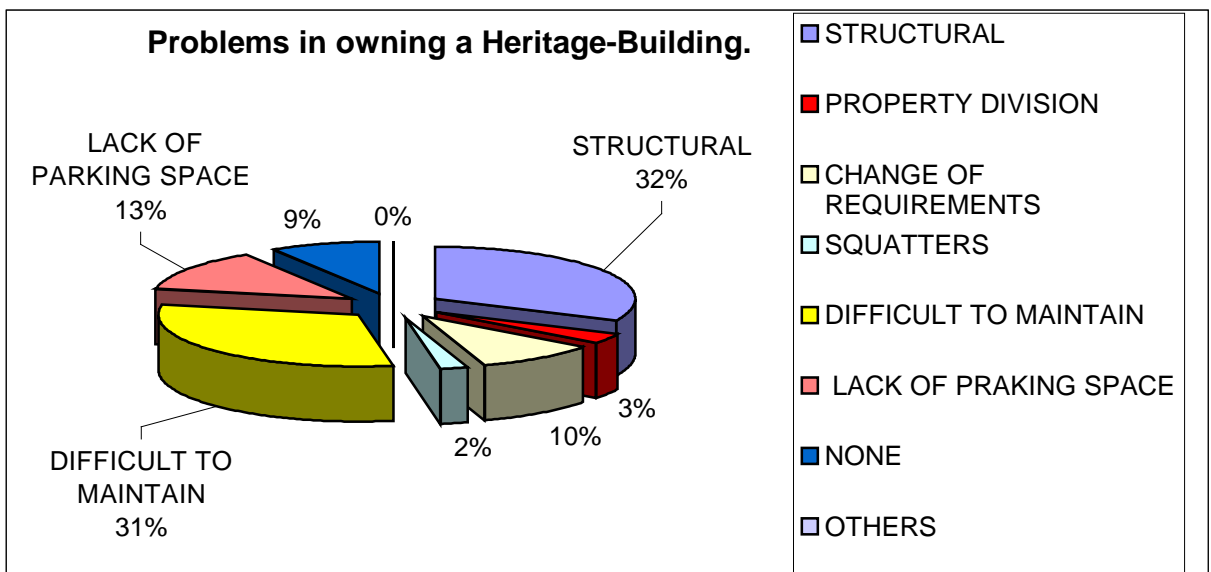


Fig: 9

- Structural problems and difficulty in maintenance remain the major disadvantages.

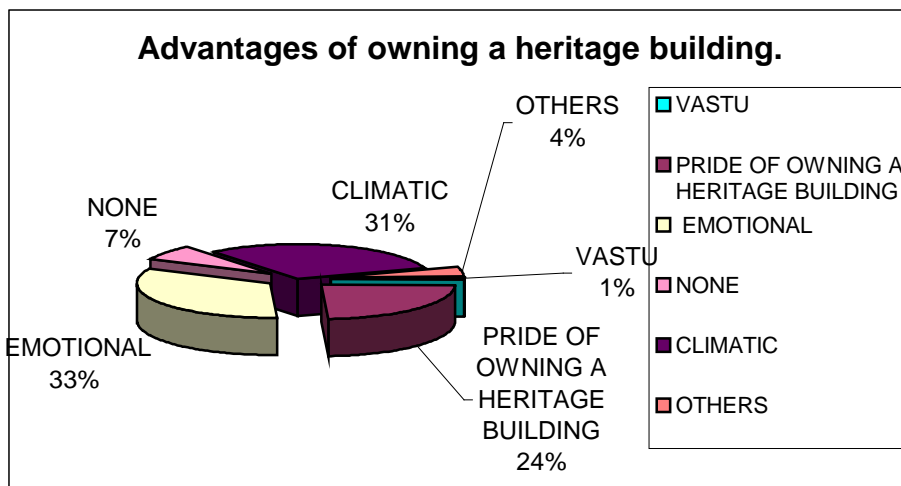


Fig: 10

- Pride of owning a Heritage-Building, emotional attachment, and climatic benefits are found to be the major advantages of owning a Heritage-Building.

