



# Western Australian Community Profiles 2011 Census

## Sri Lanka-born

### Introduction

**This profile provides a range of information on Western Australians who were born in Sri Lanka. Using data from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, it details:**

- key social and economic characteristics of the community including population size, age and gender profile, education, income and workforce participation
- migration history and cultural backgrounds including ancestry, language and religious affiliation
- family and wellbeing including marital status, family composition, living arrangements and disability.

The purpose of this profile is to assist all Western Australians to understand the State's cultural diversity and the way it has changed over time. The information can be used for a variety of purposes including policy, program and service development, research and for general interest.

### Sri Lanka-born community in Western Australia

Migration from Sri Lanka to Western Australia (WA) began in the late 19th century. Small numbers of the Sri Lanka-born were recorded as working in Broome's pearling industry. Following Sri Lanka's independence in 1948, and changes to Australia's migration policy during the 1950s through to the 1970s, there was an increase in migration of the Sri Lanka-born, including students who entered under the Colombo Plan. From the early 1980s until 2006, the Sri Lanka-born arrived mainly as humanitarian entrants. This has recently changed with the majority of those arriving after 2006 entering as skilled migrants.

#### SRI LANKA-BORN COMMUNITY AT A GLANCE

- There were 5339 Sri Lanka-born people in WA in 2011, a larger number than in 2006 (3288).
- There were 5085 Western Australians with Sri Lankan ancestry.
- Almost half (43%) arrived in WA between 2001 and 2010.
- More than half (58%) were Australian citizens.
- There were more men (2882) than women (2457) with a sex ratio of 117 men for every 100 women.
- The largest proportion of the Sri Lanka-born was young adults aged between 25 and 44 years (41%). The smallest group was young people aged between 15 and 24 years (8%).

- ▣ The median age of the Sri Lanka-born was 40 years.
- ▣ Almost two-thirds (62%) of the Sri Lanka-born spoke English well and spoke a language other than English (LOTE) at home.
- ▣ The main languages spoken by the Sri Lanka-born were Sinhalese (47%) and Tamil (16%).
- ▣ Most (92%) of the Sri Lanka-born lived in the Greater Perth Metropolitan Area.
- ▣ More than three-quarters (79%) of the Sri Lanka-born aged 15 years and over had completed Year 12 or an equivalent level of education, and more than one-third (40%) had a degree/tertiary level qualification.
- ▣ Almost two-thirds (60%) were employed and almost one-third (30%) were not in the labour force.
- ▣ The Sri Lanka-born were employed mainly as professionals (36%), technicians and trade workers (11%), and managers (11%).
- ▣ More than two-thirds (69%) were high or middle income earners with a weekly income of \$1000 or more (35%) or between \$300 and \$999 (34%).
- ▣ More than half (58%) of the Sri Lanka-born owned their home.
- ▣ More than three-quarters (76%) of the Sri Lanka-born aged 25 years and over were married and more than half (54%) lived in couple families with children.
- ▣ Almost one-fifth (18%) of Sri Lanka-born people aged 65 years and over required assistance with everyday living.

## Migration, culture, ancestry, language and religion

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In 2011, there were 5339 Sri Lanka-born Western Australians, representing less than one per cent (0.2%) of the State's total population. This group had grown by 62 per cent (from 3288) since 2006. More than half (58%) were Australian citizens.

### ARRIVAL

Almost half (43%) of the Sri Lanka-born arrived in WA between 2001 and 2010. This compares with the State's total overseas-born population of which 28 per cent arrived during the same period.

### AGE AND GENDER

The Sri Lanka-born population is composed of a larger proportion of young adults, and smaller proportions of children and young people, than the total WA population. In 2011, almost half of the Sri Lanka-born were young adults aged between 25 and 44 years (41%). This proportion was larger than in 2001 (33%) and compared with the total WA population (29%).

