

Sri Lanka – Summary Report 2024

In 2024, the Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI) conducted its first human rights expert survey in Sri Lanka to measure how well the country is performing on fulfilling its human rights obligations. Through the survey, experts and HRDs in Sri Lanka shared their insights on the overall human rights landscape in the country in 2023. Their responses allowed HRMI to produce a comprehensive human rights dataset for the country, available freely on the [Rights Tracker](#),¹ which is now a certified digital public good. The dataset for Sri Lanka includes scores for nine civil and political rights, five economic and social rights, and some additional information giving context about people groups at risk of violations of these rights.

[Civil and political rights](#)²

Safety from the State / Physical Integrity Rights

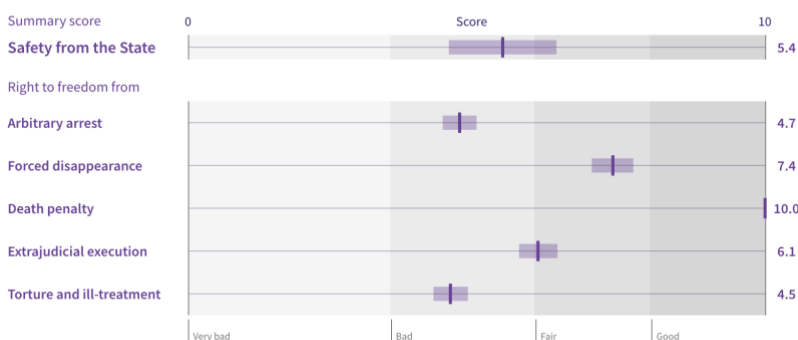
The scores on the Rights Tracker for the nine civil and political rights indicate the level of respect for each right in 2023 in Sri Lanka. These rights are further categorised into five physical integrity rights, and four empowerment rights. Sri Lanka’s summary score for the five **physical integrity rights**, i.e., the right to be safe from the State is **5.4 out of 10**. The lowest score in this category is for the right to freedom from torture and ill-treatment, which is a 4.5 out of 10; this is followed by a 4.7 out of 10 on the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest. Both these scores fall in the ‘bad’ performance range. The scores for freedom from forced disappearance and extrajudicial execution are 7.4 and 6.1 respectively. The score for the right to freedom from death penalty is 10 out of 10, as no person has been formally executed in the country in 2023.

Safety from the State - overview

(2023)

[How to read](#) ?

How well is Sri Lanka's government respecting each right?



Source: HRMI 2024 rightstracker.org

People at risk

Human rights experts from Sri Lanka commonly identified **human rights defenders, protestors, people of particular ethnicities, people with particular religious beliefs and practices, journalists, trade union members and labour rights advocates, students, detainees, LGBTQIA+ people**, among others as being at risk of violations of these rights.

In the qualitative information that experts provided,³ some responses particularly identified or stated:

- Activists and protestors associated with the Aragalaya protest movement were at risk of being arbitrarily arrested and tortured or ill-treated; all people were at risk of being arbitrarily arrested as the government suspected them of being guilty of participating in the anti-government protests.
- Tamils and Muslims, especially Malaiyaha Tamils, as well as former LTTE cadres or those suspected of terrorist activity are at risk of violations of each of these rights.
- Journalists criticising the government, or exposing violations, corruption, or illegalities are at risk.

1 All the data are freely available on the [Rights Tracker](#), and more information can be found on the [HRMI website](#).

2 Civil and political rights (CPR) scores are measured based on the responses received from human rights practitioners from the country through HRMI’s annual human rights expert survey. HRMI’s methodology for constructing CPR scores can be found here: <https://humanrightsmasurement.org/methodology/#cpr>.

3 You can explore the rich qualitative information from expert survey responses by clicking ‘Show more information’ under the ‘People at risk’ word clouds for each right. All these data for Sri Lanka are available at: <https://rightstracker.org/country/LKA?tab=atrisk>.

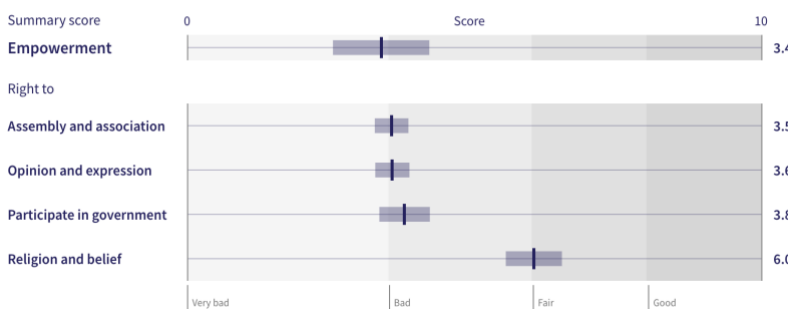
Empowerment Rights

Sri Lanka’s summary score for the four **empowerment rights** is **3.4 out of 10**, and falls on the cusp of the ‘bad’ and ‘very bad’ performance ranges. The average scores for democratic freedoms in Sri Lanka appear lower than the scores for physical integrity rights. The lowest score among the empowerment rights is 3.5 out of 10 for the freedom of assembly and association; it is also the lowest score among all civil and political rights. This is closely followed by 3.6 out of 10 on freedom of opinion and expression, and 3.8 on freedom of political participation. The score for freedom of religion and belief is 6 out of 10, and while relatively better than other empowerment rights, falls on the cusp of ‘bad’ and ‘fair’ performance range.

Empowerment - overview

(2023)

How well is Sri Lanka’s government respecting each right?



