



Sri Lanka



Capital City: Colombo

Background: The Sinhalese arrived in Sri Lanka late in the 6th century B.C. probably from northern India. Buddhism was introduced beginning in about the mid-third century B.C., and a great civilization developed at the cities of Anuradhapura (kingdom from circa 200 B.C. to circa A.D. 1000) and Polonnaruwa (from about 1070 to 1200). In the 14th century, a south Indian dynasty seized power in the north and established a Tamil kingdom. Occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century and by the Dutch in the 17th century, the island was ceded to the British in 1796, became a crown colony in 1802, and was united under British rule by 1815. As Ceylon, it became independent in 1948; its name was changed to Sri Lanka in 1972. Tensions between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil separatists erupted into war in 1983. Tens of thousands have died in the ethnic conflict that continues to fester. After two decades of fighting, the government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) formalized a cease-fire in February 2002 with Norway brokering peace negotiations. Violence between the LTTE and government forces intensified in 2006, but neither side has formally withdrawn from the cease-fire.

Geography:

- **Location:** Southern Asia, island in the Indian Ocean, south of India
- **Area comparative:** Slightly smaller than Ireland
- **Climate:** Tropical monsoon, northeast monsoon, southeast monsoon
- **Natural resources:** Limestone, graphite, mineral sands, gems, phosphates, clay, hydropower
- **Natural hazards:** Occasional cyclones and tornadoes
- **Environmental issues:** Deforestation, soil erosion, wildlife populations threatened by poaching and urbanisation, coastal degradation from mining activities and increased pollution, freshwater resources being polluted by industrial wastes and sewage runoff, waste disposal, air pollution in Colombo

Government:

- **Type of government:** Republic
- **Administrative divisions:** 8 provinces
- **Independence:** 4th February 1948 (from the UK)
- **National holiday:** Independence Day 4th February (1948)

Religion: Buddhist (69%), Muslim (8%), Hindu (7%), Christian (6%)



People:

- **Population:** 20,926,315
- **Birth rate:** 17 births per 1000 population
- **Infant mortality:** 19.45 deaths per 1000 live births
- **Life expectancy:** *Total population:* 74.8 years, *male:* 72.81 years, *female:* 76.88 years

Economy:

- **Unemployment:** 7.6%
- **Population below the poverty line:** 22% (2002 estimate)
- **Agricultural products:** rice, sugarcane, grains, pulses, oilseed, spices, tea, rubber, coconuts, milk, eggs, hides, beef, fish
- **Industries:** processing of rubber, tea, coconuts, tobacco and other agricultural commodities, telecommunications, insurance, banking, clothing, textiles, cement, petroleum refining.

Education:

- **Literacy:** *Definition:* age 15 and over can read and write. *Total population:* 90.7%, *male:* 92.3%, *female* 89.1%.
- **Language:** Sinhala (Official and National Language) 74%, Tamil (National Language) 18%, other 8%. English is commonly used in government and is spoken competently by about 10% of the population.

Communication:

- **Telephone lines:** Landlines: 1.51 million, Mobile lines: 4.284 million
- **TV stations:** 14
- **Internet users:** 280,000

Asylum: According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics, in 2005 there were fewer than 100 asylum claims by Sri Lankan nationals.

Internally Displaced Persons: The UNHCR estimates that as of April 2007, over 300,000 people in Sri Lanka are living in a situation of displacement due to the violence which flared up in April 2006.

Migration: In the first five months of 2007, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment issued 45 work permits to Sri Lankan nationals.

Sources:

CIA The World Factbook – Sri Lanka, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html> 28/06/07

UNHCR 2005 Global Refugee Trends, <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4486ceb12.pdf> 28/6/07

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre – Statistics [http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/C34F25B92F728B92802570B8005AAF25?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/C34F25B92F728B92802570B8005AAF25?OpenDocument) 28/6/07.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

<http://www.entemp.ie/publications/labour/2007/Permits%20by%20nationality.xls> 28/6/07

Flag from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/flags/ce-flag.html> 28/6/07

Map from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html> 28/6/07