



Profile of New York City’s Sri Lankan Americans

Introduction

Using data from 2006-2010 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) Selected Population Tables and the 2010 U.S. census, this profile outlines characteristics and trends among New York City’s Sri Lankan American population.¹ It presents statistics on population size and changes, immigration, citizenship status, educational attainment, English ability, income, poverty, health insurance, and housing. Comparisons with New York City’s general population are provided for context.

New York City’s Sri Lankan population was among the fastest growing Asian ethnic groups. Relative to all residents, Sri Lankans in New York City were more likely to be:

- working-age adults,
- better educated,
- higher income,
- living in poverty if a senior, and
- renters.

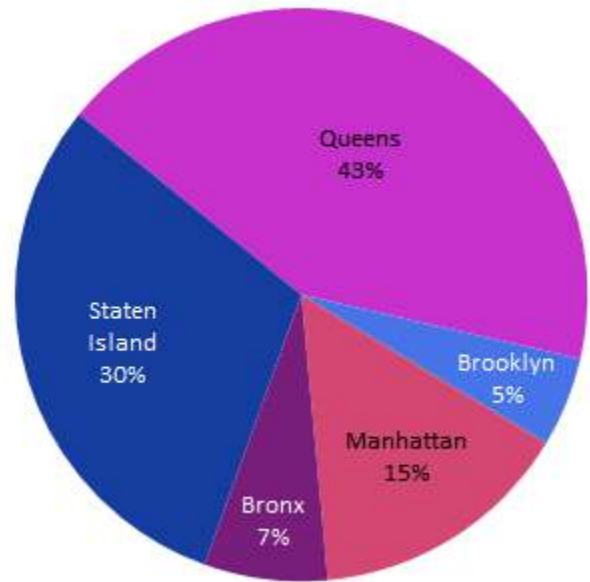


Figure 1: Sri Lankan Population by Borough

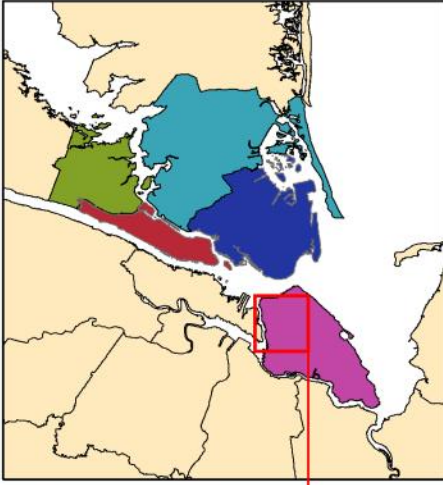
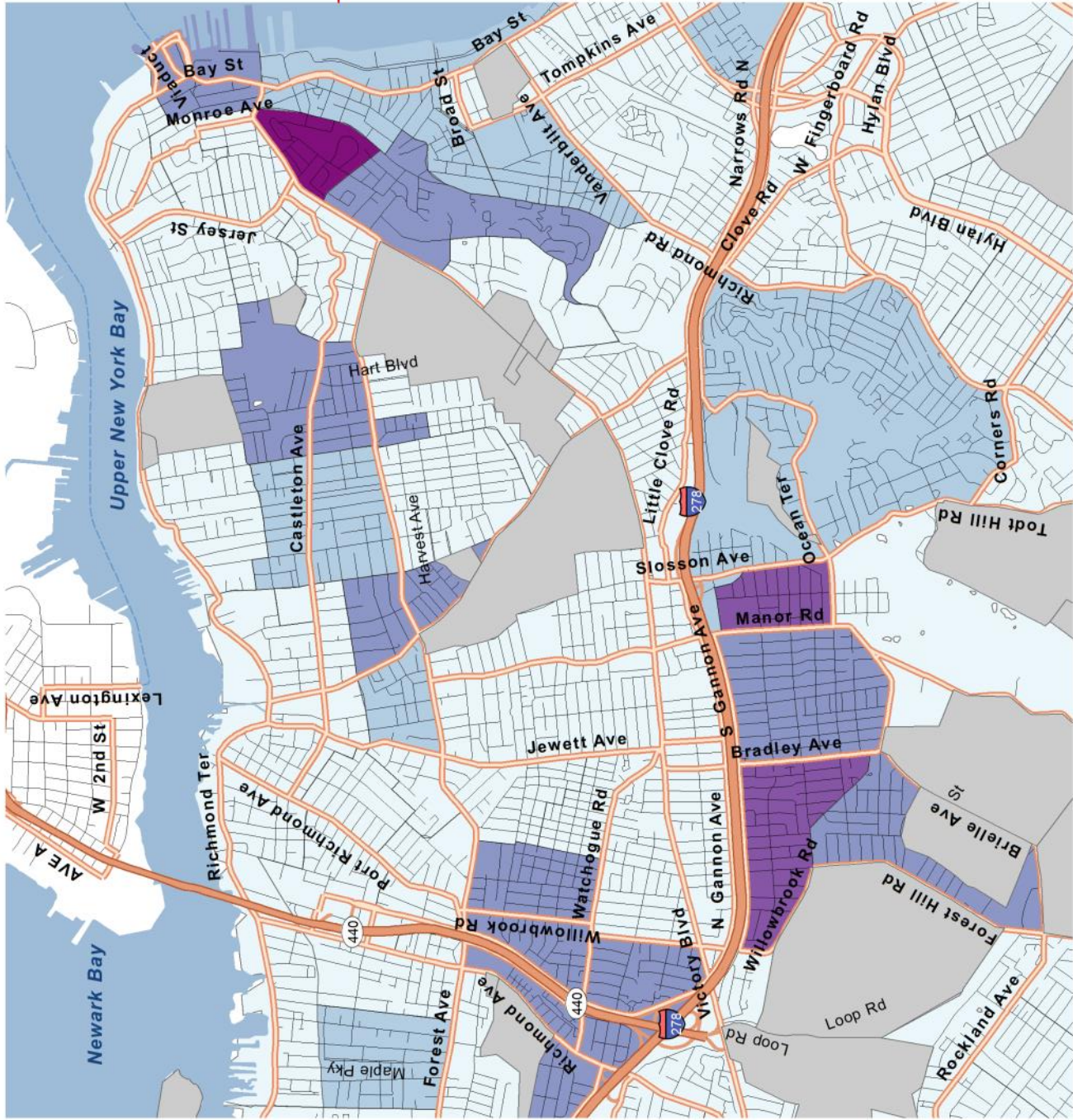
Population

