PRESS RELEASE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

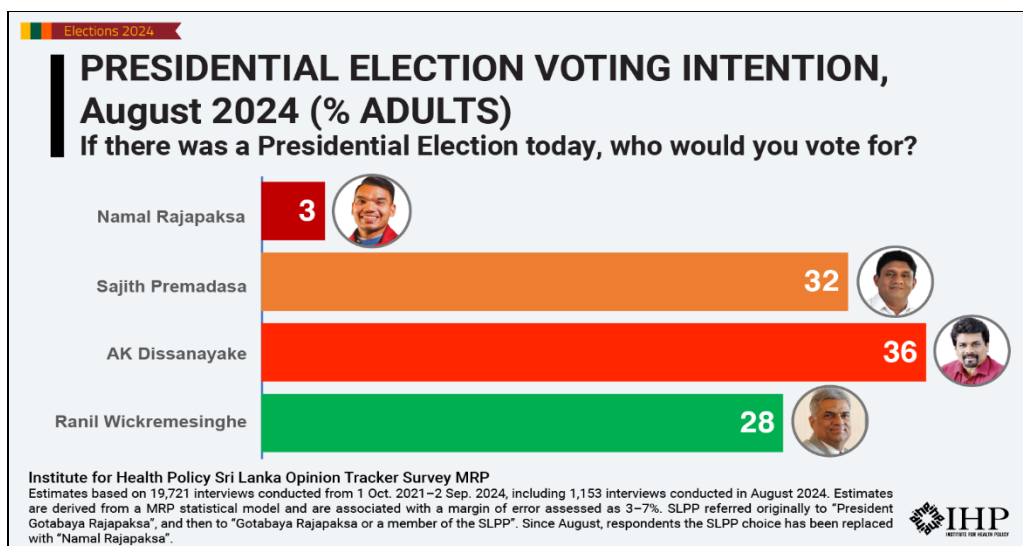Secretary/Administrator
Email: info 'at' ihp.lk

TO CONTACT LEAD INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Ravi Rannan-Eliya
Email: ravi 'at' ihp.lk   Twitter: @ravirannaneliya

AK Dissanayake and Sajith Premadasa led in August voting intent amongst all adults, but continuing shift towards President Ranil Wickremesinghe
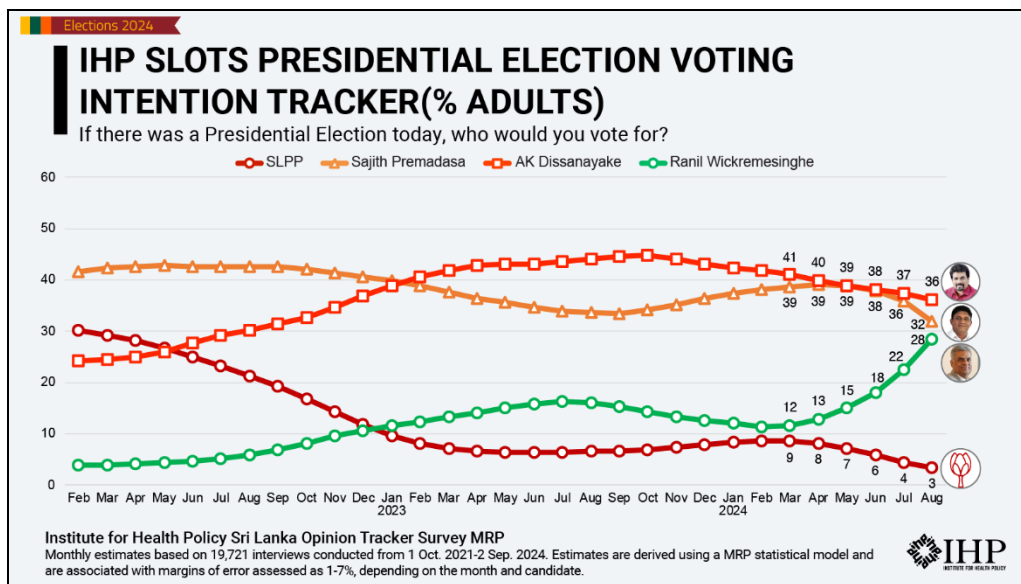
IHP MRP Presidential Election Update August 2024

IHP's Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS) MRP provisional estimates of Presidential Election voting intent for August 2024 show NPP/JVP leader AK Dissanayake and SJB leader Sajith Premadasa led in voting preferences of all adults ahead of the September Presidential Election. None of the four major party presidential candidates had support of a majority of the adult voters. NPP/JVP leader AK Dissanayake led with 36% of all adults, followed by SJB leader Sajith Premadasa with 32%, Pres. Ranil Wickremesinghe with 28% and Namal Rajapaksa with 3%. Estimates are associated with margins of error of 3–7%.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION VOTING INTENTION, August 2024 (% ADULTS)
If there was a Presidential Election today, who would you vote for?