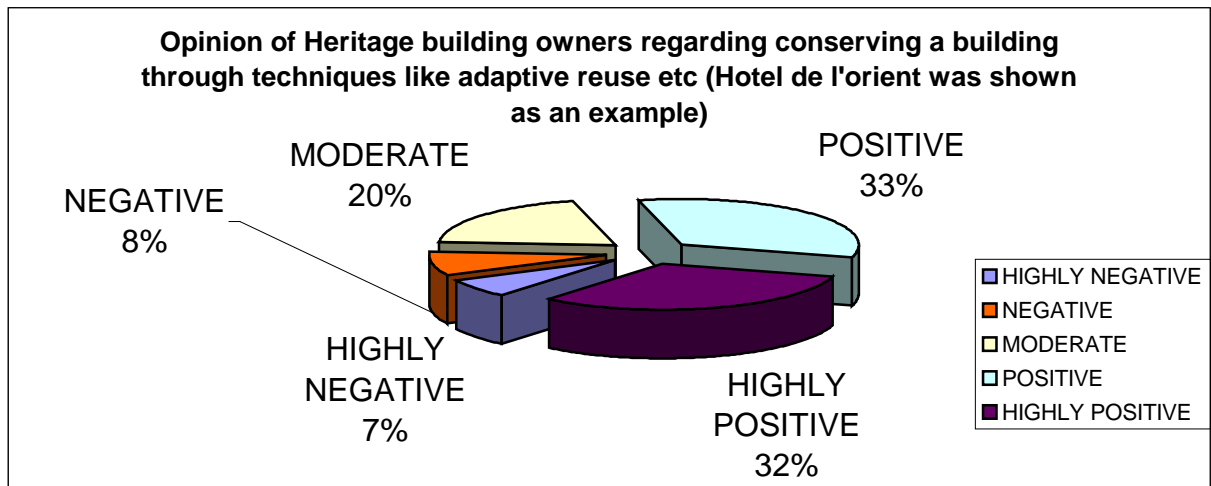


Fig: 11

- 65% of the Heritage-Building owners support Heritage Conservation through techniques such as adaptive reuse.

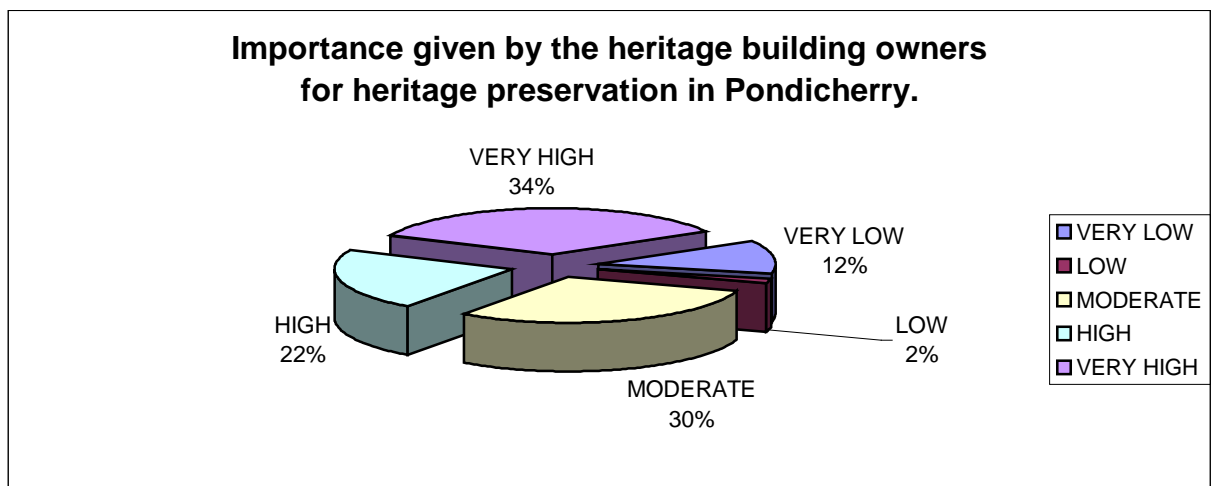


Fig: 12

- 56% of the sample has given high importance for heritage preservation in Pondicherry.
- Only 14% have reacted negatively.

