

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

<b>Bilagsnr.:</b>	<b>771</b>
Land:	Sri Lanka
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	Freedom in the World 2025 – Sri Lanka
Udgivet:	2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	22. august 2025



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

# Sri Lanka

**58**

PARTLY FREE

/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	<b>26</b> /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	<b>32</b> /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

**54** /100    **Partly Free**

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. See the methodology.



## Overview

The slight improvements in political rights and civil liberties that Sri Lanka experienced after the 2015 election of President Maithripala Sirisena were stalled after Gotabaya Rajapaksa became president in 2019 and his family's ethnic Sinhala Buddhist nationalist party Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) won parliamentary polls in 2020. A pattern of governmental mismanagement, corruption, and acute economic crisis under SLPP rule prompted the 2022 Aragalaya (Struggle) protest movement, which resulted in the ouster of President Rajapaksa and his brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. A new government overseen by veteran politician Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was chosen by Parliament to serve out the remainder of Rajapaksa's presidential term, brought relative stability, but the austerity measures it introduced under pressure from international creditors further damaged public confidence in the political establishment and contributed to a sweeping victory by the leftist opposition National People's Power (NPP) alliance in the 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections.

## Key Developments in 2024

- In January, Parliament adopted the Online Safety Act, which drew civil society criticism for its vague criminal prohibitions on false and otherwise harmful online speech. In June, Parliament passed a Women's Empowerment Act that would establish a National Commission for Women to protect women's rights and draft relevant policies, though the Supreme Court blocked a broader Gender Equality Bill, arguing that it required a supermajority and a referendum to enact.
- A presidential election was held in September, and Anura Kumara Dissanayake—widely known as AKD—of the leftist NPP won with about 42 percent of first-choice votes and 56 percent of the final tally in a ranked-choice voting system. Although AKD had garnered only 3 percent of the vote in the 2019 election, he defeated 37 other candidates in 2024, including incumbent President Wickremesinghe, who placed third after Sajith Premadasa of the main opposition alliance Samagi Jana Balawegaya. International observers concluded that the election was credible and transparent, and others noted that no major candidate had sought to stoke divisions between the ethnic Sinhala Buddhist majority and the ethnic Tamil and non-Buddhist minority populations.

- After taking office as president, AKD appointed NPP lawmaker Harini Amarasuriya as prime minister and called for snap parliamentary elections, which were held in November. The NPP alliance secured an unprecedented supermajority of 159 out of 225 seats, up from just 3 in the 2020 elections, and notably won many districts in the predominantly Tamil northeast despite being a southern-based party. At year's end, long-overdue elections for local and provincial councils were expected to be held in 2025.
- Security forces continued to disrupt protests and the work of journalists during the year, but in keeping with the NPP's campaign pledges, the new administration took some steps to ease restrictions on the Tamil population. In November, the president ordered the closure of an army camp in the north and the return of the land to its previous owners. Also that month, authorities allowed commemorations of those killed by government forces in Sri Lanka's 1983–2009 civil conflict, though they continued to ban the display of any insignia from the defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebel group.
- The counternarcotics campaign known as Operation Yukthiya, which had begun in December 2023, continued for most of 2024, generating widespread reports of arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment in custody, and extortion. In December, a deputy minister in the new NPP government accused some police personnel of colluding with drug traffickers.

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*For additional background information, see last year's [full report](#).*

## **Political Rights**

### **A. Electoral Process**

**A1** 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

4/4

*Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because the September presidential election was deemed credible and transparent by international observers, and a new prime minister and cabinet were duly appointed following the November parliamentary elections, with little of the election-related violence experienced in previous years.*

**A2** 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

4/4

*Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because the November parliamentary elections were considered genuinely competitive and transparent, with results that were widely accepted by stakeholders, allowing for a peaceful transfer of power.*

**A3** 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

3/4

## B. Political Pluralism and Participation

**B1** 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

3/4

**B2** 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

3/4

*Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 due to the opposition NPP's decisive victories in the presidential and parliamentary elections.*

**B3** 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

2/4

**B4** 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

2/4

## C. Functioning of Government

**C1** 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

3/4

*Score Change: The score improved from 2 to 3 because the new president and Parliament were freely elected, duly installed in their posts, and able to form a government without significant interference from unelected or foreign actors.*

**C2** 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1/4

**C3** 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	2/4
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**Add Q**

Is the government or occupying power deliberately changing the ethnic composition of a country or territory so as to destroy a culture or tip the political balance in favor of another group?	-1
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## Civil Liberties

### D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

**D1** 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	3/4
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**D2** 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	2/4
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**D3** 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	2/4
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**D4** 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	2/4
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# E. Associational and Organizational Rights

**E1** 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	<b>2/4</b>
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**E2** 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work?	<b>3/4</b>
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**E3** 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?	<b>3/4</b>
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# F. Rule of Law

**F1** 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	<b>3/4</b>
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**F2** 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	<b>1/4</b>
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**F3** 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	<b>2/4</b>
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**F4** 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

1/4

## G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

**G1** 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

2/4

**G2** 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

2/4

**G3** 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

2/4

**G4** 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

2/4



## On Sri Lanka

See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.

[See More >](#)

### *Country Facts*

Population

**22,180,000**

Global Freedom Score

**58/100** Partly Free

Internet Freedom Score

**53/100** Partly Free

### *Other Years*

2024

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