Candidate	%
Namal Rajapaksa	3
Sajith Premadasa	32
AK Dissanayake	36
Ranil Wickremesinghe	28

Institute for Health Policy Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey MRP
Estimates based on 19,721 interviews conducted from 1 Oct. 2021–2 Sep. 2024, including 1,153 interviews conducted in August 2024. Estimates are derived from a MRP statistical model and are associated with a margin of error assessed as 3–7%. SLPP referred originally to "President Gotabaya Rajapaksa", and then to "Gotabaya Rajapaksa or a member of the SLPP". Since August, respondents the SLPP choice has been replaced with "Namal Rajapaksa".

Support for Ranil Wickremesinghe has been rising from March through August 2024, while there have been small declines in support for AK Dissanayake, Sajith Premadasa, and SLPP during the same period.

IHP Executive Director, Dr Ravi Rannan-Eliya, commenting on the narrow race, said: "Our August polling indicates a tightening race in which no candidate will get close to half the vote on the first count. While this indicates that no candidate has succeeded in exciting a majority of voters, it also means that it is increasingly likely that the 2024 election will be the first presidential poll decided on a count of second and third preferences. We urge civil society and the Elections Commission to intensify efforts to educate voters about using their preferences to ensure that every vote counts."
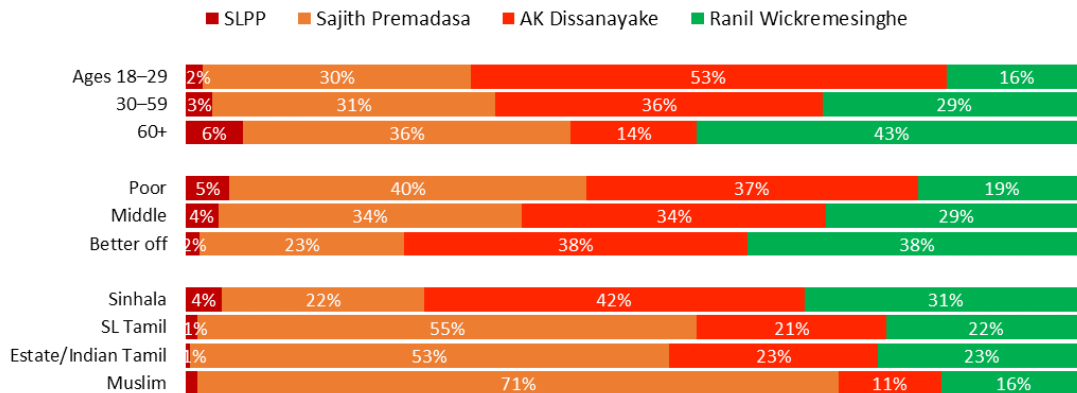

Analysis of the MRP model estimates for August reveal differences in the support base for each candidate. Support for AK Dissanayake was strongest among the youth, with a majority (53%) supporting him, and among Sinhala voters (42%). The most affluent third of voters (38%) supported both AK Dissanayake and Ranil Wickremesinghe. In contrast, Sajith Premadasa led among the poorest third of voters (40%).

More than half of Sri Lankan Tamils (55%) and Estate/ Indian Tamils (53%) supported Sajith Premadasa, while two-thirds of Muslims (71%) backed him. Ranil Wickremesinghe's support increased with age, reaching 43% among those aged 60 years and older.

Presidential Election voting intention by demographic characteristics, August 2024 (% adults)

If there was a Presidential Election today, who would you vote for?