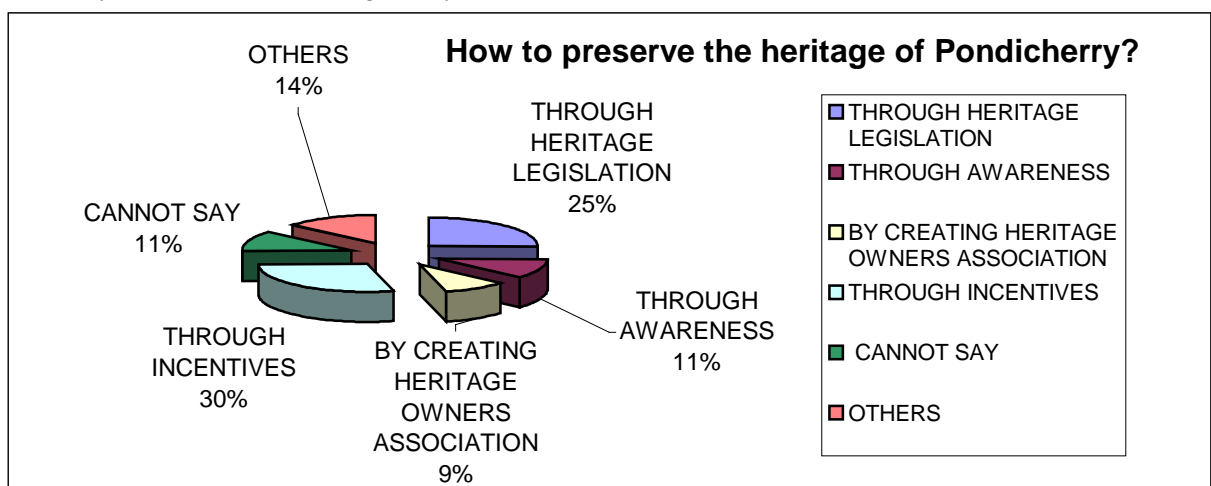


Fig: 13

- Heritage legislation and Incentives receive maximum priority to preserve the heritage of Pondicherry.

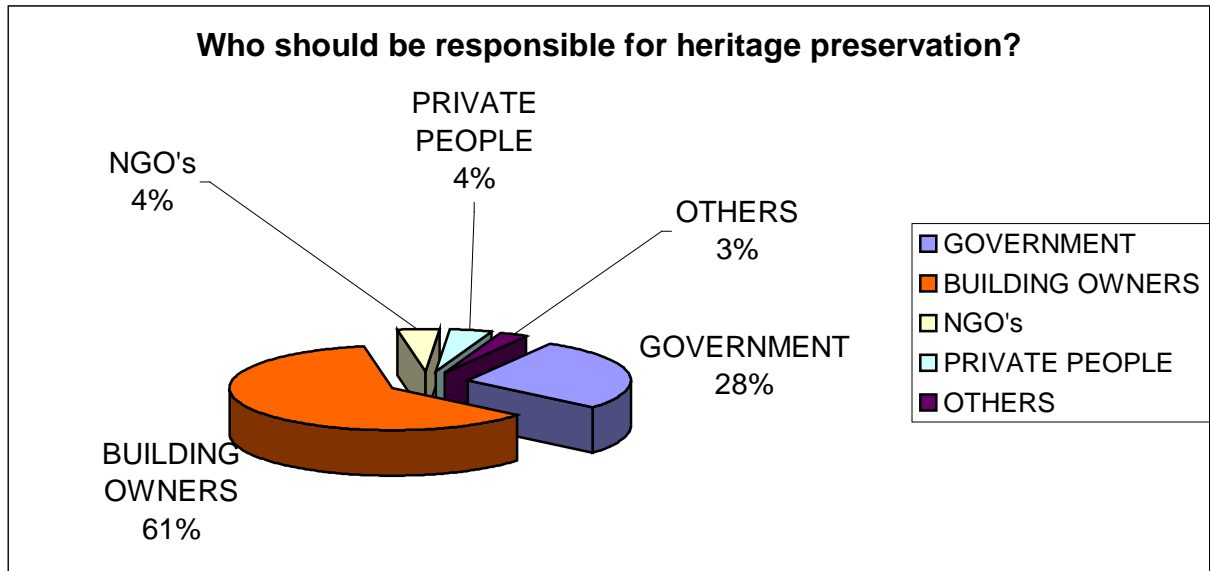


Fig: 14

- The building owners themselves own responsibility for heritage preservation. However the Government is expected to play a big role.

