

## PRESS RELEASE

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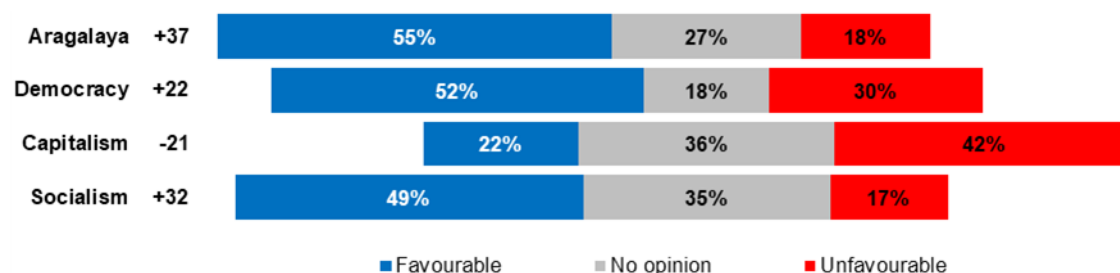
## The Aragalaya and democracy have increasing and widespread support amongst the public, but Sri Lankans are souring on capitalism

Support for the Aragalaya and democracy remains high and is increasing six months after the collapse of the Gotabaya Rajapaksa presidency, according to SLOTS polling from Oct. 2022 to Feb. 2023. Six in ten Sri Lankans (55%) had a favourable view of the Aragalaya and only one in five Sri Lankans (18%) viewed it negatively. And from late-2022 to early-2023, net favourability of the Aragalaya increased 16 points from +26 to +42.

Most Sri Lankans also have favourable views of democracy (+20) and socialism (+32), with favourability of both increasing 14 points from end-2022 to early-2023. In contrast, only one in five Sri Lankans (22%) have a positive view of capitalism, with net favourability showing a small decline during the same period.

### Most Sri Lankans have favourable views of the Aragalaya, democracy, and socialism, but negative views of capitalism

% who say they have a favourable or unfavourable view of \_\_\_\_\_



Institute for Health Policy Sri Lanka Opinion Tracker Survey (SLOTS)

Survey of 2,652 adults during 4 Oct. 2022–24 Feb. 2023. Refusals and respondents who had not heard of the relevant item, which averaged 4–6% across questions, are excluded. All estimates weighted to match the national population.

SLOTS polling confirms public impressions that the youth were the most enthusiastic backers of the Aragalaya, with net favourability being highest (62%) in the youth (18–29 years), and favourability towards it declining with age, although net favourability is positive in all age groups. The youth also have far more negative views of capitalism (net favourability -44%) than older Sri Lankans (-17%).

In contrast, support for the Aragalaya is similar across ethnic groups and provinces, with SLOTS polling indicating that support for the Aragalaya is widespread and not confined to the Sinhala community or those living in the Western province or urban areas.

Perhaps surprisingly, more educated and better-off Sri Lankans are the most favourable towards the Aragalaya and have the most negative views of capitalism. Amongst Sri Lankans with a university education, capitalism has a negative favourability of -42%.

Professor Siri Hettige, one of the SLOTS investigators, commented that this may reflect the unprecedented nature of the current economic crisis, which has affected not only the poor, but also “hitherto secure groups from privileged social and economic backgrounds.” Many Sri Lankans also perceive that the dominant economic policy paradigm in the past three decades has been “capitalist”, and so the negative views of “capitalism” and the positive views of “socialism” may be driven by public perceptions that this dominant policy paradigm has fundamentally failed.

Major differences in views about the Aragalaya are largely politically partisan. Despite its widespread support, the Aragalaya has a net negative favourability of -33% amongst SLPP supporters, whilst UNP supporters are ambivalent with net favourability being only 11%. This probably reflects the fact that the Aragalaya was seen as opposed to the Gotabaya Rajapaksa administration, and the fact that most UNP supporters today are former SLPP voters.

### **Full report available from [ihp.lk](http://ihp.lk)**

Institute for Health Policy, March 2023, “The Aragalaya and democracy have widespread support amongst the public, but Sri Lankans are souring on capitalism”, SLOTS Report #2023-04. Available at <http://ihp.lk/publications/docs/SLOTSReport202304.pdf>.

### **About IHP**

IHP is an independent, non-partisan research centre based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The SLOTS lead investigator is Dr Ravi Rannan-Eliya of IHP, who has trained in public opinion polling at Harvard University and has conducted numerous surveys over three decades.

### **Methodology**

The results reported here are based on interviews with 2,720 adults during 04/10/2022– 01/03 2023. The overall favourability estimates are associated with a margin of error of  $\pm 4\text{--}5\%$  (95% confidence level).

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.

Respondents are interviewed in their language of choice: Sinhala, Tamil, or English. The specific question about favourability is worded as follows: “Can you tell me whether you have a favourable or unfavourable view of \_\_\_\_\_ — or that you are unsure or have no view of [it], or that you have not heard of [it].”

Net favourability is the average of the percentages of respondents who say they have a favourable or unfavourable opinion.

Favourability as assessed by SLOTS refers to people’s perceptions and does not tell us what respondents understand by the terms Aragalaya, democracy, capitalism and socialism.

All reported results are weighted to be representative of all Sri Lankan adults by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, household income, education, and province.

## **Funding**

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