Legend: ■ SLPP ■ Sajith Premadasa ■ AK Dissanayake ■ Ranil Wickremesinghe

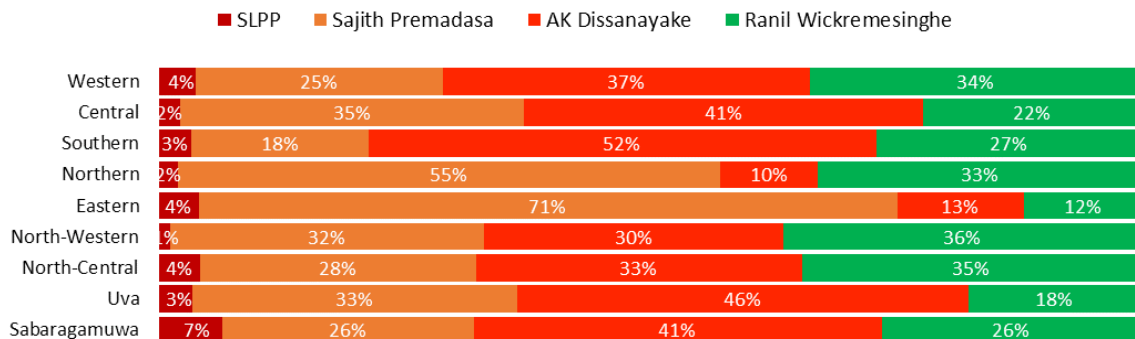| Group	SLPP	Sajith Premadasa	AK Dissanayake	Ranil Wickremesinghe
Ages 18–29	2%	30%	53%	16%
30–59	3%	31%	36%	29%
60+	6%	36%	14%	43%
Poor	5%	40%	37%	19%
Middle	4%	34%	34%	29%
Better off	2%	23%	38%	38%
Sinhala	4%	22%	42%	31%
SL Tamil	1%	55%	21%	22%
Estate/Indian Tamil	1%	53%	23%	23%
Muslim		71%	11%	16%

Institute for Health Policy Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey MRP

Estimates are generated by a MRP statistical model using 19,721 interviews conducted from 1 Oct. 2021–2 Sep. 2024, with estimates projected for the middle of August.

AK Dissanayake led in all provinces except the Northern and Eastern, where he trailed in third place behind Sajith Premadasa and Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Presidential Election voting intention by Province, August 2024

If there was a Presidential Election today, who would you vote for?

Legend: ■ SLPP ■ Sajith Premadasa ■ AK Dissanayake ■ Ranil Wickremesinghe

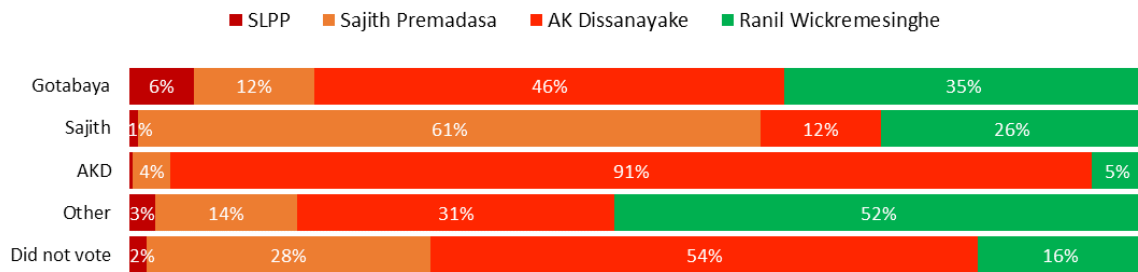| Province	SLPP	Sajith Premadasa	AK Dissanayake	Ranil Wickremesinghe
Western	4%	25%	37%	34%
Central	2%	35%	41%	22%
Southern	3%	18%	52%	27%
Northern	2%	55%	10%	33%
Eastern	4%	71%	13%	12%
North-Western	1%	32%	30%	36%
North-Central	4%	28%	33%	35%
Uva	3%	33%	46%	18%
Sabaragamuwa	7%	26%	41%	26%

Institute for Health Policy Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey MRP

Estimates are generated by a MRP statistical model using 19,721 interviews conducted from 1 Oct. 2021–2 Sep. 2024, with estimates projected for the middle of August.

Both AK Dissanayake and Ranil Wickremesinghe drew a large part of their support from Gotabaya Rajapaksa 2019 voters, with only one in eight of these voters backing Sajith Premadasa.

Presidential Election voting intention by 2019 Presidential Election voting history, August 2024

If there was a Presidential Election today, who would you vote for?