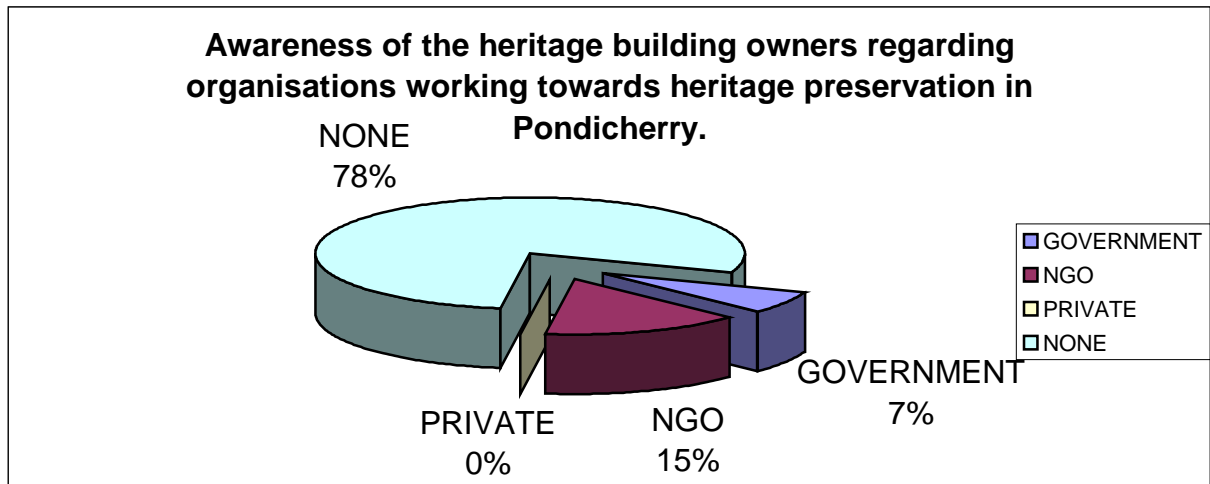


Fig: 15

- Awareness about any heritage organization remains very low.



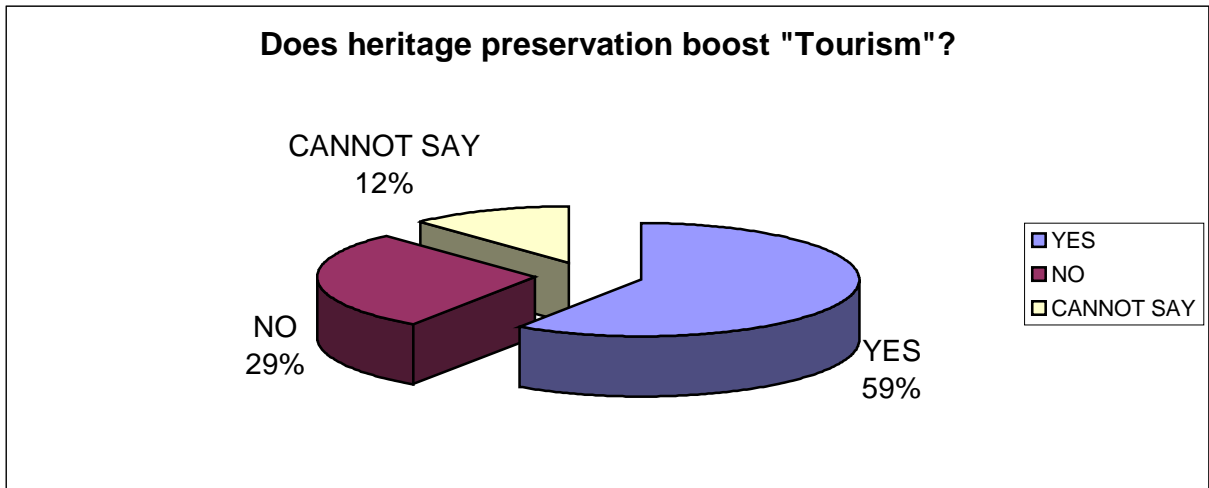


Fig: 16

- Majority of the people believe that heritage preservation will boost tourism in Pondicherry.

