

# Census of Population and Housing Sri Lanka 2012

## 1.0 Introduction

The Department of Census and Statistics was successfully conducted 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive Population and Housing Census in Sri Lanka in 2012. Enumeration stage of this Census comprised of two rounds. During the first round, data were collected from persons according to their places of usual residence (from 27<sup>th</sup> February to 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012). In the second round, data which was collected in the first round was updated taking into account events such as births, deaths or changes of usual residence between the date of data collection and the *Census date*, declared as 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012. These updates were done, based on the *Census Moment* which was fixed as the mid night of 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Enumeration of homeless people, who do not have a usual place of residence, was carried out during the mid-night of 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

## 2.0 Population distribution

According to the Census 2012, total population of the country is reported as 20,359,439. Sri Lanka has divided into 9 provinces for the administrative purposes. Among the 9 provinces, Western province reported the largest share of population (28.7%) followed by Central province (12.6%) and Southern province (12.2%). This indicates that more than half of the island's population is distributed in these three provinces even though the land area of these three provinces consists of only 23 percent of the total land area of the country. Northern province reported the lowest population share of 5.2 percent followed by 6.2 percent of share in each of North-Central and Uva provinces.

### 2.1 Population distribution by sector

Table 1 presents the distribution of population by province and sector. According to the Table 1, majority of population in Sri Lanka is in rural sector (77.4%). Urban population share of the country is 18.2 percent while the estate population consists of 4.4 percent. In addition data present in the table 1 shows, urbanization is relatively high in Western province (38.8 %) and very low in North Central (4.0%) and North Western (4.1%) provinces. The highest rural population is reported from North Central province (96.0%) and the highest estate population is reported from Central province. No estate population is reported from Northern and Eastern provinces.

**Table 1: Percentage distribution of population by province and sector**

Sri Lanka & provinces	Population	Sector			
		Total	Urban	Rural	Estate
Sri Lanka	20,359,439	100.0	18.2	77.4	4.4
Western province	5,851,130	100.0	38.8	60.4	0.8
Central province	2,571,557	100.0	10.5	70.6	18.9
Southern province	2,477,285	100.0	10.6	87.7	1.7
Northern province	1,061,315	100.0	16.7	83.3	-
Eastern province	1,555,510	100.0	25.1	74.9	-
North Western province	2,380,861	100.0	4.1	95.5	0.4
North Central province	1,266,663	100.0	4.0	96.0	0.0
Uva province	1,266,463	100.0	5.5	81.7	12.8
Sabaragamuwa province	1,928,655	100.0	6.0	85.9	8.1

### 3.0 Demographic characteristics of population

#### 3.1 Population distribution by sex

According to the Census 2012, female population is higher than male population in the country. Out of the total population, 48.4 percent are males and 51.6 percent are females. Sex ratio is reported as 94, reflecting there are 94 males for every 100 females in the country. Table 2 presents the percentage distribution of population by sector and sex and Table 3 presents sex ratio by province. According to the table 3 the highest and the lowest sex ratios are reported from North Central province and the Central province respectively.

**Table 2: Percentage distribution of population by sector and sex**

Sex	Population	Total	Sector		
			Urban	Rural	Estate
Sri Lanka	20,359,439	100.0	18.2	77.4	4.4
Male	9,856,634	100.0	18.3	77.3	4.4
Female	10,502,805	100.0	18.1	77.4	4.5

**Table 3: Population and sex ratio by province**

<b>Sri Lanka &amp; provinces</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sex ratio</b>
Sri Lanka	20,359,439	94
Western province	5,851,130	95
Central province	2,571,557	92
Southern province	2,477,285	93
Northern province	1,061,315	93
Eastern province	1,555,510	94
North Western province	2,380,861	93
North Central province	1,266,663	96
Uva province	1,266,463	95
Sabaragamuwa province	1,928,655	95

### 3.2 Population by age group

Population by broad age groups is presented in Table 4. It gives the percentages of child population, working age population and elderly population by province. Among the nine provinces the highest child population is reported from Eastern province while the highest elderly population is reported from Sabaragamuwa province.