From 2010 to 2015, the Sri Lankan alone or in combination population in New York City increased by 26 percent from 3,980 to 5,009 –greater growth than the city’s overall 4 percent increase and the 13 percent growth of the total Asian population. The Sri Lankan alone population increased by 35 percent from 3,305 in 2010 to 4,474 in 2015.

New York City was home to 74 percent of New York State’s Sri Lankan residents. The majority of Sri Lankan New Yorkers lived in Queens (43 percent) and Staten Island (30 percent) (Figure 1). The neighborhoods with the largest number of Sri Lankan residents were Stapleton and Manor Heights areas of Staten Island (see map).

In 2015, working-age adults (age 18 to 64) were a larger share of New York City’s Sri Lankan population, comprising 74 percent of the group, compared with 66

Facts on Sri Lankan Population in New York City	
Alone or in-Combination Population	5,009
Percent Change from 2010 to 2015	26%
Immigration and Citizenship	
Percent of Population Foreign Born	72%
Percent of Foreign Born Who are Citizens	47%
Educational Attainment for Adults Age 25 or Older	
Percent of Adults without High School Diploma	13%
Percent of Adults with a Bachelor’s Degree	44%
Limited English Proficiency	
Percent of Population Age 5 or Older	28%
Income	
Median Household Income	\$63,955
Median Family Income	\$64,739
Per Capita Income	\$34,570
Poverty	
Percent of Total Population Living in Poverty	18.3%
Percent of Children Living in Poverty	19.7%
Percent of Seniors Living in Poverty	23.8%

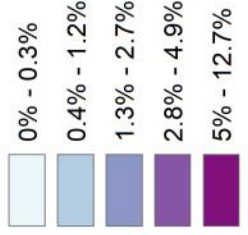


Legend

Landmarks

Sri Lankan Population

As Percent of Total Population



Sri Lankan Population in Staten Island

percent of all city residents. Children (under 18 years of age) and seniors (age 65 or older) each constituted 20 and 5 percent of the city’s Sri Lankan population, compared with 21 percent and 13 percent, respectively, of the citywide population in those age groups.

Immigration and Citizenship

About 72 percent of New York City’s Sri Lankans in 2015 were foreign-born, compared to 37 percent of all city residents. Sri Lankan immigrants in New York City slightly more likely to be recent arrivals with 13 percent arriving in 2010 or later, higher than the 10 percent rate for all immigrant New Yorkers. Of all the city’s foreign-born Sri Lankan residents, 47 percent were naturalized citizens, higher than the 53 percent of all foreign-born New Yorkers.

Education

Sri Lankans in 2015 had more schooling than the city’s general population. Of the city’s 3,500 Sri Lankan adults, 13 percent had not graduated from high school, comparatively lower than 20 percent of adults citywide.² Also, 4 percent of Sri Lankan adults in New York City had less than a ninth-grade education – lower than the 10 percent rate for all adult New Yorkers.

At the high end of the educational spectrum, 62 percent of Sri Lankan adults in New York City had some sort of post-secondary education, compared with slightly over half (56 percent) of all city adults. Less than half (44 percent) of Sri Lankan adults in New York City had a bachelor’s degree or higher, higher than one third (36 percent) of all city adults.

