

Census of Population and Housing, 2012

Introduction

The Department of Census and Statistics has been conducting decennial Censuses of Population and Housing since 1871. Census of Population and Housing 2012, was the 14th Census conducted in Sri Lanka. This Census was very important as it was the complete enumeration conducted in Sri Lanka after 31 years.

The enumeration stage of the Census conducted in 2012 was comprised of two rounds. During the first round, which was carried from 27th February to 19th March 2012, data were collected from persons according to their places of usual residence. In the second round, revision of data collected in the first round was carried out taking into account for any births, deaths or changes of residence between the date of collection and the *Census date*, which was declared as 20th March. These revisions were done based on *Census Moment* which was declared as mid night of 19th March 2012. Enumeration of the homeless people who do not have a usual place of residence was carried out during the mid-night of 19th March 2012.

Census 2012 incorporated new technology to improve the quality and timeliness of Census data. Improvements such as changing the method of enumeration from de facto to de jure, inclusion of new questions, changing data capture method from manual data entry to scanning technology and introducing '*e-census*' for data collection as an experimental basis could be cited as examples. Brief explanations of these changes are described below.

Change of method of enumeration

De facto is the method use for all the previous Censuses conducted in Sri Lanka. Due to several justifiable reasons Census 2012 adopted *de jure* method using the *usual residence* concept. In order to compare with previous Censuses *recall de facto information* was collected based on the *Census Moment*. The place of usual residence of a person for the Census purposes has been defined as '**A place where a person has been living continuously for more than six months, or intends to stay more than 6 months continuously at the time of Census**'.

Inclusion of new questions

In addition to the usual questions, new questions were included in the Census 2012 on *reasons for migration, international migration, professional qualifications, ability to use computers and physical and mental difficulties*. Census questionnaire and the instruction manual could be downloaded from the following links.

Improving the data capturing technology

Manual data entry is the method used for data capturing in previous Censuses but in Census 2012 scanning technology was used for data capturing. Due to the use of scanning technology data capturing was completed in 7 months which is a remarkable improvement compare to the time period of 3 years used for data capturing in 2001 by manual data entry method. In addition, '*e-census*' technology was introduced in Census 2012 to collect information from households in Colombo Municipal Council on an experimental basis. Based on the findings of this method, the possibility of shifting to e-census will be explored for the next round of population and housing.

Dissemination of Census Results

Census is the largest data collection activity in a country and releasing Census information take considerable time due to series of activities involved in this process. Therefore releasing Census results are to be released at different stages. For instance, the **first report** on preliminary results was released in April 2012, immediately after the completion of Census enumeration stage. Another two reports on characteristics of '**Population**' and '**Housing**' by Divisional Secretary division level were released in November 2012 based on the *enumerators summaries* prepared manually.

Census 2012 results on population.

Population by districts, age, sex, marital status, physical and mental difficulties, economic activities, migration, fertility, education and literacy.

Census information will be provided at different stages as explained earlier, a series of publications given below will be available in the future.

- Provincial reports and a report at national level
- General report with historical trends

- Thematic reports on aging, gender, youth, migration, education, employment, physical and mental difficulties etc.

Link between administrative boundaries and Census blocks

Administrative units: For the administrative convenience Sri Lanka is divided into 9 provinces and these Provinces further divided in to 25 districts. These districts further divided into 331 Divisional Secretary Divisions (DSD). DSDs again sub divided in to Grama Niladhari Divisions which are the smallest administrative boundaries in Sri Lanka. There were 14,022 such divisions in Sri Lanka at the time of Census 2012.

Census blocks: For the convenience of the Census taking process, Grama Niladhari Divisions were again sub divided in to smaller areas known as Census blocks in such a way that each block is consisted of about 150 building units. Total number of Census blocks identified for the Census 2012 was 65,012.

Salient Features of Population and Housing Census 2012

Population

Population: According to final results, the Population of Sri Lanka is recorded as 20,359,439. Of this 3,704,470 (18.2%) living in Urban sector, 15,753,322 (77.4%) living in Rural sector and the balance 901,647 (4.4%) living in Estate sector. **(Table A1)**

- There are three main sectors in Sri Lanka namely Urban, Rural and Estate. Definition of the 'Urban' sector has changed during the past as described below.
- In 1981 Census Municipal Councils (MC), Urban Councils (UC) and Town Councils (TC) were considered as urban areas. However in 1987, some TCs were demolished and included in Pradeshiya Sabas (PS) under rural areas. In Census 2012 MCs and UCs were considered as Urban.
- The comparison of the magnitude of Urbanization over the past Census years has somewhat difficult due to the reasons mentioned above. Therefore it should be cautious when comparing and interpreting Census figures in urban sector.
- According to the Census Ordinance 'Estate' sector has defined as areas with plantations where there are 20 or more acres in land and 10 or more resident labourers.
- All other areas which do not fall into the above two categories are considered as 'Rural'.

Average Annual Growth Rate: Average Annual Growth Rate of the Population was computed from 1981 to 2012 as there was no complete enumeration in between. The average annual growth rate from 1981 to 2012 is 1.1 percent. Population increase from 1981 to 2012 in terms of numbers is 5,512,689 which amount to 37.1 percent increase.

Population Density (persons per Sq. km): Population density of Sri Lanka works out to be 325 in 2012. Colombo (3,438) turns out to be the most densely inhabited districts followed by Gampaha (1719). The lowest densities are reported from Mullativu (38) and Mannar (53) districts.

Sex ratio : The overall sex ratio in the country was 94 males per 100 females indicates that there are more females in Sri Lankan population than males. However, sex ratio among children below 18 years is reported as 102 which indicate more males among child population while the corresponding figure for 60 or more population is 79 indicating more females among older population.

