

## Commentary on Sri Lanka's domain ranks in the 2014 Global AgeWatch Index

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**Global AgeWatch Index rank**

**43**  
out of 96

Sri Lanka ranks moderately on the Index at 43 overall. It performs best in the enabling environment domain (25), with values above regional averages for three out of four indicators: social connectedness (79%), safety (71%) and civic freedom (81%).

It ranks high on the capability domain (32), with values well above the regional average for educational attainment among older people (63.9%). However, it ranks below average on the employment indicator (50.3%).

It ranks moderately in the health domain (54), with values below the regional average on only one indicator - psychological wellbeing. It ranks lowest in the income security domain (79), with low pension income coverage (17.1%) though it has a high relative welfare rate compared to other countries in this region.


**Income security**

**79**  
34.9/100

According to international data, pension income coverage in Sri Lanka is lower than 20%. A few state banks have started their own pension schemes depending on the deposits that a person maintains with the bank. The average income per household is 46,207 Rupees (US\$ 355) per month in 2012. In 2009/10, it was 36,451 (US\$ 280) showing an increase of 26.8%. However, the real increase after making adjustments for inflation is only 5.5%.

HelpAge Sri Lanka and older campaigners have been continuously advocating for increasing older people's income by providing them a monthly allowance at least for people aged 70 or older. This has been successful, as there are now around 254,000 older people over 70 who receive a monthly allowance of 1000 Rupees (US\$ 7.68).


**Health status**

**54**  
50.0/100

According to international data, both life expectancy at 60 and healthy life expectancy at 60 is above the regional averages. According to national data women can expect to live a few years longer than men.

The public health system is free of charge for everybody in Sri Lanka. Government hospitals and dispensaries are established in every district and all main towns. People living in rural areas still face difficulties to access these services due to lack and cost of transport. There are numerous private medical institutions in all main towns, but people living in poverty cannot access these because of the high prices.

Health systems for older people are improving as the Ministry of Health has realised that proper measures must be taken to provide for the increasing population of older people. The ministry has issued instructions for all registered medical institutions (public and private) to have disability and age friendly environments. These medical institutions have the capacity for treating most communicable and non-communicable diseases. Medicine is provided free of charge.

Challenges exist for vulnerable older people, who have no one to assist them, to access these services, especially in a rural area. Despite positive developments in the health sector, health facilities have not been sufficiently set up in the rural areas of the country.

 **Capability** 32  
43.0/100

Most older people work in the informal sector. Most commonly they work in the fields of agriculture, fishing, trading, and sewing. In the informal sector, older people tend to work as long as they can to secure their livelihoods.

In the formal sector, compulsory retirement age is 60 years. Some of the formal sector employees, after retiring, join the informal sector to make an additional income.

 **Enabling environment** 25  
72.9/100

In Sri Lanka, particularly in rural areas, people are closely connected and support each other. For instance, during a period of grievance, relatives, friends and neighbours volunteer to help the victims.

With the end of ethnic conflict in 2009, large numbers of police and armed forces were removed from war affected areas to other areas of Sri Lanka. These security officers are now being utilised by the government to ensure public safety, for instance on roads. Permanent check points have now been removed, but mobile check points are still continuing without any notice to public.

Freedom of choice is a problem as people get older in Sri Lanka; they often have to abide by decisions made by their children, as older people often become dependent and are living with their children.

Local public transportation systems are improving for instance with increased number of public buses, but these are still not age-friendly. The condition of most of the roads (even in rural areas) have been improved during the last couple of years.

**The Global AgeWatch Index ranks countries by how well their older populations are faring.**

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