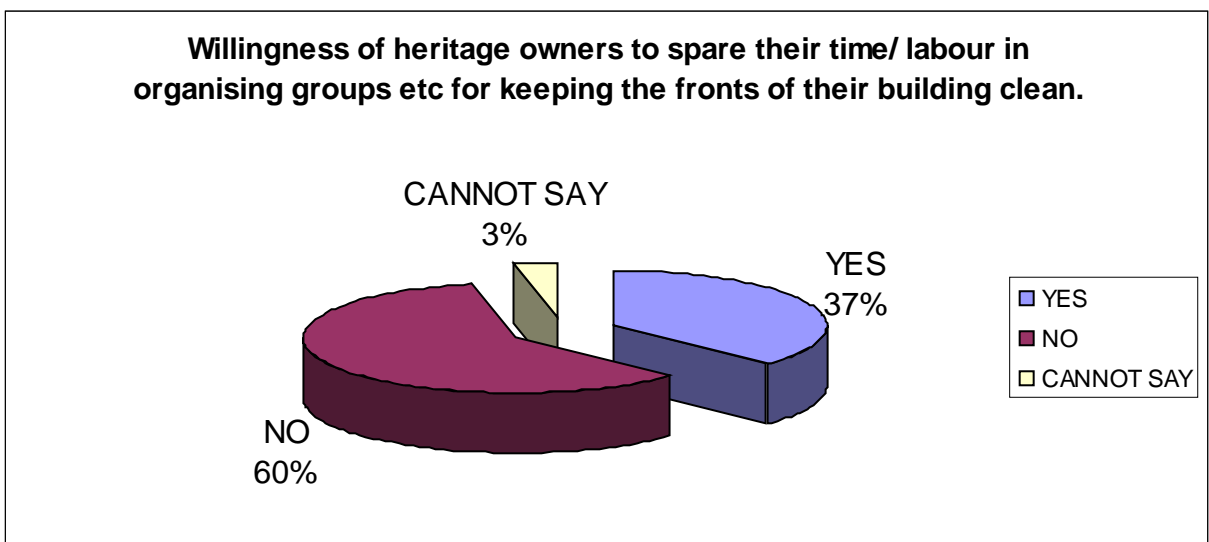
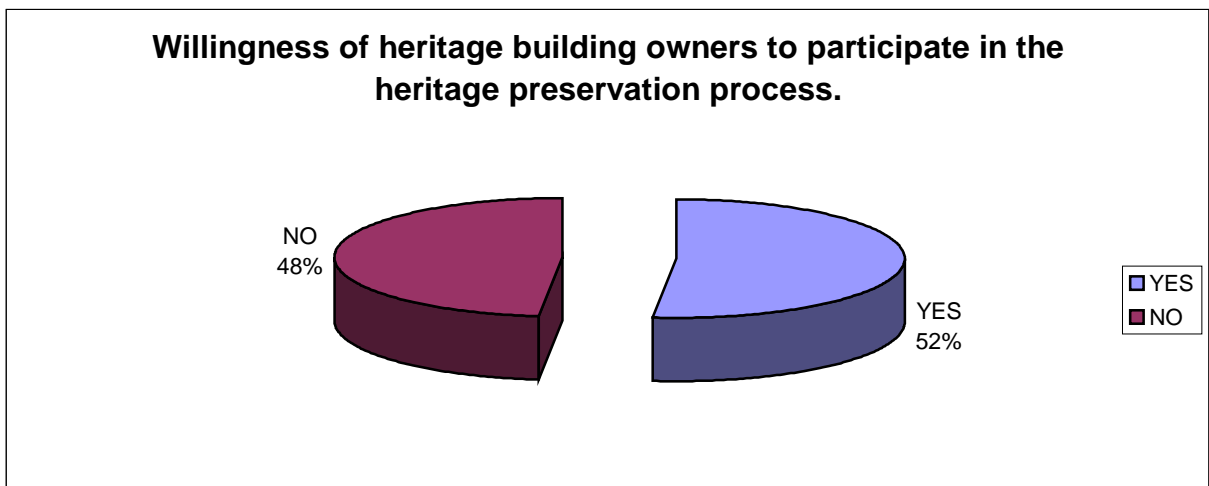


Fig: 17

- A lot of people displayed reservations for participating in any kind of "Heritage preservation process" suggesting that suitable remedial measures should be taken to increase "Peoples participation".