Source: HRMI 2024 rightstracker.org

[How to read](#) ⓘ

People at risk

Human rights experts most commonly identified the following people to be more vulnerable to restrictions of these rights: **human rights advocates, protestors, trade union members and labour rights advocates, journalists, people of particular ethnicities, people with particular religious beliefs and practices, LGBTQIA+ people, detainees**, among others.

In the qualitative information that experts provided,⁴ some responses particularly identified or stated:

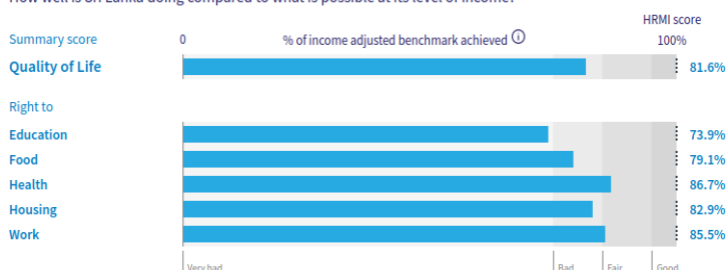
- Activists, journalists, and human rights organisations critical of the government, advocating for minority or ethnic groups, monitoring human rights, or collaborating with international organisations face surveillance, harassment, and State-sponsored hate campaigns both online and offline.
- People in the North and East regions, especially Tamil people, Muslims, activists, journalists, people from plantation communities face threats, harassment, and restrictions due to anti-terror laws, heavy security presence, and high surveillance.
- Protestors, union leaders, students, and other people, especially those associated with the Aragalya movement, are labelled “anti-government” and monitored by the State.

Economic and social rights⁵

Quality of Life - overview

(2021)

How well is Sri Lanka doing compared to what is possible at its level of income?



Source: HRMI 2024 rightstracker.org

[How to read](#) ⓘ [Switch view](#) ⚙️

The image alongside shows ‘income-adjusted’ scores for five ‘quality of life’ rights in Sri Lanka. ‘Income-adjusted’ scores mean that for each of these rights, Sri Lanka can attain 100% even within its existing income and resources. Therefore, any income-adjusted score that is less than 100% indicates that the Government of Sri Lanka has potential to better fulfil these rights of its people even at its current income levels.

4 You can explore the rich qualitative information from expert survey responses by clicking ‘Show more information’ under the ‘People at risk’ word clouds for each right. All these data for Sri Lanka are available at: <https://rightstracker.org/country/LKA?tab=atrisk>.

5 Economic and social rights scores are measured using the SERF Index. HRMI’s methodology for constructing ESR scores can be found here: <https://humanrightsmasurement.org/methodology/>

Example of how to read ‘income-adjusted’ HRMI scores: We can see in the image above that Sri Lanka’s ‘income-adjusted’ HRMI score for the Right to Education is 73.9%. This means that the Government of Sri Lanka is currently achieving only 73.9% on the right to education of its people compared to what it is actually capable of achieving at its current income level (GDP per capita). Since the score is ‘income-adjusted’, we calculate that Sri Lanka actually has the potential to reach the 100% mark within its resources.

- Out of the five economic and social rights we measure, Sri Lanka scores the lowest on the Right to Education (73.9%), which falls in the ‘very bad’ performance range. This is closely followed by the scores for the Right to Food (79.1%) and the Right to Housing (82.6%); while these scores are comparatively better, they still fall in the ‘bad’ performance range.
- The scores for the Right to Health (86.7%) and the Right to Work (85.5%) are relatively better, but still fall in the ‘fair’ performance range, indicating that the Government of Sri Lanka can do much better for fulfilment of these rights even presently, and is not meeting its obligation of their progressive realisation.
- In comparison with other countries in South Asia, Sri Lanka is performing ‘better than average’ on the ‘quality of life’ rights on the ‘income-adjusted’ benchmark. However, when measured against the ‘global best’ benchmark compared to all the countries in the world, Sri Lanka has a long way to go to meet the current global best standards for ensuring that all people in the country have adequate and quality food, education, healthcare, housing, and work.

People at risk

Human rights experts who took HRMI’s 2024 survey most commonly identified the following groups to more at risk of being unable to fulfil their ‘quality of life’ rights: Street children or homeless youth, LGBTQIA+ people, homeless people, sex workers, people with disabilities, people from particular cultural backgrounds and castes, among others. Interestingly, many experts also selected ‘All people’ to be particularly at risk of not being able to fulfil each of the five economic and social rights.

In the qualitative information that experts provided,⁶ some responses particularly stated:

- In relation to the Right to Food, everyone suffers due to low wages, high inflation rates, high interest rates, and the recently introduced tax systems. Specific challenges are faced by poor urban workers, Malaiyaha Tamils, plantation workers, and residents of former war-affected provinces. Similarly, people living in in remote areas or dry zones, and women, especially daughters of single mothers who migrate to find work are also vulnerable.
- In relation to the Right to Housing, the response was similar i.e. everyone suffers due to low wages, high inflation rates, high interest rates, and new tax systems. Malaiyaha Tamils, people living in in remote areas or dry zones, plantation workers, residents of former war affected provinces, women, LGBTQIA+ community, asylum seekers, and poor urban workers are more vulnerable to not having access to quality and safe housing.

⁶ You can explore the rich qualitative information from expert survey responses by clicking ‘Show more information’ under the ‘People at risk’ word clouds for each right. All these data for Sri Lanka are available at: <https://rightstracker.org/country/LKA?tab=atrisk>.