Legend: ■ SLPP   ■ Sajith Premadasa   ■ AK Dissanayake   ■ Ranil Wickremesinghe

2019 vote	SLPP	Sajith Premadasa	AK Dissanayake	Ranil Wickremesinghe
Gotabaya	6%	12%	46%	35%
Sajith	1%	61%	12%	26%
AKD	4%	91%		5%
Other	3%	14%	31%	52%
Did not vote	2%	28%	54%	16%

Institute for Health Policy Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey MRP
Estimates are generated by a MRP statistical model using 19,721 interviews conducted from 1 Oct. 2021–2 Sep. 2024, with estimates projected for the middle of August.
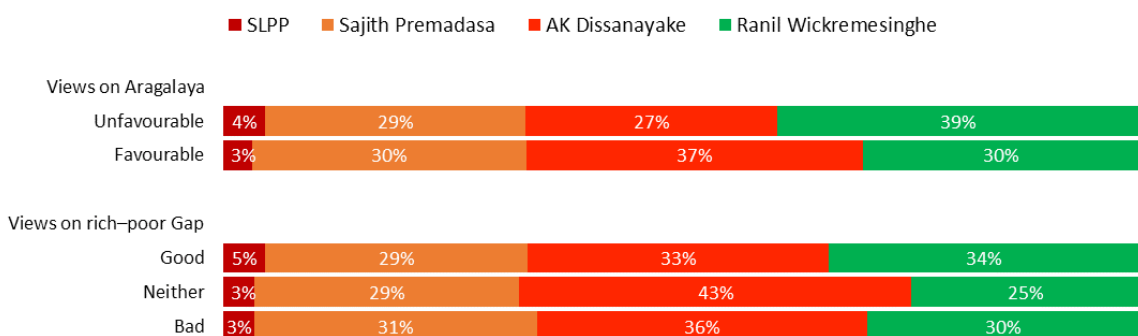
Further analysis of voting intent based on public opinion about the Aragalaya shows that adults with favourable views of the Aragalaya were more likely to support AK Dissanayake than those with an unfavourable view (37% versus 27%) in August. In contrast, Ranil Wickremesinghe and Namal Rajapaksa did better amongst those with a negative view of the Aragalaya, whilst Sajith Premadasa did equally well in both groups.

A comparable but weaker relationship was seen in relation to voters' views about whether the rich-poor gap in the country is a good or bad thing. AK Dissanayake did 3 points better in those who thought the gap was bad versus those who thought it was good, whilst Ranil Wickremesinghe did 4 points worse.

Dr. Rannan-Eliya commented: "Our polling indicates that overwhelming majorities of Sri Lankans have a favourable view of the Aragalaya and think that the poor-rich gap has been increasing in Sri Lanka and that this is bad. But it's surprising that none of the leading candidates have been able to effectively tap into these sentiments with a winning message."

Presidential Election voting intention by views of Aragalaya and Rich–Poor Gap, August 2024

If there was a Presidential Election today, who would you vote for?

Legend: ■ SLPP   ■ Sajith Premadasa   ■ AK Dissanayake   ■ Ranil Wickremesinghe

	SLPP	Sajith Premadasa	AK Dissanayake	Ranil Wickremesinghe
Views on Aragalaya				
Unfavourable	4%	29%	27%	39%
Favourable	3%	30%	37%	30%
Views on rich–poor Gap				
Good	5%	29%	33%	34%
Neither	3%	29%	43%	25%
Bad	3%	31%	36%	30%

Institute for Health Policy Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey MRP
Estimates are generated by a MRP statistical model using 19,721 interviews conducted from 1 Oct. 2021–2 Sep. 2024, with estimates projected for the middle of August.

These estimates use the IHP SLOTS Multilevel Regression and Poststratification (MRP) model (01/2024 revision). This update is for all adults and uses data from 19,721 interviews conducted from 1 Oct. 2021 to 2 Sep. 2024, including 1,153 interviews during August 2024. One hundred bootstraps were run to capture model uncertainty, with margins of error

assessed at 1–7% for August. IHP has expanded its interview numbers in the weeks leading to the Presidential Election to provide better estimates.

IHP's SLOTS MRP methodology first estimates the relationship between a wide variety of characteristics about respondents and their opinions – in this case, 'If there was a Presidential Election today, who would you vote for?'– in a multilevel statistical model that also smooths month to month changes. It then uses a large data file calibrated to the national population to predict voting intent in each month since Oct. 2021, based on what the multilevel model indicates about their probability of voting for various parties ('post-stratification') at each point in time. The multilevel model was estimated 100 times to reflect underlying uncertainties in the model and to obtain margins of error. The voting intent results for previous months have changed in this update as more data were collected after the last release and these changes are within the margin of error.

