

# Sri Lanka

## *Ethnicity in Sri Lanka*

### *Power relations*

*Population figures:* Population estimates especially for the 21st century are quite variable. The CIA World Factbook and the State Department report a total of 21.3 million inhabitants, Freedom House and the Bertelsmann Transformation Index list 20 million, and the Joshua Project only accounts for 19.5 million. In the 1970s a lot of Indian Tamils was relocated to India, halving the population share of that group (see below). Specific ethnic group counts also diverge. Since the vast majority of Moors speak Tamil and live among the Sri Lankan Tamils, population numbers of the latter seem to be overestimated. However, no certain information exists and the 2001 census information is not available online. The relative share of Indian Tamils was therefore changed and most other estimates were left as they are currently coded.

*Sinhalese:* Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected as the first southern President. As all of his predecessors he is an ethnic Sinhalese but in comparison to the previous government he strongly caters to Sinhalese extremist voters. In order to consolidate his power he had to forge several alliances with smaller parties that represent the Muslim and Indian Tamil groups but did not support his campaign or his overall political goals. Moreover, several of the cabinet posts seem to be cosmetic. Out of 108 ministers, there were only three Muslims and only one Indian Tamil. Rajapaksa's power is uncontested as he personally holds several important cabinet positions (defence, finance, infrastructure). Accordingly, the Sinhalese have once again obtained a dominant position in the period from 2006 until 2009. Peebles (<sup>3287</sup>, 177) confirms this assessment stating that "minorities are second-class citizens" in Sri Lanka.

<sup>3287</sup> [Peebles, 2006]

*Sri Lankan Tamils:* According to Freedom House (<sup>3288</sup>) the population share of Sri Lankan Tamils is only 0.039. However, U.S. state department background notes and Suryanarayan (<sup>3289</sup>) who cites census figures, note a population share of 0.12, which is in agreement with the current coding.

<sup>3288</sup> [Freedom House, 2006]

<sup>3289</sup> [Suryanarayan, 2001]

The 1987 Sri Lanka provided for the devolution of power and the recognition of Tamil as an official language (<sup>3290</sup>, 414).

<sup>3290</sup> [Hennayake, 1989]

Internment of hundreds of thousands of Tamils since 2006 suggests discrimination. Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP), political rivals of LTTE govern regional council but regional autonomy is worthless due to the strong military presence on the Tamil territory. Moreover, there is no devolution of powers yet to the Eastern Province.

The International Crisis Group (<sup>3291</sup>) confirms this assessment: "No real space has been given to Tamil and Muslim political or community leaders in the north and very little in the east." Similarly, the UCDP (<sup>3292</sup>) states that the government closed off Tamil territories thereby "effectively placing the Jaffna peninsula under siege and prompting a humanitarian crisis in the north with hundreds of thousands of civilians being affected."

<sup>3291</sup> [ICG, 2010]

<sup>3292</sup> [UCDP, 2008]

*Indian Tamils:* In 1948, shortly after independence, the first Ceylonese government under D.S. Senanayake introduced the Ceylon Citizenship Act which disenfranchised the Indian Tamils. The law was mostly motivated by their political support for Senanayake's political opponents.

According to Suryanarayan (<sup>3293</sup>) who cites the Sri Lankan census, several Indian Tamils returned to India in the 1970s due to the Srma-Shastri pact of 1964 and Indira-Sirimavo supplementary agreement of 1974 and/or identified themselves as Sri Lankan Tamils. Accordingly, the population share decreased by almost 50% down to 0.055 while that of the Sri Lankan Tamils rose to 0.127. The remaining Indian Tamils were granted citizenship and became politically represented in parliament by 1977 but did not wield major influence in government.

<sup>3293</sup> [Suryanarayan, 2001]

The leader of the Indian Tamil Ceylon Worker's Congress (CWC), Saumiyamurthy Thondaman, was a continuous cabinet member since the 1970s and emerged as a "kingmaker" for the Sinhalese majority parties (<sup>3294</sup>). Since his death in 1999 his grandson Arumugan Thondaman has become leader of the CWC but faces intra-ethnic challenges from other political groups. The CWC receives continued support from the Indian mainland (possibly of interest for TEK coding - <sup>3295</sup>).

