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REPORTS & INDICES

World Press Freedom Index 2025 — PFI

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SUBJECTS COVERED

POLITY

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ISSUING BODY	FREQUENCY	INDIA'S RANK	TOP PERFORMER
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)	**Annual**	**151 / 180** +8	**Norway**

KEY FINDINGS

- India ranked 151st with a score of 32.96, up from 159th in 2024
- Norway tops for the 9th consecutive year with a score of 92.31
- India classified under 'very serious situation' category
- For the first time, global press freedom classified as 'difficult situation'
- Economic fragility identified as the leading threat to press freedom globally
- Over half the world's population lives in red zones for press freedom

ABOUT THE INDEX

The **World Press Freedom Index** is published annually by **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)** — known in French as *Reporters sans frontieres* — an international NGO headquartered in Paris, founded in 1985 by Robert Menard. The index has been published since 2002 and ranks 180 countries and territories based on their press freedom environment.

Methodology

Since 2022, the index uses a revised methodology based on **five indicators**, each scored from 0 to 100:

INDICATOR	WHAT IT MEASURES
Political Context	Degree of political support for media freedom
Legal Framework	Strength of laws protecting press freedom
Economic Context	Economic viability of independent media
Sociocultural Context	Social norms affecting media freedom
Safety	Physical safety of journalists

Score interpretation: 0 = worst, 100 = best. Countries are classified into five colour-coded zones:

SCORE RANGE	CLASSIFICATION
85-100	Good situation (green)
70-85	Satisfactory situation (yellow)
55-70	Problematic situation (orange)
40-55	Difficult situation (red)
0-40	Very serious situation (black)

INDIA'S PERFORMANCE

India ranks **151st out of 180 countries** with a score of **32.96**, placing it in the **"Very Serious Situation"** category. This is an improvement of 8 positions from 159th in 2024.

Key Concerns Highlighted by RSF for India

- **Media ownership concentration:** Reliance Industries (Mukesh Ambani) owns over 70 media outlets; Gautam Adani acquired NDTV in 2022
- **Government advertising dependence:** Most media houses rely heavily on government advertising revenue, compromising editorial independence
- **Journalist safety:** Journalists covering environment and Kashmir face police harassment, surveillance, and detention
- **Self-censorship:** Growing trend of self-censorship in mainstream media due to economic and political pressures

Historical Trend

YEAR	RANK	SCORE
2020	142	—
2021	142	—
2022	150	41.22
2023	161	36.62
2024	159	31.28
2025	151	32.96

Regional / BRICS Comparison

COUNTRY	RANK (2025)	SCORE	CLASSIFICATION
South Africa	~31	~72	Satisfactory
Brazil	~82	~57	Problematic
India	151	32.96	Very Serious
Russia	~164	~23	Very Serious
China	~172	~18	Very Serious

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF LATEST EDITION

- **Norway** retains the top position for the **9th consecutive year** with a score of 92.31 — the only country with a "good" rating across all five indicators
- Top 5: Norway (1st, 92.31), Estonia (2nd, 89.46), Netherlands (3rd, 88.64), Sweden (4th, 88.13), Finland (5th, 87.18)
- For the **first time in the history of the index**, the global state of press freedom is classified as a **"difficult situation"**
- The **economic indicator** has reached an unprecedented critical low, with independent media struggling financially worldwide
- Over **half the world's population** lives in press freedom "red zones" (difficult or very serious situations)
- The report highlights the rise of AI-generated disinformation as an emerging threat to press freedom

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

PROVISION	DETAILS
Article 19(1)(a)	Freedom of speech and expression (press freedom is read into this)
Article 19(2)	Reasonable restrictions (sovereignty, security, public order, decency, defamation, contempt of court, incitement)
Press Council of India Act, 1978	Self-regulatory body; no binding powers
IT Act, 2000 (Section 69A)	Government power to block content
IT (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2021	Regulation of digital media and social media

UPSC RELEVANCE

India's rank, RSF HQ (Paris), five indicators of the index, top/bottom performers, Article 19(1)(a) **Mains GS-2:** *Press freedom as a democratic pillar, media regulation vs. media independence, role of Press Council of India, digital media regulation, paid news, media trial* **Interview:** *"Should India have a statutory press regulator with binding powers, or would that further compromise media independence?"*

RELATED TERMS

Press Freedom | Media Independence

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