Mean and median age of the population: Mean age of the population is 32 years. Median age of the population is 31 years.

Dependency ratio: This simply explains how many people in the working age group to support dependents in the population. Over all dependency ratio of the country in 2012 was 60.2 percent. Child (under 15 years) dependency shows how many people in the working age group (15-59 years) to support children in the population. Child dependency ratio was 40.4 percent. Old age dependency shows how many people in the working age group to support people in the old age group (60 years or more) people in the population. The old age dependency ratio was 19.8 percent.

Sex composition of the head of the households : 3,986,236 of households are headed by males while the balance 1,278,046 headed by females. [\(Table A20\)](#)

Marital status of the population : Out of the population aged 15 years or more, 3,927,602 of the population was never married at the time of the Census while 10,322,105 were reported as married. The widowed number was reported as 792,947 while divorced or separated of population was 185,119. [\(Table A10\)](#)

Physical and mental difficulties : Physical and mental difficulties of the population due to health in six domains namely seeing, hearing, walking, remembering (cognition), self-care and communication was collected in the Census 2012. Results showed that 1,617,924 of the population aged 5 years or more was suffering from any difficulty at least in one domain out of six domains. Number of the population suffering from seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care and communication is (996,939), (389,077), (734,213), (343,689), (197,575) and (180,833) respectively. [\(Tables A22\)](#)

Economic status: Economically active population who were 15 years or more stands at 7,857,370. The corresponding figure for males and females is 5,491,129 and 2,366,241 respectively. [\(Table A37\)](#)

Total employed population is 7,335,432. The employed males and females are 5,190,697 and 2,144,735 respectively. Total unemployed population is 521,938. The unemployed males and females are 300,432 and 221,506 respectively. [\(Table A37\)](#)

- In the Census 2012, employed, unemployed and economically inactive population were defined according to the number of weeks spent by the people who were *15 years or more during 52 weeks prior to the Census* on paid employment, employer, own account worker, contributing to family enterprise (Unpaid family worker), available/seeking work and non-economic activities.
- Employed population is defined as the persons who worked as paid employees, employers, own account workers or contributing to family workers during the reference period mentioned above.
- Unemployed population is defined as the people who available or seeking work during the reference period.

Status and sector of employment: Final census revealed that the total employed population is 7,335,432. According to the status and sector of employment, persons employed in government sector is 1,122,734 which is 15.3 percent of the total employed population. [\(Table A40\)](#)

Fertility : Results of the revealed that the average number of children born to ever married women in Sri Lanka is 2.65. [\(Table A44\)](#)

Migrant Population : Migration is defined as change of a person's residence other than her/his place of birth (ie.district). Information on district of birth, district of usual residence, duration of residence and district of previous residence were collected from the Census 2012 to study the movement of the population between districts. Results revealed that 3,954,684 (19.4%) of population has migrated to another district from their district of previous residence. Majority of females migrate due to marriage 939,248 (43.1%) while majority of males migrate due to employment 552,441 (31.7 %). [\(Tables A17\)](#)

People living abroad: Census 2012 collected information of people who are living aboard more than 6 months and intends to return back to Sri Lanka. There were 604,540 such persons and their information was collected using separate set of questions. Of this 354,462 (58.6%) consist of males and 250,078 (41.4%) were females. According to reasons for migration, 513,527 (84.9%) migrated for employment, 42,095 (7.0%) migrated for education and the balance 48,918 (8.1%) migrated for other purposes. [\(Tables A47,A48,A49\)](#)

Educational attainment: Education attainment of the population was computed for people who were 5 or more years at the time of the Census. Results of the final census data showed that 700,419 (3.8%) of population in this age range was reported as 'No schooling'.

Corresponding number for males and females were 243,754 (2.7%) and 456,665 (4.7%) respectively. **(Tables A30)**

Population aged 5 years or more passed primary (including those who are studying in grade 1 at the time of the Census), secondary, G.C.E.O/L, G.C.E. A/L or equivalent and degree or above is 4,390,536 (23.6%), 7,571,816 (40.7%), 3,159,402 (17.0%), 2,293,841 (12.3%), 499,563 (2.7%) respectively. **(Tables A30)**

Literate population : Final census data indicates that out of the population aged 10 years or more at the time of Census, 16,142,267 (95.7%) of Sri Lankans are literate. In the same age group, number of literate people in urban sector is 3,059,241 (97.7%) while the corresponding figure for rural and estate sectors are 12,446,443 (95.7%) and 616,583 (86.1%) respectively. The literacy rate among males is 96.8 percent(7,841,287) while the corresponding value for females is 94.6 percent(8,300,980). **(Tables A31)**

Ability to use computer : On an average 24.2 percent (4,086,167) of 10 years or more aged population reported that they have ability to use computers. The corresponding figures for males and females are reported as 26.5(2,143,901) and 22.1(1,942,266) percent respectively. The percentage of young people showed higher percentage of using computers than people in the old age groups. For example ability to use computer among 15-19 age group is 47.2 percent(388,971) whereas the corresponding figure for people aged 60-64 years is 4.1 percent(20,065). **(Tables A36)**

Language ability: Final data of Census 2012 revealed that 14,670,239 (87.0%) of people can speak Sinhala while 4,807,584 (28.5%) can speak Tamil and 4,019,583 (23.8%) can speak English. Proportion of the population who can read and write Sinhala is 79.7 (13,439,904) while the corresponding figure for Tamil language and English language is 26.4 (4,456,056) and 30.8 percent(5,194,996) respectively. **(Tables A32)**

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