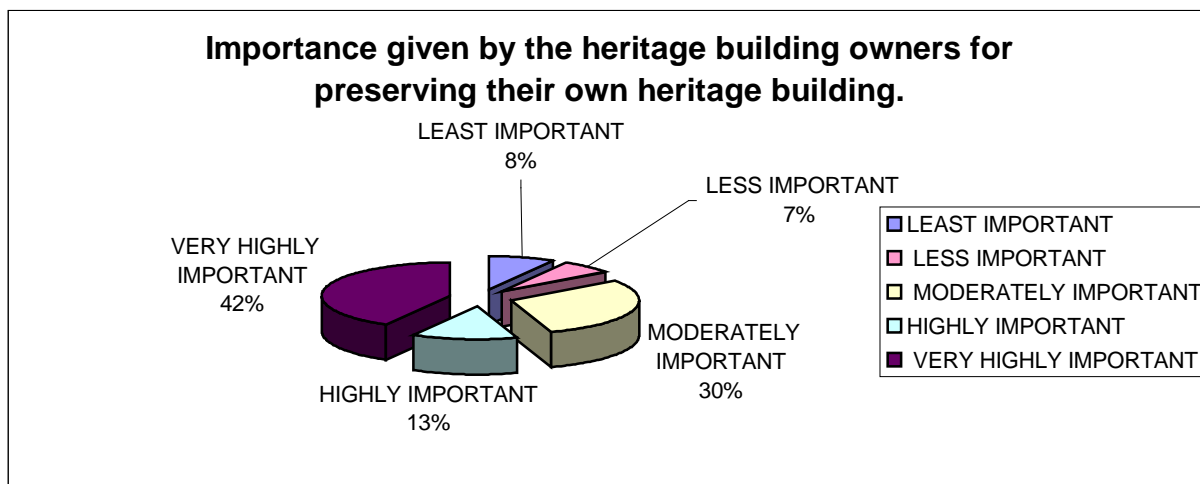


Fig: 19

- 55% of the sample placed high importance for preserving their own Heritage-Building, as against 15%, who were reluctant to do so.

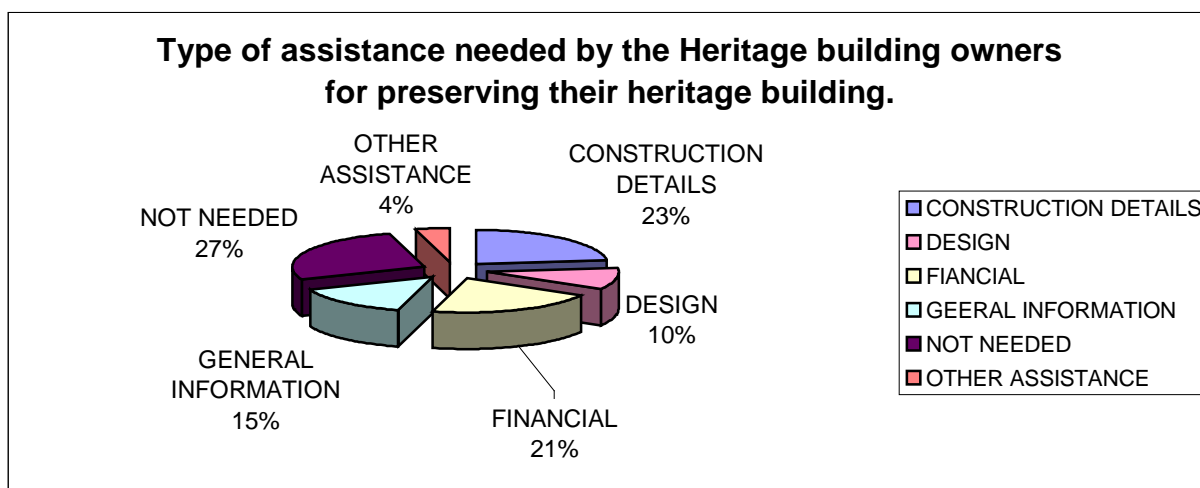


Fig: 20

- Assistance in terms of General information on heritage, Finance, and construction details, etc received high priority from the Heritage-Building owners.

