

Trinidad and Tobago

Ethnicity in Trinidad and Tobago

Group selection

Trinidad and Tobago achieved independence from Britain in 1962. 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 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** (⁴⁵⁶⁰). We identify these two politically relevant ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago.

⁴⁵⁶⁰ [Freedom House, 2002-2009]

Power relations

1962-1986

Politics were dominated by the PNM, until the national Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), a mixed party, won the majority in December 1986.

1987-1991

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 (⁴⁵⁶¹). In 1989, the party's East Indian component broke away and formed the UNC. During this periods, Blacks are coded as Senior Partner and East Indians as Junior Partner.

⁴⁵⁶¹ [Munasinghe, 2001]

1991-1995

In December 1991 the PNM regained power and the UNC formed the main opposition party. The tensions between the two ethnic groups increased, as Blacks were now Dominant and East Indians Powerless.

1995-2002

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" (⁴⁵⁶²). East Indians were Senior Partner, and Blacks Junior Partner.

⁴⁵⁶² [Minority Rights Group International, 2014]

2003-2010

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.

There is a small group of people that started to identify itself as descendant of the indigenous population of the country during this period, but they did not have a political organization making claims on their behalf, so that they are not included as a politically relevant ethnic group.

2010-2015 The 2010 election saw the PNM lose to the People's Partnership, with the major party being the UNC. Post-election, the Prime Minister and a majority of the cabinet officers (approximately 20 out of 33) were East Indian, so that East Indians are coded as Senior Partner and Blacks as Junior Partner.

2016-2017 In September 2015 the PNM defeated the PP coalition and Keith Rowley - leader of PNM - replaced former Premier Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of the UNC (⁴⁵⁶³: 1). The cabinet is dominated by Blacks, the ruling party's ethnic group, but also includes a significant number of opposition members from the East Indian ethnic group (⁴⁵⁶⁴). This accounts for the ongoing coding of power-sharing structures. The election victory of the PNM is reflected in the change of the Senior/Junior Partner status of Blacks and East Indians from 2016 onwards.

⁴⁵⁶³ [USDS, 2017]

⁴⁵⁶⁴ [CIA, 2014]

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



Figure 931: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 1987-1991.



Figure 932: 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 2015

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

From 2016 until 2017

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



Figure 934: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 2003-2010.



Figure 935: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 2011-2015.



Figure 936: Political status of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 2016-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago

From 1962 until 2017

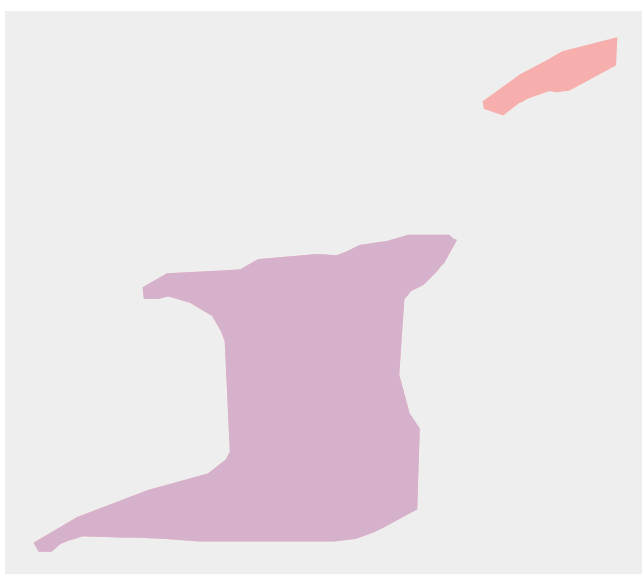


Figure 937: Map of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 1962-2017.

| Group name | Area in km ² | Type |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Blacks | 5017 | Statewide |
| East Indians | 4718 | Regional & urban |

Table 312: List of ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago during 1962-2017.

Conflicts in Trinidad and Tobago

Starting on 1990-07-26

| Side A | Side B | Group name | Start | Claim | Recruitment | Support |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------|------------|----------|-------------|---------|
| Government of Trinidad and Tobago | Jamaat al-Muslimeen | Blacks | 1990-07-26 | Explicit | Yes | No |