**Table 4 : Population by broad age groups and province**

<b>Sri Lanka &amp; provinces</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Age group</b>		
			<b>Less than 15 years</b>	<b>15 -59</b>	<b>60 years and above</b>
Sri Lanka	20,359,439	100.0	25.2	62.4	12.4
Western province	5,851,130	100.0	22.7	63.9	13.4
Central province	2,571,557	100.0	26.4	60.8	12.8
Southern province	2,477,285	100.0	25.1	60.9	14.0
Northern province	1,061,315	100.0	26.7	61.4	11.8
Eastern province	1,555,510	100.0	30.4	61.8	7.8
North Western province	2,380,861	100.0	25.4	62.4	12.2
North Central province	1,266,663	100.0	26.6	64.0	9.4
Uva province	1,266,463	100.0	26.8	62.4	10.8
Sabaragamuwa province	1,928,655	100.0	24.2	62.0	13.8

### 3.3 Population distribution by ethnicity

Majority of population in Sri Lanka is Sinhalese (74.9%) followed by Tamils (15.3%) and Sri Lanka Moor (9.3%). Other ethnic groups namely Burgher, Malay, Sri Lanka Chetty and Bharatha form 0.5 percent. Table 5 presents ethnic distribution by province. The highest percentages of Sinhalese, Tamil and Sri Lanka moor population are reported from Southern province (95.0%), Northern province (93.8%) and Eastern province(36.9%) respectively.

**Table 5: Percentage distribution of population by ethnic group and province**

Sri Lanka & provinces	Population	Total	Ethnic group			
			Sinhalese	Tamil	Sri Lanka Moor	Other
Sri Lanka	20,359,439	100.0	74.9	15.3	9.3	0.5
Western province	5,851,130	100.0	84.2	6.8	7.9	1.2
Central province	2,571,557	100.0	66.0	23.8	9.9	0.3
Southern province	2,477,285	100.0	95.0	1.7	2.9	0.4
Northern province	1,061,315	100.0	3.0	93.8	3.1	0.1
Eastern province	1,555,510	100.0	23.2	39.2	36.9	0.7
North Western province	2,380,861	100.0	85.7	3.0	11.0	0.3
North Central province	1,266,663	100.0	90.9	1.0	8.0	0.1
Uva province	1,266,463	100.0	80.8	14.7	4.3	0.3
Sabaragamuwa province	1,928,655	100.0	86.4	9.2	4.3	0.1

**Table 6: Percentage distribution of population by religion and province**

Sri Lanka & provinces	Population	Total	Religion				
			Buddhist	Hindu	Islam	Roman catholic	Other
Sri Lanka	20,359,439	100.0	70.1	12.6	9.7	6.2	1.4
Western province	5,851,130	100.0	73.4	4.8	8.6	11.1	2.1
Central province	2,571,557	100.0	65.0	21.0	10.3	2.5	1.2
Southern province	2,477,285	100.0	94.7	1.3	3.2	0.3	0.5
Northern province	1,061,315	100.0	2.9	74.3	3.1	15.5	4.2
Eastern province	1,555,510	100.0	23.0	34.7	37.0	3.0	2.3
North Western province	2,380,861	100.0	74.0	1.8	11.3	11.9	1.0
North Central province	1,266,663	100.0	90.0	0.8	8.0	0.8	0.4
Uva province	1,266,463	100.0	80.4	13.4	4.5	1.1	0.6
Sabaragamuwa province	1,928,655	100.0	85.8	8.1	4.4	1.0	0.7

### 3.4 Population distribution by religion

Almost 70 percent of Sri Lankan population is Buddhist followed by Hindus (12.6%), Islam (9.7%), Roman Catholic (6.2%) and other religions (1.4%). Table 6 presents percentage distribution of population by religion and province.

### 3.5 Population distribution by marital status

Marital status is another important demographic characteristic of a population. Marital status is reported for the age 15 years and above population. Table 7 shows that 67.8 percent of 15 years and above population is married and almost 25.8 percent is never married in Sri Lanka. Among the nine provinces, Northern province reported the highest percentage of never married population while North Central province reported the lowest percentage of never married population. Overall Widowed population in the country is 5.2 percent and that population is highest in Northern province (7.2%) and lowest widowed population reported from Eastern province. Percentages of divorced and separated population is 0.3 and 0.9 respectively.