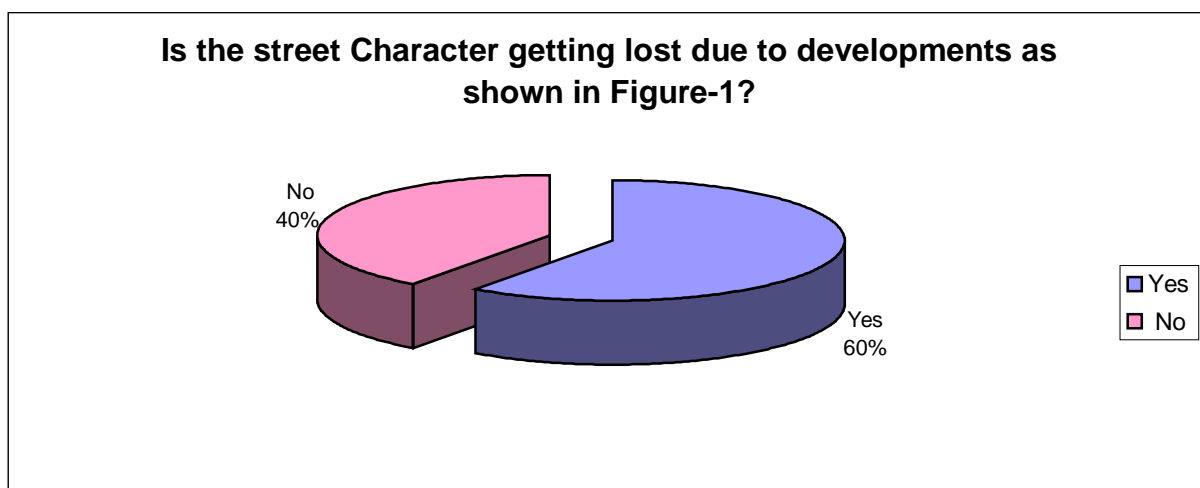


Fig: 21

- Predominantly people believe that demolition of Heritage-Buildings lead to loss of street character.

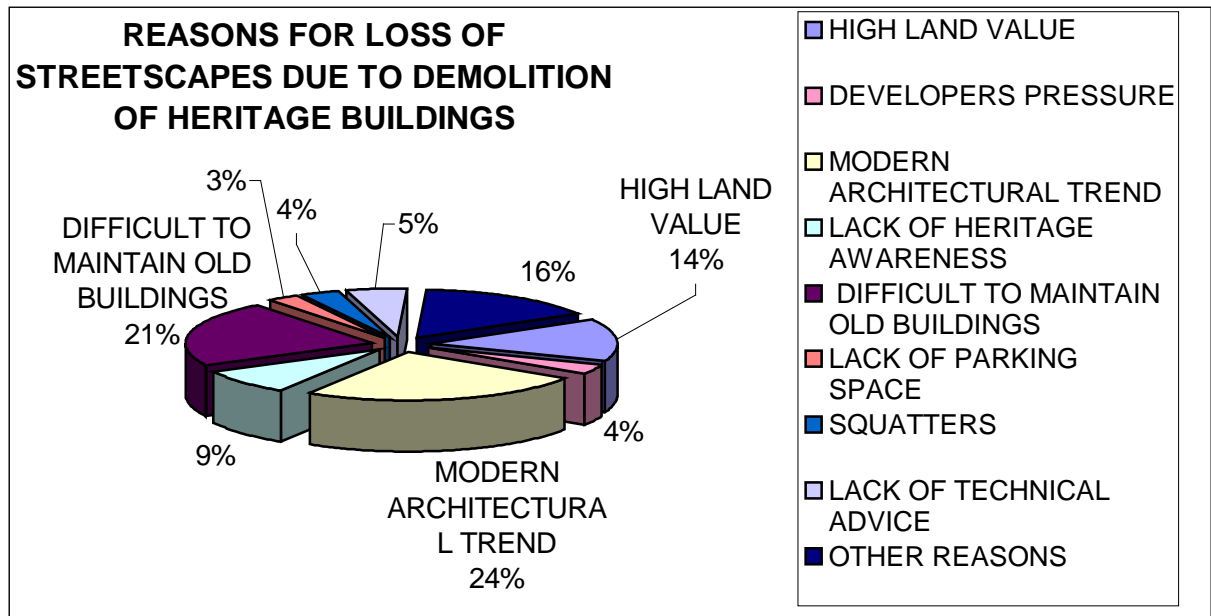


Fig: 22

- Modern architectural trend, Maintenance difficulty, and High land value are the three major reasons for the demolition of Heritage-Buildings and hence loss of streetscapes.