

# Sri Lanka

## Geography

Location: Southern Asia, island in the Indian Ocean, south of India

Area:

total area: 65,610 sq km

land area: 64,740 sq km

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 1,340 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm or to the edge of the continental margin

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: tropical monsoon; northeast monsoon (December to March); southwest monsoon (June to October)

Terrain: mostly low, flat to rolling plain; mountains in south-central interior

Natural resources: limestone, graphite, mineral sands, gems, phosphates, clay

Land use:

arable land: 16%

permanent crops: 17%

meadows and pastures: 7%

forest and woodland: 37%

other: 23%

Irrigated land: 5,600 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: deforestation; soil erosion; wildlife populations threatened by poaching; coastal degradation from mining activities and increased pollution; freshwater resources being polluted by industrial wastes and sewage runoff

natural hazards: occasional cyclones and tornadoes

Note: strategic location near major Indian Ocean sea lanes

## People

Population: 18,342,660 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 29% (female 2,597,969; male 2,713,696)

15-64 years: 65% (female 6,042,228; male 5,902,343)

65 years and over: 6% (female 547,715; male 538,709) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.15% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 18.13 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 5.78 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: -0.84 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 21.3 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:  
total population: 72.14 years  
male: 69.58 years  
female: 74.82 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.08 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:  
noun: Sri Lankan(s)  
adjective: Sri Lankan

Ethnic divisions: Sinhalese 74%, Tamil 18%, Moor 7%, Burgher, Malay, and Vedda 1%

Religions: Buddhist 69%, Hindu 15%, Christian 8%, Muslim 8%

Languages: Sinhala (official and national language) 74%, Tamil (national language) 18%  
note: English is commonly used in government and is spoken by about 10% of the population

Literacy:  
total population: 88%  
male: 93%  
female: 84%

# Government

## Names:

conventional long form: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

conventional short form: Sri Lanka

former: Ceylon

Type: republic

Capital: Colombo

Independence: 4 February 1948 (from UK)

National holiday: Independence and National Day, 4 February (1948)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: yellow with two panels; the smaller hoist-side panel has two equal vertical bands of green (hoist side) and orange; the other

panel is a large dark red rectangle with a yellow lion holding a sword, and there is a yellow bo leaf in each corner; the yellow field appears as a border that goes around the entire flag and extends between the two panels

## Economy

Industries: processing of rubber, tea, coconuts, and other agricultural commodities; clothing, cement, petroleum refining, textiles, tobacco

Agriculture: accounts for one-fourth of GDP; field crops - rice, sugarcane, grains, pulses, oilseeds, roots, spices; cash crops - tea, rubber, coconuts; animal products - milk, eggs, hides, meat; not self-sufficient in rice production

## Transportation

Railroads:

total: 1,948 km

Highways:

total: 75,263 km

Inland waterways: 430 km; navigable by shallow-draft craft

Pipelines: crude oil and petroleum products 62 km (1987)

Ports: Colombo, Galle, Jaffna, Trincomalee

Airports:

total: 14

## Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Navy, Air Force, Police Force