**Table 7: Percentage distribution of population (aged 15 years and above) by marital status**

Sri Lanka & provinces	Population aged 15 years and above	Total	Marital status				
			Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated
Sri Lanka	15,227,773	100.0	25.8	67.8	5.2	0.3	0.9
Western province	4,524,129	100.0	27.4	66.7	4.8	0.3	0.8
Central province	1,893,560	100.0	25.2	68.6	5.2	0.2	0.8
Southern province	1,855,363	100.0	26.2	67.7	5.0	0.2	0.9
Northern province	777,433	100.0	30.6	60.8	7.2	0.1	1.3
Eastern province	510,106	100.0	22.6	73.4	2.4	0.4	1.2
North Western province	1,776,504	100.0	23.1	69.3	5.9	0.3	1.4
North Central province	929,662	100.0	22.1	71.3	5.2	0.3	1.1
Uva province	226,857	100.0	24.1	70.2	4.7	0.2	0.8
Sabaragamuwa province	1,461,128	100.0	25.0	68.8	5.0	0.3	0.9

## **4.0 Educational attainment**

Through the Census 2012, information on the highest educational attainment, the highest professional/vocational qualifications were collected from persons who were aged 5 years and above. Information on involvement in any educational activity during 30 days prior to the date of Census was also collected from population aged 3 years and above. Purpose of having these data is to collect information on current involvement of educational activity of a person. In addition, information on ability to speak, read and write in Sinhala, Tamil and English languages and ability to use computers were also collected from those who were aged 10 years and above.

In Sri Lanka percentages of passed primary (including those who are studying in grade 1 at the time of the Census), passed secondary, passed G.C.E.O/L or equivalent, passed G.C.E. A/L or equivalent and degree or above are 23.6, 40.7, 17.0, 12.3 and 2.7 percent respectively. These figures show that majority of the population completed education up to secondary level. Nearly 3.8 percent of the population in Sri Lanka reported that they have never attended in a school.

### **4.1 Literacy rate and Language ability**

Literacy rate is a key indicator to measure the level of reading and writing ability of persons in a country. The definition of literate person is given as *“If a person can both read and write a short statement with understanding is considered as literate”*. According to the results shown in the Table 8 literacy rate of the population aged 10 years and above in Sri Lanka stands at 95.7 percent. The corresponding rates for males and females are 96.9 and 94.6 percent respectively. The highest literacy rate is reported from Western province and the lowest literacy rate is reported from Eastern province.

### **4.2 Computer literacy by sex**

According to the Table 9, computer literacy of the population aged 10 years and above in Sri Lanka stands at 24.2 percent. Male’s computer literacy is higher than female’s computer literacy and computer literacy in Western province is the highest among provinces.

**Table 8 : Percentages of literate population  
(aged 10 years and above) by sex and province**

Sri Lanka & provinces	Population aged 10 years and above	Both sexes	Sex	
			Male	Female
Sri Lanka	16,867,825	95.7	96.9	94.6
Western province	4,953,138	98.0	98.5	97.6
Central province	2,109,607	93.9	96.1	92.0
Southern province	2,052,466	95.3	96.3	94.4
Northern province	876,354	97.8	98.3	97.4
Eastern province	1,237,082	91.9	94.0	89.9
North Western province	1,967,530	96.3	97.0	95.6
North Central province	1,029,994	95.4	96.6	94.3
Uva province	1,034,402	92.2	94.7	89.8
Sabaragamuwa province	1,607,252	94.8	96.3	93.5

**Table 9: Percentages of population able to use computer  
(aged 10 years and above) by sex and province**

Sri Lanka & provinces	Population aged 10 years and above	Both sexes	Sex	
			Male	Female
Sri Lanka	16,867,825	24.2	26.5	22.1
Western province	4,953,138	32.9	36.3	29.7
Central province	2,109,607	24.1	26.1	22.3
Southern province	2,052,466	22.4	23.7	21.2
Northern province	876,354	19.4	20.4	18.6
Eastern province	1,237,082	18.6	22.0	15.5
North Western province	1,967,530	20.5	22.8	18.3
North Central province	1,029,994	17.7	19.2	16.3
Uva province	1,034,402	17.6	18.3	17.0
Sabaragamuwa province	1,607,252	19.9	21.2	18.7

## 5.0 Economic activities

Economic activities that people engaged for their livelihood are very important characteristic in a population. Census 2012 gathered information on economic status of population aged 15 years and above considering 52 weeks prior to the Census date. Therefore, the indicators reflect usual economic status of the population rather than current economic status.

