

Trinidad and Tobago

Ethnicity in Trinidad and Tobago

Power relations

1962–2009 Trinidad and Tobago achieved independence from Britain in 1962. According to the 2000 census, 40% of the population are East Indians, 37.5% are Blacks and around 20% are mixed or others. The political system is dominated by two parties, which are technically multi-ethnic, but in practice divided along ethnic lines. The People's National Movement (PNM) is favored by the Blacks, and the United National Congress (UNC) is affiliated with the East Indians (³⁵⁴⁹). Politics were dominated by the PNM, until the national Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), a mixed party, won the majority in December 1986. The NAR was led by Robinson, who tried to bridge the traditional differences between Blacks and East Indians. Robinson was black and at that time a lot of people could still not imagine their country having an East Indian Prime Minister (³⁵⁵⁰). In 1989, the party's East Indian component broke away and formed the UNC.

³⁵⁴⁹ [Freedom House, 2002-2009]

³⁵⁵⁰ [Munasinghe, 2001]

In December 1991 the PNM regained power and the UNC formed the main opposition party. The tensions between the two ethnic groups increased. In the November 1995 elections, Panday (UNC) became the first East Indian Prime Minister and appointed many East Indians to the cabinet - which, however, still included several black ministers (4 out of 22). Before, East Indians existed essentially as a "minority in socio-cultural and political terms" (³⁵⁵¹). The October 2002 elections saw the PNM regaining control of the government with a majority of the popular votes. The prime minister had called for new elections in 2001 because both major parties had won 18 seats in the parliament and were unable to form a majority. In the 2007 elections, Manning (PNM) won another term in office. The candidate lists show that the parties have sought to broaden their appeal and party affiliation is not completely determined by ethnicity. Therefore, the situation since 2002 is coded as an ethnic power sharing with the Blacks as senior partner and the East Indians as junior partner.

³⁵⁵¹ [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

There is a small group of people that starts to identify itself as descendant of the indigenous population of the country. But they still do not form a relevant political force.

2010–2013 Per the 2011 decennial census conducted by the Trinidadian government, the Indian-descended group represented approximately 35.4% of the population and the African-descended group represented approximately 34.2% (the remaining groups were "Mixed-African and East Indian" at 7.66%, "Mixed-Other" at 15.16%, "Not Stated" at 6.22%, and several other ethnicities totaling approximately 1.31%). The 2010 election saw the reigning People's National Movement (PNM) party, which generally represents the interests of the African population, lose to the People's Partnership, which, although a coalition of multiple interests, includes the major party representing the Indian group, the United National Congress (UNC). Prior to the election, the Prime Minister was Afro-Trinidadian and, based primarily on the names and pictures, approximately 16 cabinet ministers were as well (with the other 6 being Indo-Trinidadian). Post-election, the Prime Minister and a majority of the cabinet officers (approximately 20 out of 33) were Indo-Trinidadian.

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Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago

From 1962 until 1986

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
East Indians	0.4	POWERLESS
Blacks	0.375	DOMINANT

From 1987 until 1991

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
East Indians	0.4	JUNIOR PARTNER
Blacks	0.375	SENIOR PARTNER

From 1992 until 1995

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
East Indians	0.4	POWERLESS
Blacks	0.375	DOMINANT

From 1996 until 2002

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
East Indians	0.4	SENIOR PARTNER
Blacks	0.375	JUNIOR PARTNER



Figure 767: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 1962-1986.



Figure 768: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 1987-1991.



Figure 769: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 1992-1995.



From 2003 until 2010

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
East Indians	0.4	JUNIOR PARTNER
Blacks	0.375	SENIOR PARTNER

From 2011 until 2013

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
East Indians	0.354	SENIOR PARTNER
Blacks	0.342	JUNIOR PARTNER



Figure 771: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 2003-2010.



Figure 772: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 2011-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago

From 1962 until 2013



Figure 773: Map of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 2011-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Blacks	5031	Statewide
East Indians	4718	Regional & urban

Table 222: List of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 1962-2013.

Conflicts in Trinidad and Tobago

Starting on 1990-07-27

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Trinidad and Tobago	Jamaat al-Muslimeen	Blacks	1990-07-27	Explicit	Yes	No