<sup>3294</sup> [Sambandan, 2003]

<sup>3295</sup> [Sambandan, 2003]

As of the 2005 Presidential election Mahinda Rajapaksa, an ethnic Sinhalese, is not only President but also holds the Defense, Finance, and two infrastructure ministries. While the majority of the Indian Tamils as well as the Muslims did vote for the losing opposition party (<sup>3296</sup>), the United National Front (UNP), the Indian Tamils seem to have gained government access once more in the new jumbo

<sup>3296</sup> [Becker, 2005]

cabinet. Rajapaksa is joined by over 100 additional cabinet members (<sup>3297</sup>) including CWC politicians (<sup>3298</sup>). The influence of the CWC has certainly waned in comparison to the pre-1999 and the autocratic style governing by President Rajapaksa does not allow a continued Junior Partner coding. Coding them as powerless coding from 2006 onwards appears reasonable.

<sup>3297</sup> [BBC, 2007]

<sup>3298</sup> [TamilNet, 2007]

*Moors (Muslims):* Muslim National Unity Alliance part of government alliance (United People's Freedom Alliance) since 2004 according to a Wikipedia article without references. From Wikipedia three members of the cabinet from 2005 until 2009 could be discerned that were supposed to represent the Muslim community. These are A. L. M. Athaullah (Minister of Water Supply and Drainage), Ferial Ashraff (Minister of Housing and Common Amenities), and Kabir Hashim (Non-Cabinet Minister of Tertiary Education). It remains unclear how much influence these individuals wielded or how well they were representing the Moors as a group and although the Bertelsmann Country Study mentions that "Muslim political parties that had emerged in the last twenty years, and had advocated a separate Muslim province have begun to ally themselves with one or the other of the main parties" (<sup>3299</sup>), the Muslims under President Rajapaksa have suffered the same fate as the Indian Tamils and become powerless.

<sup>3299</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009]

### *Power relations (2010-2013 Update)*

*General Observations:* Important to note is that the years covered by the current update represent the 1st post-conflict phase following the defeat of the LTTE in 2009 after 26 years of civil war – a war that came in the context of broader Tamil claims of discrimination by the Sinhalese majority (<sup>3300</sup>), as is reflected in the previous coding. Inter-ethnic tensions between all ethnic groups remain (<sup>3301</sup>), making the rehabilitation of trust, especially among those most affected by the war, a major challenge (<sup>3302</sup>). This process has been particularly hampered by a general climate of nationalist rhetoric and impunity (<sup>3303</sup>), as well as by the persistent unwillingness of the ruling group to make political concessions to the Sri Lankan Tamil minority (<sup>3304</sup>).

<sup>3300</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3301</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3302</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

<sup>3303</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3304</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

*Political Developments:* The political context in Sri Lanka over the last four years has been characterized by a growing solidification of Sinhalese power. President Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected for a second 6-year term in 2010 (<sup>3305</sup>) having won 58% of the vote (<sup>3306</sup>). Voting was divided along ethnic lines, with the Tamils and Muslims voting mainly for the main opponent Sarath Fonseka, the former head of the armed forces, while the Sinhalese voted mainly for Rajapaksa (<sup>3307</sup>). In the parliamentary elections, the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA), a coalition led by the President, took 144 of the 225 seats, while the Tamil National Alliance won 14 (<sup>3308</sup>). Both elections were considered neither fair nor free, especially in that the state apparatus was used to benefit the incumbent/ruling coalition (<sup>3309</sup>; <sup>3310</sup>; <sup>3311</sup>). According to the US Department of State (<sup>3312</sup>), the elections were also accompanied with violence and intimidation.

Overall, there has been a considerable deterioration in political democracy, the biggest challenge being the absence of a strong opposition, so ensured by the current government's modus operandi (<sup>3313</sup>). Indeed, Sri Lanka is becoming increasingly authoritarian through the growing concentration of power in the presidency (<sup>3314</sup>; <sup>3315</sup>). President Rajapaksa's regime consolidated its position in various local, divisional and provincial council elections in 2011 and 2012, and now controls the national legislature, all provincial legislatures and most local governments (<sup>3316</sup>; <sup>3317</sup>). There was also a Constitutional Amendment in 2010, which gave the President control over appointments to previously independent public institutions, including the judiciary and key commissions (police, human rights, civil servants); it also removed the 2-term limit on presidents (<sup>3318</sup>; <sup>3319</sup>; <sup>3320</sup>). Restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association and movement further constrained opposition politics (<sup>3321</sup>; <sup>3322</sup>; <sup>3323</sup>). Opposition parties were generally not free to operate or organize, especially if they spoke out in favor of minority groups (<sup>3324</sup>; <sup>3325</sup>). According to the Minority Rights Group International (<sup>3326</sup>) "the end of the conflict should have offered new opportunities to (minority parties), but instead most ... have become considerably weaker."

