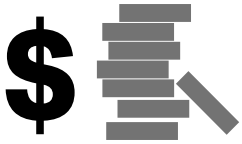
THE VALUE OF AVIATION SRI LANKA

The economic impact of aviation in Sri Lanka

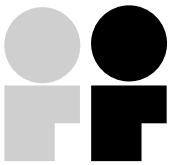
The aviation sector and its quantifiable economic effects made up 5.1% of Sri Lanka's GDP and 5.6% of the country's employment in 2025. This covers the sector itself, its supply chain, employee spending, and international air transport-enabled tourism to Sri Lanka.

GDP and employment created by aviation in Sri Lanka in 2025



5.6
USD billion

5.1%
of GDP



465.5
thousand jobs

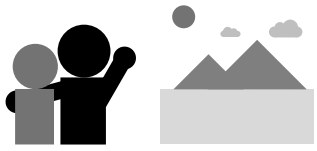
5.6%
of employment

Included economic impacts:
***Direct** – within aviation sector, **Indirect** – aviation supply chain,*
Induced** – employee spending, **International tourists arriving by air

Breakdown of GDP and employment created







Airlines	Airports, ANSPs, civil manufacturing	International tourists arriving by air
USD 277.3 million	USD 483.2 million	USD 4.8 billion
14.1 thousand jobs	26.4 thousand jobs	425 thousand jobs

Source: Air Transport Action Group, 2026. Aviation Benefits Beyond Borders report based on data from Oxford Economics.
Note: Economic impacts are calculated using Oxford Economics' Aviation: Benefits Beyond Borders methodology with inputs sourced from publicly available statistics and recognized industry datasets wherever possible, with modelling-based estimates applied where direct data are not available. Estimates do not include domestic tourism spending, nor the wider catalytic benefits of aviation on trade, investment, productivity gains, and enhanced connectivity, among others.
Note: Average 2025 exchange rate: USD 1 = LKR 300.85

Air transport brings millions of people safely to global destinations

Around 4.4 million air passengers departed from Sri Lanka in 2025, based on Origin-Destination(O-D) traffic, making Sri Lanka the 75th largest air passenger market globally.

Air travel from Sri Lanka in 2025, Origin-Destination (O-D)

4.4
million
passenger departures

GROWTH

34.8%
10-year growth

16.2%
year-on-year growth

RANK

75th
Global
No change since 2015

18th
in Asia
No change since 2015

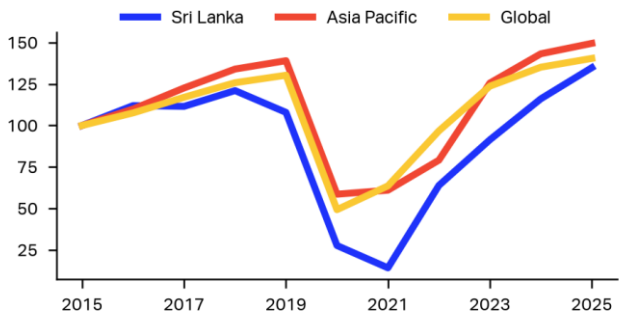
SHARE

0.1%
of global departures

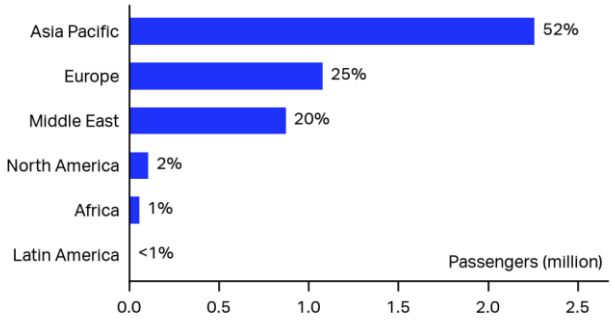
0.3%
of Asian departures

International: 4.4 million passenger departures, 35.9% 10Y growth, 16.1% YoY growth

Total passenger departures, O-D, 2015-2025, index 2015=100



International passenger departures by destination region, O-D, 2025



Top air travel markets Inbound & outbound	Top origin cities Inbound	Top destination cities Outbound
1. India	1. London	1. Chennai
2. United Arab Emirates	2. Chennai	2. Dubai
3. United Kingdom	3. Dubai	3. Bangkok
4. Maldives	4. Male	4. Singapore
5. Australia	5. Paris	5. Male

Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics using IATA DDS data.
Note: O-D (origin-destination) departures measures passengers beginning their journey in Sri Lanka, to their final destination, excluding transfer and transit passengers.
Top air travel markets based on total O-D passenger traffic between Sri Lanka and other markets in 2025. Top outbound and inbound cities are based on round-trip passenger journeys.
IATA DDS data are derived from ticketing and sales transactions using IATA methodologies and estimates; therefore, results may not exactly match officially reported traffic statistics.