By contrast, proportions of Sri Lanka-born children aged between 0 and 14 years (10%) and young people aged between 15 and 24 years (8%) were smaller compared with the total WA population (20% and 14%, respectively). Since 2006, the proportion of Sri Lanka-born children had increased (from 6%) while the proportion of young people had decreased (from 11%).

The proportion of adults aged between 45 and 64 years had also decreased (from 35% to 29%), but was larger compared with the total WA population (25%). The median age of the Sri Lanka-born was 40 years, compared with 36 years for the total WA population.



Age and gender profile	Sri Lanka-born					WA population 2011		
	2011			2006	2001	Male %	Female %	Total %
Age group	Male %	Female %	Total %	Total %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %
0–14 years	9.6	9.7	9.6	5.7	5.5	20.1	19.2	19.7
15–24 years	8.9	7.6	8.3	10.6	12.9	14.1	13.3	13.7
25–44 years	43.6	38.5	41.2	33.4	33.0	29.4	28.9	29.1
45–64 years	27.1	30.4	28.6	35.0	35.1	25.1	25.3	25.2
65+ years	10.9	13.8	12.2	15.2	13.5	11.3	13.2	12.3
All (number)	2882	2457	5339	3288	2964	1,126,177	1,112,994	2,239,171
Sex ratio			117.3	107.6	110.4			101.2

In 2011, there were more Sri Lanka-born men than women. The sex ratio (number of men per 100 women) was approximately 117. This was higher than in 2006 (108) and 2001 (110), and compared with the total WA population (101).

### ANCESTRY

People born in Sri Lanka, who have one or both parents born there, or who were born elsewhere but have Sri Lankan ancestors, may identify that they have Sri Lankan ancestry. In 2011, 55 per cent of the Sri Lanka-

born identified that they had Sri Lankan ancestry. Sri Lanka-born Western Australians also reported that they had Sinhalese (21%), Tamil (6%), English (6%) and Dutch (4%) ancestries. Most (96%) had one or both parents born overseas.

Small numbers and proportions of the WA population (5085 or 0.2%) and the Australia-born (1524 or 0.1%) identified that they had Sri Lankan ancestry.

Ancestry	Sri Lanka-born		WA population 2011	Australia-born 2011
	2011	2006		
Self-identified ancestry	Total %	Total %	Total %	Total %
Sri Lankan	55.4	NA*	0.2	0.1
Sinhalese	20.6	73.9	0.07	0.02
Tamil, nfd	5.5	5.5	0.04	0.008
English	5.8	7.9	37.9	41.4
Dutch	4.4	7.0	2.0	2.1
One or both parents born overseas	95.5	97	56.2	35.2
Both parents born in Australia	0.2	0.5	43.8	64.8
One parent born in Australia	0.5	1.0	51.3	75.3

\* The 2006 Census does not have data for this ancestry.

Language	Sri Lanka-born					WA population 2011		
	2011			2006	2001	Male %	Female %	Total %
English proficiency	Male %	Female %	Total %	Total %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %
English only	29.2	31.1	30.1	42.5	47.0	78.8	79.8	79.3
Other language and English; very well or well	61.4	61.9	61.6	54.2	49.4	12.4	12.7	12.5
Other language and English; not well or not at all	3.7	5.8	4.7	2.2	2.1	1.8	2.4	2.1
<b>Main language spoken at home other than English (top two responses)*</b>								
Sinhalese	47.3	40.9	47.2	39.3	32.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Tamil	16.3	15.5	15.9	15.5	16.6	0.2	0.2	0.2

\* The first three columns show the top two responses for the Sri Lanka-born. Data for the WA population are not the top responses and are presented for comparative purposes.

## LANGUAGES

In 2011, two-thirds (66%) of Sri Lanka-born Western Australians reported speaking a language other than English (LOTE) at home, mainly Sinhalese (47%) and Tamil (16%).