### 5.1 Economically active population

Economically active population or the labour force comprised of employed and unemployed persons. According to the data, 51.6 percent of aged 15 years and above population is economically active in Sri Lanka. Out of the economically active population majority consist of males (69.9%) while 30.1 percent are females. However in estate sector percentage of economically active females is higher (44.3%) than other sectors. Table 10 present percentages of economically active population by sector and sex.

**Table 10: Percentages of economically active population  
(aged 15 years and above) by sector and sex**

	Economically active Population aged 15 years and above	Sex		
		Total	Male	Female
Sri Lanka	7,857,370	100.0	69.9	30.1
Urban	1,416,955	100.0	69.8	30.2
Rural	6,048,095	100.0	70.8	29.2
Estate	392,320	100.0	55.7	44.3

Total employed population in Sri Lanka is reported as 7,335,432. Among the employed population 40.6 percent are private sector employees, 32.9 percent are own account workers, 18.6 percent are government or semi government employees and the balance employed as employers (2.6%) and unpaid family workers (5.2%).

Table 11 present percentages of employed population by sector of employment and sex. According to the Census 2012 total unemployed population in the country is 521,938 and among them 57.6 percent are Males. (Table 12)



**Table 11: Percentages of employed population  
(aged 15 years and above) by sector of employment and sex**

Sector of employment	Employed Population	Total	Sex	
			Male	Female
Sri Lanka	7,335,432	100.0	70.8	29.2
Government employee	1,122,734	100.0	64.4	35.6
Semi government employee	244,989	100.0	62.0	38.0
Private sector employee	2,980,361	100.0	70.5	29.5
Employer	190,680	100.0	86.2	13.8
Own account worker	2,414,258	100.0	79.8	20.2
Unpaid family worker	382,410	100.0	31.9	68.1

**Table 12: Percentages of unemployed population  
(aged 15 years and above) by sex and province**

Sri Lanka & provinces	Unemployed Population	Total	Sex	
			Male	Female
Sri Lanka	521,938	100.0	57.6	42.4
Western province	125,653	100.0	60.1	39.9
Central province	68,911	100.0	55.3	44.7
Southern province	79,069	100.0	55.7	44.3
Northern province	39,716	100.0	52.8	47.2
Eastern province	50,018	100.0	64.1	35.9
North Western province	48,820	100.0	58.1	41.9
North Central province	25,100	100.0	57.3	42.7
Uva province	31,162	100.0	52.7	47.3
Sabaragamuwa province	53,489	100.0	57.2	42.8

## 5.2 Economically inactive population

Students, those who are engaged in household work, income recipient/ pensioners, unable to work, unpaid social worker, children not attending school and other non-economic activities are considered as economically inactive population. Economically inactive population in Sri Lanka is reported as 7,370,403. Table 13 and Table 14 presents more information about economically inactive population.

**Table 13: Percentages of economically inactive population  
(aged 15 years and above) by sex and province**

Sri Lanka & provinces	Economically inactive population	Both sexes	Sex	
			Male	Female
Sri Lanka	7,370,403	100.0	24.1	75.9
Western province	2,184,311	100.0	25.7	74.3
Central province	911,153	100.0	25.9	74.1
Southern province	911,090	100.0	24.8	75.2
Northern province	427,002	100.0	22.6	77.4
Eastern province	573,031	100.0	20.1	79.9
North Western province	861,392	100.0	21.8	78.2
North Central province	419,865	100.0	20.4	79.6
Uva province	410,236	100.0	23.9	76.1
Sabaragamuwa province	672,323	100.0	24.9	75.1

**Table 14: Percentages of economically inactive population  
(aged 15 years and above) by current activity and sex**

	economically inactive population	Total	Sex	
			Male	Female
Sri Lanka	7,370,403	100.0	24.1	75.9
Student	1,431,105	100.0	46.9	53.1
Household work	4,199,558	100.0	5.5	94.5
Income recipient	66,547	100.0	57.9	42.1
Pensioner	346,084	100.0	61.6	38.4
Unable to work/Old age	914,934	100.0	43.7	56.3
Unpaid Social work	32,909	100.0	63.2	36.8
Child not attending school	32,869	100.0	62.8	37.2
Other non economic activity	346,397	100.0	51.4	48.6