Note: before proceeding to the discussion of the political status of each ethnic group individually, it is important to mention that it was often difficult to distinguish between the different minority groups, especially between the two Tamil groups, since the consulted reports often just referred to 'minorities' or 'Tamil minorities'.

Population numbers appear to be on target, and there is no evidence of any major changes in the sizes of ethnic groups during the current update period.

<sup>3305</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

<sup>3306</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3307</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3308</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3309</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

<sup>3313</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

<sup>3314</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

<sup>3315</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3316</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

<sup>3317</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

*Sinhalese:* President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is of Sinhalese ethnicity, was elected in 2010 for a second 6-year term, as mentioned above. He is also Minister of Defense and Urban Development, Finance and Planning, Ports and Highways, and Law and Order (3327), as well as empowered to appoint to the judiciary and key commissions (see above). Regarding this concentration of power at the presidential level, the Bertelsmann Stiftung (3328) writes that “the executive currently enjoys more power to govern than any other that has held office in the country”.

3327 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

3328 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

Furthermore, the President’s family has been assigned extensive influence through the appointment to key positions: his three brothers serve as Defense Secretary, Minister for Economic Development, and Speaker of Parliament, while other relatives, including his son, hold key political or diplomatic positions (3329; 3330; 3331). Together, they control ca. 70% of the country’s budget (3332; 3333), and no major change in policy is implemented if they oppose it, even if the matter does not fall within their jurisdiction constitutionally (3334).

3329 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

3330 [Freedom House, 2013]

3331 [US Department of State, 2013]

3332 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

3333 [Freedom House, 2013]

The two largest political parties are dominated by Sinhalese (3335).

3335 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

Sinhala is the only official language, and the constitution specifies Buddhism as the state religion, although religious freedom is largely respected (3336; 3337).

3336 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

3337 [Freedom House, 2013]

Based on the information above, a concentration of Sinhalese power has undoubtedly taken place, especially after the 2010 elections and constitutional amendment. Since there are still token members from the Tamil and Muslim communities in the Cabinet (Wikipedia, 2014), however, the coding dominant through 2013 appears reasonable.

*Moors:* Muslim parties have gradually shifted from advocating a separate Muslim province to allying themselves with one of the main political parties (e.g. the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) is allied with the Sinhalese-led UPFA) (3338; 3339). According to the US Department of State (3340), there are currently 18 representatives of the Muslim minority serving in parliament. The SLMC has support of Muslim voters in most parts of the country, and in 2010 parliamentary elections won 8 seats (3341). The leader of the National Unity Alliance (NUA), however, lost her seat after a racist campaign, during which Sinhalese voters (who made up 1/3 of her support base) were publicly motivated to vote for any Sinhalese candidate rather than for her (3342). There has also been an increase in discrimination and harassment against the Muslim community more generally (3343; 3344; 3345).

3338 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

3339 [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

3340 [US Department of State, 2013]

3341 [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

3342 [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

In sum, even though the Muslim minority is represented in the national political arena, the representatives are unlikely to be in the position to ensure effective representation of their group’s interests. Therefore extending the powerless coding in the current EPR update appears reasonable.

*Indian Tamils:* Both the US Department of State <sup>(3346)</sup> and the Minority Rights Group International <sup>(3347)</sup> mention longstanding and continuing discrimination against and marginalization of the Indian Tamil minority, in terms of their social, economic as well as political rights. On the one hand, this is due to their similarity in name and identity to the Sri Lankan Tamils: even though they were not directly involved in the conflict, they often face the same treatment. On the other hand, ca. 200,000 still have problems of documentation, which, inter alia, prohibits them from voting <sup>(3348)</sup>.

Nevertheless, there are Indian Tamil political parties participating in mainstream politics <sup>(3349)</sup>. The Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) was able to attain a more influential role by forming coalition governments in the past, but has recently faced criticism for allying with the government; in the 2010 elections, its number of seats dropped from 8 to 4 <sup>(3350)</sup>.