Almost two-thirds (62%) of people born in Sri Lanka reported speaking a LOTE and speaking English very well or well, a larger proportion than in 2001 (49%). Almost equal proportions of men (29%) and women (31%) reported speaking a LOTE and English very well or well.

Almost one-third (30%) spoke only English at home, which was a smaller proportion than in 2001 (47%). Almost equal proportions of men (29%) and women (31%) spoke only English at home.

Approximately five per cent of the Sri Lanka-born reported speaking a LOTE and English not well or not at all.

## RELIGION

The religious affiliation of Sri Lanka-born Western Australians changed between 2001 and 2011. There was an increase in affiliation with Buddhism (from 26% to 42%) and a decrease in affiliation with Christianity (from 53% to 36%). Smaller proportions identified with Hinduism (12%) or identified as having no religion (3%). These proportions were unchanged since 2001. This reflects the general trend for the total WA population for which identification with Christianity had decreased and identification with non-Christian religions or as having no religion had increased.



## Geographic distribution

The settlement pattern for Sri Lanka-born Western Australians remained stable between 2001 and 2011. In 2011, most (92%) lived in the Greater Perth Metropolitan Area and eight per cent lived in non-metropolitan areas. Compared with the Sri Lanka-born, a smaller proportion of the total Western Australian population lived in the Greater Metropolitan Perth Area (77%) and a larger proportion lived in non-metropolitan areas (22%).

Within the Greater Perth Metropolitan Area, the Sri Lanka-born lived mainly in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Canning (23%), Stirling (12%) and Gosnells (11%).

## Education

In 2011, more than three-quarters (79%) of the Sri Lanka-born aged 15 years and over had completed Year 12 or an equivalent level of education. This was a larger proportion than in 2006 (73%) and 2001 (69%), and compared with the total WA population (48%).

Between 2001 and 2011, there was an increase in the proportion of the Sri Lanka-born with qualifications at degree/tertiary level (from 29% to 40%), while the proportion with advanced diploma, diploma and certificate level qualifications was relatively unchanged (from 22% to 24%). A larger proportion of Sri Lanka-born men (43%) held a qualification at the degree/tertiary level than women (36%), however, similar proportions had an advanced diploma, diploma or certificate level qualification (24%).

The proportion of Sri Lanka-born people with post-school qualifications (64%) was larger compared with the total WA population (45%).

The proportion of Sri Lanka-born Western Australians who reported that they had not attended school (0.3%) was comparable to the total WA population (0.6%).

Educational attainment	Sri Lanka-born					WA population 2011		
	2011			2006	2001	Male %	Female %	Total %
Population (15+ years)	Male %	Female %	Total %	Total %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %
Degree/tertiary level	42.6	36.2	39.5	33.8	28.9	15.9	19.2	17.5
Advanced diploma/diploma/certificate	23.7	24.4	24.1	21.8	22.1	32.8	22.4	27.6
Completed Year 12/equivalent	79.8	78.9	79.4	73.2	69.3	46.2	49.4	47.8
Did not attend school	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.6

## Labour force

### PARTICIPATION

The labour force participation rate is the proportion of the total population, aged 15 years and over, who are employed or unemployed and able to work. In 2011, almost two-thirds (64%) of Sri Lanka-born Western Australians were in the labour force. This was the same proportion as in 2001 (64%) and for the total WA population (64%).

In 2011, almost two-thirds (60%) of the Sri Lanka-born were employed, which was comparable to 2001 (58%) and to the total WA population (61%). The proportion not in the labour force decreased (from 35% to 30%), but was also comparable to the total WA population (29%).

The rate of unemployment decreased slightly (from 6% to 4%) and was comparable to the total WA population (3%).

A larger proportion of Sri Lanka-born men (74%) were employed than women (55%). A larger proportion of

Labour force	Sri Lanka-born					WA population 2011		
	2011			2006	2001	Male %	Female %	Total %
Population (15+ years)	Male %	Female %	Total %	Total %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %
Employed	73.9	55.1	59.7	64.8	58.3	66.7	55.3	61.0
Unemployed	3.4	5.0	4.1	2.9	5.6	3.2	2.9	3.0
Not in the labour force	21.6	38.7	29.5	30.3	35.1	22.7	36.1	29.4

women than men were not in the labour force (39% and 22%, respectively).