Air transport directly connects Sri Lanka to 29 different countries

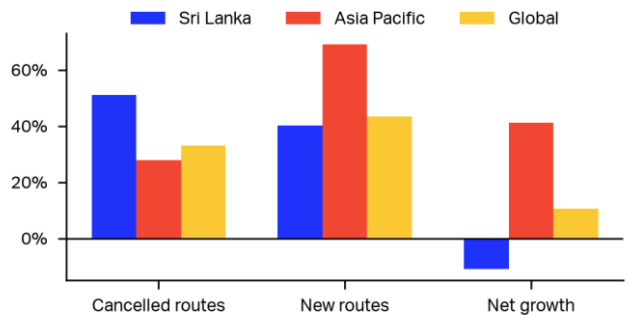
In 2025, there were 11 airports and 36 operating airlines in Sri Lanka, providing a total of 82 regularly scheduled commercial passenger routes for Sri Lanka, connecting to 29 countries with about 76 daily international departures.

Air Connectivity in Sri Lanka

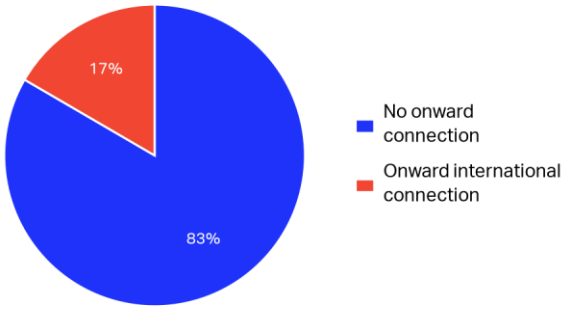


		Total		
		Available routes	Connected countries	Daily int. departures
2025	Total	82	29	76
	Global rank	94th	81st	73rd
	Asia rank	20th	15th	16th
2015	Total	92	27	73
	Global rank	82nd	75th	71st
	Asia rank	17th	14th	14th

Route network change, 2015 to 2025, % of 2015



Onward connections of international arrivals, 2025

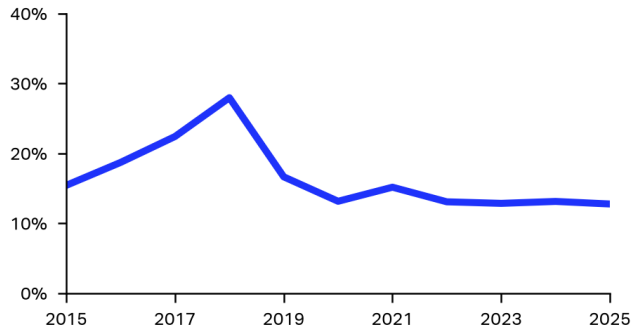


Source: IATA Sustainability & Economics using OAG & IATA DDS data.
Note: Airport, airline, and route counts include only those with regularly scheduled passenger services from Sri Lanka. Airports with fewer than 1,000 regularly scheduled seats in 2025 are excluded.

Air Cargo provides Sri Lanka timely and safe access to global markets

Although air transport accounted for an estimated 96.2% of Sri Lanka's traded goods by weight, it carried 85.7% of their total value.
Sri Lanka's airports handled around 191.5 thousand tonnes of air cargo in 2025, ranking Sri Lanka as the world's 57th largest air cargo handler market and the 15th largest in Asia.

Sri Lankan air cargo, value, % of total, 2015-2025



Sri Lankan air cargo, share of trade, 2025

96.2%
of trade by weight

85.7%
of trade by value

Air cargo handled in Sri Lanka, 2025

191.5
thousand tonnes
air cargo handled

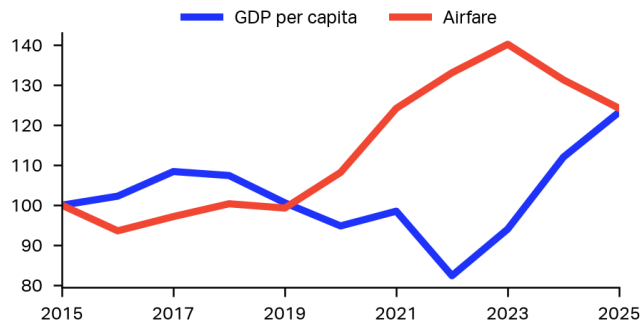
57th
Globally
15th in Asia

Source: Airports Council International (ACI) for air cargo handled, Global Trade Tracker (GTT) for imports and exports by air.
Note: Sri Lanka's trade by air includes imports and exports. It is based on the country's self reported customs data.

International air travel from Sri Lanka has become less affordable over the past decade

Sri Lanka's nominal GDP per capita increased by 23.3%, while the average nominal airfare for an international ticket from Sri Lanka increased by 24.2%, over the past decade. Therefore, international air travel has become less affordable for local residents over this time period.

Nominal GDP per capita & average international fare, Sri Lanka, 2015-2025, index 2015=100



Source: IATA DDS, World Bank. Nominal GDP per capita and fare developments measured in USD terms.