Therefore, while they do have access to the political space, they are unlikely to wield much power in the context of Sinhalese dominance. Also, while they are neglected and underprivileged, they are unlikely subjected to targeted discrimination at the level faced by the Sri Lankan Tamils. This therefore warrants an extension of the powerless coding through 2013.

*Sri Lankan Tamils:* There are currently 27 Sri Lankan Tamil representatives in the national parliament <sup>(3351)</sup>. While local elections in the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka were held, the provincial council elections were postponed indefinitely, in an effort by the government to delay civilian political control of the area <sup>(3352)</sup>. According to the US Department of State <sup>(3353)</sup>, the elections were accompanied by political violence, especially by attacks on TNA (Tamil National Alliance) candidates, by pro-government paramilitaries.

The EPDP (Eelam People's Democratic Party) and the TNA are the only serious political parties representing the Sri Lankan Tamils, but few political analysts think them a strong option for the future political development of this group. The political importance of the EPDP – which was formerly the main northern party in the democratic mainstream that opposed the LTTE – has become much reduced since the defeat of the LTTE by the Sri Lankan military. Regarding the TNA, this is currently the most popular Tamil political party in the North, especially since it raises controversial issues faced by the Tamils. Nevertheless, its demands for political autonomy leave it somewhat isolated, given that they are rather unrealistic in the current political context <sup>(3354)</sup>. Indeed, Tamil hopes for political autonomy remain unfulfilled: LTTE rule has been replaced by that of armed paramilitary forces, which control most aspects of daily life <sup>(3355; 3356)</sup>. There are, however, sources that suggest that former Tamil Tigers have been invited to join the armed forces, and that ethnic Tamil and Tamil-speaking police officers have been trained and deployed <sup>(3357; 3358)</sup>

<sup>3346</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

<sup>3347</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

<sup>3348</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

<sup>3349</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

<sup>3350</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

<sup>3351</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

<sup>3352</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

<sup>3353</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

<sup>3354</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2011]

<sup>3355</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

<sup>3356</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3357</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

<sup>3358</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

Reports emphasize continued systematic discrimination against ethnic Tamils, including in government employment and other matters controlled by the government, and that a disproportionate number of victims of serious HR violations, especially at the hands of security forces and paramilitary groups, were Tamils (3359; 3360). Another issue is that of land appropriations in traditionally Tamil areas, both directly by the government or through government-aided resettlement of Sinhalese families (3361; 3362). This has, inter alia, impinged on the ability of local people to return to their property after the end of the civil war, as have general war damage and mines (3363; 3364). As a result, 9,800 remain as IDPs.

Given the limited access to national (and local) level power, combined with strong discrimination, of Sri Lankan Tamils, extending the discriminated coding through 2013 appears reasonable. The political autonomy variable should remain negative also during the current EPR update period, for reasons described above.

<sup>3359</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

<sup>3360</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3361</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

<sup>3362</sup> [Freedom House, 2013]

<sup>3363</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]



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## Political status of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka

*From 1948 until 1955*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Sinhalese	0.7	DOMINANT
Indian Tamils	0.12	DISCRIMINATED
Sri Lankan Tamils	0.11	POWERLESS
Moors (Muslims)	0.06	POWERLESS

*From 1956 until 1963*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Sinhalese	0.7	DOMINANT
Indian Tamils	0.12	DISCRIMINATED
Sri Lankan Tamils	0.11	DISCRIMINATED
Moors (Muslims)	0.06	DISCRIMINATED

*From 1964 until 1983*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Sinhalese	0.7	DOMINANT
Indian Tamils	0.12	POWERLESS
Sri Lankan Tamils	0.11	DISCRIMINATED
Moors (Muslims)	0.06	DISCRIMINATED

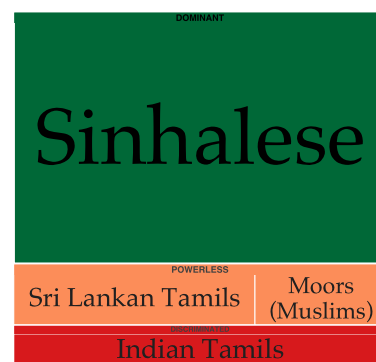


Figure 695: Political status of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1948-1955.



Figure 696: Political status of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1956-1963.