These gender-based trends reflect those for the total Western Australian population of which 67 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women were employed, while more than one-third of women (36%) and less than one-quarter of men (23%) were not in the labour force.

### OCCUPATION

The Sri Lanka-born were mainly employed as professionals (36%), technicians and trade workers (11%), managers (11%) and labourers<sup>1</sup> (10%). Some occupations and rates were comparable to those for the total WA population, of which 12 per cent were managers and 10 per cent were labourers.

Sri Lanka-born men were mainly employed as professionals (37%), technicians and trade workers (14%), managers (14%) and labourers (12%). Sri Lanka-born women were mainly employed as professionals (33%), clerical and administrative workers (21%), community and personal service workers (15%) and labourers (8%).

### BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

In 2011, nine per cent of the Sri Lanka-born were small or medium business owners, which was similar to 2006 (11%) but smaller compared with the total WA population (15%).

More than half (55%) of the businesses owned by the Sri Lanka-born employed between one and 19 people and more than one-third (37%) were self-managed. The remainder (8%) employed 20 or more people. A larger proportion of Sri Lanka-born men (10%) than women (7%) were business owners.

<sup>1</sup> According to the 2011 Census Dictionary, 'labourers' include cleaners and laundry workers, construction and mining labourers, factory process workers, farm, forestry and garden workers, food preparation assistants and a miscellaneous category such as handypersons, recycling and rubbish collectors and vending machine attendants.



Weekly income	Sri Lanka-born					WA population 2011		
	2011			2006*	2001**	Male %	Female %	Total %
Population (15+ years)	Male %	Female %	Total %	Total %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %
None	6.2	18.3	11.8	9.1	9.1	5.6	9.8	7.7
<\$300	8.7	18.3	13.0	18.3	32.6	11.7	19.8	15.7
\$300–999	31.3	37.3	34.1	40.0	29.4	29.3	41.9	35.6
\$1000 or more	46.3	21.5	35.0	23.1	13.6	43.0	20.2	31.6

Note: \* Unlike 2011 and 2001 the threshold for the 2006 Census was less than \$250. The next income bracket was \$250–999.  
 \*\* For the 2001 Census' no income' also included negative income.

## INCOME

More than two-thirds (69%) of the Sri Lanka-born were middle or high income earners with a weekly income between \$300 and \$999 (34%) or \$1000 or more (35%). The proportion of high income earners was larger than in 2006 (23%) and 2001 (14%) but comparable to all Western Australians (32%). The proportion of middle income earners was smaller than in 2006 (40%) but larger than in 2001 (29%), and comparable to all Western Australians (36%).

Between 2001 and 2011, the proportion of Sri Lanka-born Western Australians earning a weekly income of less than \$300 decreased (from 33% to 13%), and was comparable to all Western Australians (16%).

In 2011, more than one-tenth (12%) of the Sri Lanka-born was without a weekly income, slightly larger than in 2001 (9%) and compared with the total WA population (8%).

Larger proportions of Sri Lanka-born women were middle (37%) or low (18%) income earners, or without an income (18%) than men (31%, 9% and 6%, respectively). A larger proportion of men (46%) than women (22%) were high income earners.

## HOUSING

In 2011, more than half (58%) of the Sri Lanka-born owned their home compared with almost two-thirds (63%) of all Western Australians.

In 2011, more than one-third (42%) of the Sri Lanka-born lived in a home they were purchasing and 16 per cent lived in a home they fully owned. This compares with 39 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively, for the total WA population.

One-third (33%) of the Sri Lanka-born were living in rental accommodation, a larger proportion compared with the total WA population (26%).