Previous reports available from ihp.lk

Institute for Health Policy, April 2023, "AK Dissanayake (48%) leads Sajith Premadasa (37%) in Presidential Election voter preferences. IHP/SLOTS MRP Presidential Election Voting Intention Update March 2023".
Available at: https://www.ihp.lk/publications/docs/SLOTSReport202309.pdf

Institute for Health Policy, March 2024, "AK Dissanayake (53%) continues to lead Sajith Premadasa (34%) in Presidential Election voting intent in February 2024. IHP/SLOTS MRP Presidential Election Voting Intention Update February 2024".
*Available at:*https://ihp.lk/press-releases/ak-dissanayake-53-continues-lead-sajith-premadasa-34-presidential-election-voting

Institute for Health Policy, April 2024, "Sajith Premadasa (41%) closes gap with AK Dissanayake (44%) in Presidential Election voting intent in March 2024. IHP/SLOTS MRP Presidential Election Voting Intention Update March 2024".
*Available at:*https://ihp.lk/press-releases/sajith-premadasa-41-closes-gap-ak-dissanayake-44-presidential-election-voting-intent

Institute for Health Policy, May 2024, "Sajith Premadasa and AK Dissanayake tied with 39% support in Presidential Election voting intent in April 2024. IHP/SLOTS MRP Presidential Election Voting Intention Update April 2024".
*Available at:*https://ihp.lk/press-releases/sajith-premadasa-and-ak-dissanayake-tied-39-support-presidential-election-voting

Institute for Health Policy, June 2024, "AK Dissanayake (39%) and Sajith Premadasa (38%) continue to bolster support in Presidential Election voting intent in May 2024. IHP/SLOTS MRP Presidential Election Voting Intention Update May 2024".
*Available at:*https://ihp.lk/press-releases/ak-dissanayake-39-and-sajith-premadasa-38-continue-bolster-support-presidential

Institute for Health Policy, July 2024, "Sajith Premadasa (43%) leads as Presidential Election kicks off in June 2024, but within margin of error. IHP/SLOTS MRP Presidential Election Voting Intention Update June 2024".
*Available at:*https://ihp.lk/press-releases/sajith-premadasa-43-leads-presidential-election-kicks-june-2024-within-margin-error

Institute for Health Policy, August 2024, "AK Dissanayake and Sajith Premadasa lead neck and neck in July voting intent, but support for Pres. Ranil Wickremesinghe surges. IHP/SLOTS MRP Presidential Election Voting Intention Update July 2024".

Available at:https://ihp.lk/press-releases/ak-dissanayake-and-sajith-premadasa-lead-neck-and-neck-july-voting-intent-support

About IHP

IHP is solely responsible for commissioning and designing the survey, and it takes full responsibility for it. IHP is an independent, non-partisan research institution based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The SLOTS lead investigator is Dr Ravi Rannan-Eliya of IHP, who was trained in public opinion polling at Harvard University, and who has conducted many opinion surveys over three decades, both in and outside Sri Lanka.

Methodology

SLOTS combines interviews from a national sample of adults (ages 18 and over) reached by random digit dialling of mobile numbers, and others coming from a national panel of respondents who were previously recruited through random selection. IHP estimates voting intent using an adaptation of Multilevel Regression and Post-Stratification (MRP), with multiple imputation to account for uncertainties in its modelling, exploiting data from all SLOTS interviews to estimate voting in a particular month.

The August 2024 MRP estimates are based on 19,721 interviews conducted from 1 October 2021–2 September 2024, including 1,153 interviews conducted in August 2024. The margin of error is assessed as 4.4–6.4% for Ranil Wickremesinghe and Sajith Premadasa, and 2.2–2.4% for AK Dissanayake and Namal Rajapaksa. All estimates are adjusted to ensure the sample matches the national population with respect to age, sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, geographical location, and voting in the 2019 Presidential and 2020 General Elections.

Funding

SLOTS fieldwork since 2021 has been supported by a range of funders, who play no role in question design, data analysis, or reporting. Past funders have included the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, Asia Foundation, European Commission, UK National Institute for Health and Care Research, the Foundation Open Society Institute, and others. Current fieldwork is supported by funding from the Velux Stiftung foundation, New York University Abu Dhabi, and the IHP Public Interest Research Fund. The survey findings and IHP reporting do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of past and present funders. Interested parties can contact IHP for more detailed data and results.