

## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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

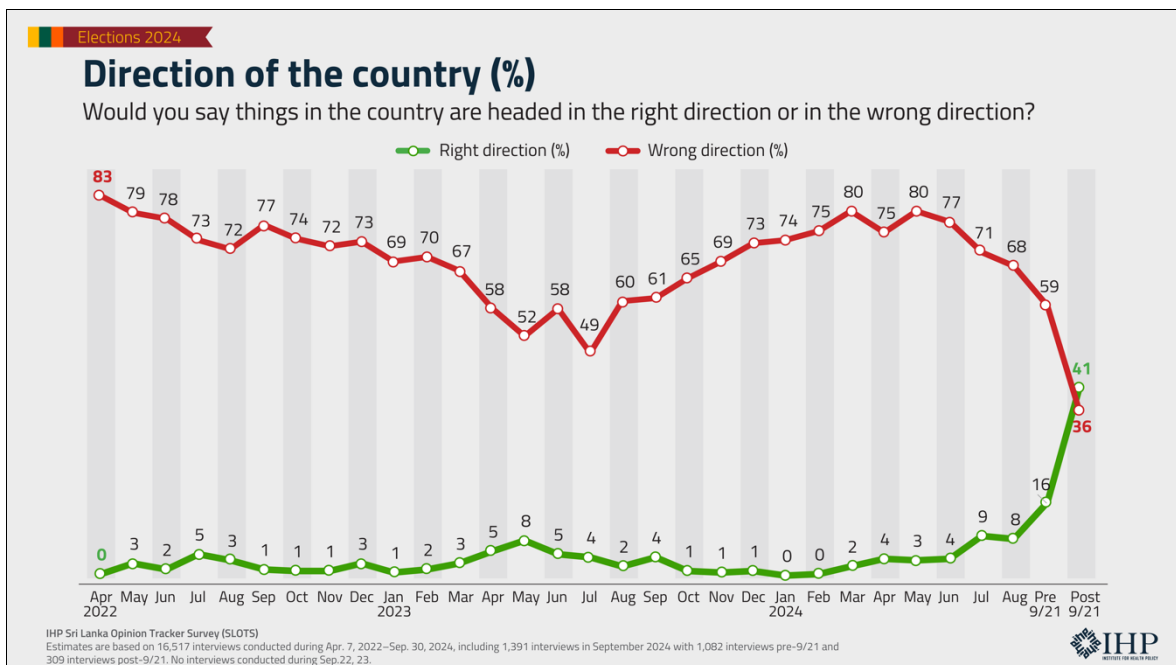
### TO CONTACT LEAD INVESTIGATOR

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

## 41% of Sri Lankans say the country is heading in the right direction in September after the Presidential Election

*Presidential Election leads to big turnaround in public views on the country's direction*

Sri Lankans views of the country's direction improved dramatically in SLOTS polling for September 2024. In the weeks leading up to the Presidential election, a net 43% of the public thought the country was heading in the wrong direction. This reversed after the election, with a net 5% of Sri Lankans saying that the country was headed in the right direction in the last ten days of the month, the highest level since SLOTS started tracking this in April 2022.



Overall, during September, an average of 21% of adults thought the country was heading in the right direction versus 54% who thought the country was heading in the wrong direction. In the period before elections on 21 September, 16% thought the country was heading in the right direction, and this increased to 41% after the polls, whilst 59% thought the country was heading in the wrong direction before elections, falling to 36% after.

This dramatic turnaround in opinion occurred immediately after the election on 21 September. SLOTS did not conduct interviews during 22-23 September, but the change in sentiment was clear and detectable immediately from 24 September when the survey resumed.

The improvement in the public's views about the country's direction was broad-based and across all demographics. The biggest improvements were seen in the poorest adults (+77%), and in younger adults (18-29 years +74%, 30-44 years +77%), Sinhala (+75%) and Muslim (+74%) respondents. The only demographic where net opinion on the country's direction did not increase into positive territory was the richest third of Sri Lankans, in which a net 6% thought the country was heading in the wrong direction.

The big change in views in Sri Lanka meant that Sri Lankans went from being amongst the pessimistic nations when thinking about the direction of the country to being the amongst the most positive after the elections. Before September 2024, when excluding "no opinion" responses for comparability with other countries, over 90% of Sri Lankans believed the country was on the wrong track. In a global IPSOS poll of 29 countries<sup>1</sup>, an average of 61% of adults thought their country was heading in the wrong direction, according to September estimates. By comparison, 79% of Sri Lankans held this view before the election (during Sep 1-Sep 20), a figure only better than South Korea and Japan, but far behind other South Asian countries tracked. After the election, this percentage dropped to 32% (68% in the right direction) moving Sri Lanka into the top three countries with positive outlooks.

### **More details available from [ihp.lk](https://ihp.lk)**

Institute for Health Policy, October 2024, "41% of Sri Lankans say the country is heading in the right direction in September after the Presidential Election". Available at:

<https://ihp.lk/research-updates/41-sri-lankans-say-country-heading-right-direction-september-after-presidential>

### **About IHP**

The Institute for Health Policy (IHP) conducts the SLOTS survey to track changes in health and social conditions, and public opinion in the country, on behalf of the Sri Lanka Health and Ageing Study (SLHAS) consortium of Sri Lankan academic and research institutions. 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 polls the public's outlook on the overall direction of the country by asking people: "Would you say things in the country are headed in the right direction or the wrong direction?". Respondents are also allowed not to answer or to say they "Don't know" or are "Not sure". The percentages saying the country is moving in the right or wrong direction is based on all those who were interviewed, so numbers for right and wrong tracks will not sum to 100% because of don't knows and refusals.

To minimize sample bias, estimates are based on weighting respondents to match the national population for age, sex, sector, ethnicity, religion, education, socioeconomic status ranking, and geographical location. Weighting is done by propensity weighting and iterative proportional fitting (raking).

## **Funding**

IHP conducts the SLOTS survey to track changes in health and social conditions, and public opinion in the country. IHP is solely responsible for conceiving, commissioning and designing the survey, and it takes full responsibility for it. Interviews are done daily by phone by IHP employees, with respondents recruited by a national field survey or by randomly dialling phone numbers. 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, USAID, 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.