

Pattern identification of Sri Lanka presidential election results with special attention to voting literacy: 1982-2024

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The study focused on Sri Lanka's presidential elections from 1982 to 2024 using a quantitative and longitudinal design to examine electoral trends over time. To analyze voting patterns in Sri Lanka, the study used data from the Election Commission to examine nine presidential elections across twenty-two districts. Microsoft Excel was used to analyse the data. All islands' data depicted that the voting percentage increased to 83.72% in 2019 from 81.52% in 2015 and 81.06% in 1982. The highest abstention rate in 1988 was 44.68%, compared to a turnout rate of 55.32%. Absentees fell from 20.54% in 2024 to 16.28% in 2019. In 2010, there were 99.03% valid votes and this dipped to 97.69% in 1999, with 2.31% being rejected. Further, the study analyzed voting patterns in Sri Lanka's most populated Western Province. According to the Western Province results, the lowest total voter turnout recorded was 70.53%, with the highest abstention rate at 29.47% in 1988. The highest voter turnout reached 83.65% and the lowest abstention rate was 16.35% in 2019. The year 2019 indicated the lowest percentage of valid votes at 97.53%, with the highest rejection rate at 2.47%. On the other hand, the highest percentage of valid votes was 98.98% in 1982, with the lowest rejection rate at 1.02%. There is anecdotal evidence that some people do not vote because they do not like the candidates, feel there is no one worth voting for, some are unaware of the importance of voting, cannot read or write, cannot understand a long or complex ballot paper, or even fear of coming out considering their safety. To identify, explore, and validate the socially held anecdotal opinions, there is a need to conduct qualitative research, emphasising the importance of qualitative studies and the social responsibility of public and community librarians to enhance voting literacy.

Keywords: *Presidential election, Voter turnout, Abstention, Voting pattern, Rejected ballot, Voting literacy, Sri Lanka*