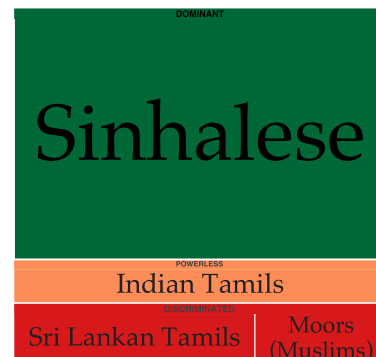


Figure 697: Political status of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1964-1983.

*From 1984 until 1984*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Sinhalese	0.74	DOMINANT
Sri Lankan Tamils	0.11	SELF-EXCLUSION
Moors (Muslims)	0.08	DISCRIMINATED
Indian Tamils	0.06	POWERLESS

*From 1985 until 1986*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Sinhalese	0.74	SENIOR PARTNER
Sri Lankan Tamils	0.11	SELF-EXCLUSION
Moors (Muslims)	0.08	DISCRIMINATED
Indian Tamils	0.06	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 1987 until 1987*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Sinhalese	0.74	SENIOR PARTNER
Sri Lankan Tamils	0.1	POWERLESS
Moors (Muslims)	0.08	DISCRIMINATED
Indian Tamils	0.06	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 1988 until 2005*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Sinhalese	0.74	SENIOR PARTNER
Sri Lankan Tamils	0.09	POWERLESS
Moors (Muslims)	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER
Indian Tamils	0.06	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 2006 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Sinhalese	0.74	DOMINANT
Sri Lankan Tamils	0.09	DISCRIMINATED
Moors (Muslims)	0.08	POWERLESS
Indian Tamils	0.06	POWERLESS



Figure 698: Political status of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1984-1984.



Figure 699: Political status of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1985-1986.



Figure 700: Political status of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1987-1987.

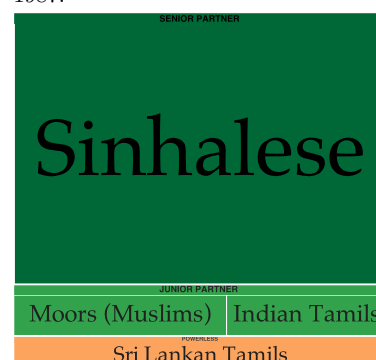


Figure 701: Political status of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1988-2005.



## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka*

*From 1948 until 1990*

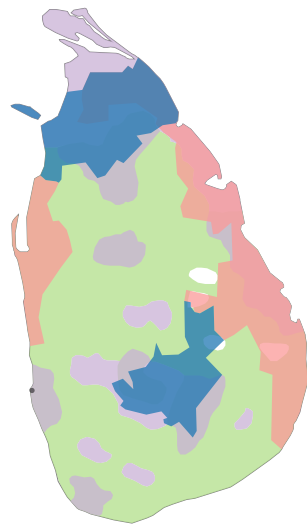


Figure 703: Map of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 2006-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■ Sinhalese	53 096	Regional & urban
■ Sri Lankan Tamils	24 103	Regionally based
■ Moors (Muslims)	15 523	Regional & urban
■ Indian Tamils	11 397	Regional & urban

Table 204: List of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1948-1990.

*From 1991 until 2013*

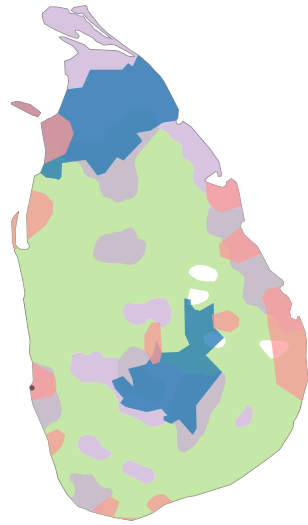


Figure 704: Map of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 2006-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Sinhalese	53 096	Regional & urban
<span style="color: purple;">■</span> Sri Lankan Tamils	24 103	Regionally based
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Indian Tamils	11 397	Regional & urban
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Moors (Muslims)	6696	Regional & urban

Table 205: List of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka during 1991-2013.

## *Conflicts in Sri Lanka*

*Starting on 1971-04-05*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Sri Lanka	JVP	Sinhalese	1971-04-05	No	Yes, from EGIP	No

*Starting on 1975-07-27*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Sri Lanka	LTTE	Sri Lankan Tamils	1975-07-27	Explicit	Yes	No
Government of Sri Lanka	EPRLF	Sri Lankan Tamils	1978-05-06	Presumed	Yes	No
Government of Sri Lanka	TELO	Sri Lankan Tamils	1978-05-06	Explicit	Yes	No