## Family

### MARITAL STATUS

In 2011, more than three-quarters (76%) of the Sri Lanka-born aged 25 years and over were married. This was comparable to 2006 (75%) but larger than the proportion of the total WA population (58%). Similar proportions of men and women were married (75% and 76%, respectively).

Between 2006 and 2011, the proportion of the Sri Lanka-born who were divorced or separated was relatively unchanged (8% and 6%, respectively) but was smaller compared with the total WA population (14%). The proportion of the Sri Lanka-born who were widowed was also relatively unchanged (6% and 4%, respectively) and comparable to the total State population (6%). A larger proportion of women (8%) than men (1%) was widowed.

The proportion of the Sri Lanka-born who had never married was comparable in 2011 (14%) and 2006 (12%) but smaller compared with the total WA population (23%).

### FAMILY COMPOSITION

In 2011, more than half (54%) of the Sri Lanka-born lived in couple families with children, and almost one-quarter (22%) lived in couple families without children: both were comparable to the proportions in 2006 (53% and 24%, respectively). The comparative proportions of the Western Australian population were 45 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively.

In 2011, four per cent of the Sri Lanka-born lived in one-parent families, which was almost unchanged since 2006 (5%) but smaller compared with the proportion of the total WA population (10%). A larger proportion of women (6%) than men (2%) lived in one-parent families.

### LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

In 2011, almost two-thirds (59%) of the Sri Lanka-born lived with a spouse or partner, similar to 2006 (62%), but larger compared with all Western Australians (42%). A larger proportion of Sri Lanka-born women (63%) than men (56%) was living with a spouse.

Registered marital status (25+ years)	Sri Lanka-born				WA population 2011		
	2011			2006	Male %	Female %	Total %
	Male %	Female %	Total %	Total %			
Married	75.0	76.2	75.8	74.5	59.0	57.1	58.1
Widowed	1.0	7.7	4.1	5.6	2.3	8.8	5.6
Divorced/separated	5.2	7.3	6.2	7.9	12.3	14.9	13.6
Never married	19.4	8.2	14.1	12.0	26.3	19.2	22.7
<b>Family composition (all ages)</b>							
Couple family with children	50.7	57.3	53.7	52.6	45.0	44.7	44.8
Couple family without children	21.2	23.7	22.3	24.0	19.4	20.3	19.8
One-parent family	2.4	5.6	3.9	5.3	7.8	12.0	9.9



Almost one-quarter (23%) of the Sri Lanka-born lived with other family or non-family members. This proportion was almost unchanged since 2006 (21%) but smaller than the proportion of all Western Australians (35%). The proportion not living at home (10%) was larger compared with 2006 (6%), but was comparable to the total WA population (8%).

A smaller proportion of the Sri Lanka-born lived alone (9%), compared with all Western Australians (12%). A larger proportion of Sri Lanka-born women (11%) than men (7%) were living alone.

### **DISABILITY/SICKNESS**

Disability refers to the level of assistance a person requires in day-to-day activities such as eating, dressing and bathing. In 2011, 18 per cent of Sri Lanka-born people aged 65 years and over required such assistance. A larger proportion of women (22%) than men (14%) aged 65 years and over required assistance. These figures were comparable with those for all Western Australians of the same age (18% and 13%, respectively). A small proportion of the Sri Lanka-born aged between 15 and 64 years (less than 1%) required such assistance.

In 2011, 10 per cent of the Sri Lanka-born aged 15 years and over were providing unpaid care and/or assistance to a family member, comparable to the total WA population (9%).

## **More information**

For more information and assistance, please contact:

### **OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS**

Department of Local Government and  
Communities  
GPO Box R1250 PERTH WA 6844

Phone: (08) 6551 8700

Fax: (08) 6552 1555

Email: [harmony@omi.wa.gov.au](mailto:harmony@omi.wa.gov.au)

Website: [www.omi.wa.gov.au](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au)