English Proficiency

New York City’s Sri Lankan residents had a slightly higher incidence of limited English proficiency (LEP) than New Yorkers as a whole in 2015.³ More than one-quarter (28 percent) of the city’s total Sri Lankan population spoke English well, not well or not at all – just above the 23 percent rate for New Yorkers overall (Figure 2). Sri Lankan children had lower LEP rates than children in the general population.

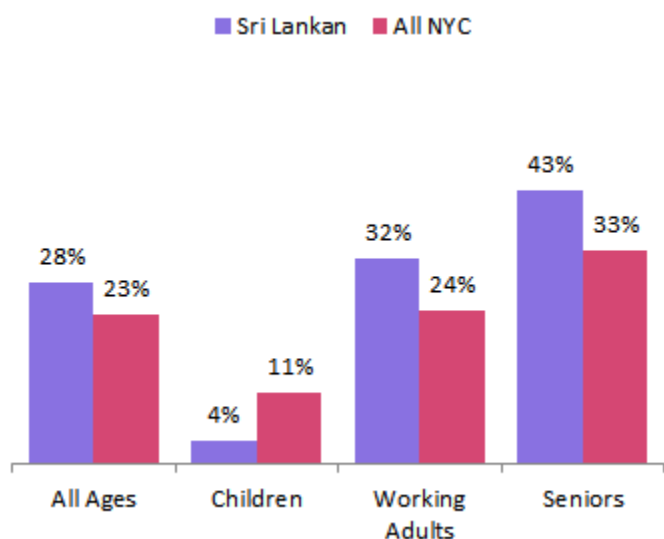
Income

Sri Lankan New Yorkers had higher incomes compared to New York City residents overall for all income gauges.⁴ The median income for Sri Lankan households was \$63,955, greater than the \$53,373 median for households citywide. Median family income was \$64,739 for Sri Lankan and \$59,285 for all families. Additionally, Sri Lankan per capita income was \$34,570 – slightly higher than \$33,078 citywide.

Poverty

The poverty rates for Sri Lankan residents in relation to the total New York City population were lower overall.⁵ Among all Sri Lankan in the city, 18.3 percent lived below the poverty line, compared with the general New York City poverty rate of 20.6 percent. For children, 19.7 percent of Sri Lankans in New York City experienced poverty, compared with 29.5 percent of all city children. Among working-age adults, 17.5 percent of Sri Lankans in the city lived in poverty, lower than 18.1 percent for all working-age adults. The story is different for seniors, where 23.8 percent of elderly Sri Lankans in the city lived in poverty, higher than the 18.8 percent overall senior poverty rate.

Figure 2: Limited English Proficiency Rates



Health Insurance Coverage

Sri Lankan New Yorkers were about as likely to be without health insurance as the general population, with 12.1 percent of Sri Lankans uninsured, compared with 12.4 percent of the general population. Among children, 5.8 percent of Sri Lankan children were uninsured, compared to 3.6 percent of all children.

Housing

Sri Lankan New Yorkers in 2015 had a larger average household size than households in general (3.02 people versus 2.65 people). Sri Lankan households were more likely to be overcrowded than households in general, with 19 percent of Sri Lankan households and 9 percent of households in general having more than one occupant per room.

Sri Lankan households had similar rates of owning homes compared to New York City households in general. About a third (32 percent) of Sri Lankan households owned their homes, compared with 32 percent homeowners in the city overall.

Endnotes

¹ Data sources used in this brief were 2011-2015 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables, and are for the Sri Lankan Alone or in Any Combination category, unless otherwise noted. Statistics from 2010 used 2006-2010 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables.

² For educational attainment, adults were defined as people age 25 or older.

³ "Limited English Proficiency" refers to individuals age 5 years and older who reported speaking English well, not well, or not at all.

⁴ Household income refers to the income of all occupants of a housing unit. Family income referred to the earnings of a group of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together.

⁵ Families and individuals were classified as below the poverty line if their total family income or unrelated individual income over the last 12 months was less than the poverty threshold specified for the applicable family size, age of householder, and number of related children younger than 18 present for the year and month the data was collected. For these thresholds, please see <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.htm>

Technical Notes

Race Categories

Beginning with the Census 2000, the Census Bureau collects data in which respondents were allowed to mark more than one race. For example, 2000 data include results for single-race as well as multiple-race responses. "Sri Lankan Alone" corresponds to the respondents who reported only Asian Indian and no other race category. "Alone" should be considered the minimum population size in any analysis that uses Census Bureau data.

To be as inclusive as possible, this profile uses "Sri Lankan Alone or in Any Combination" numbers where possible. "Alone or in Any Combination" corresponds to the responses (not respondents) that included Sri Lankan, either alone or in any combination with other Asian groups or other race categories. If a respondent selected Sri Lankan and another racial group (e.g., Sri Lankan and black), that individual, while excluded from the "Sri Lankan Alone" count, was tallied in the "Alone or in Any Combination" count for Asian Indian and the other racial group. Hence, some overlap in the "In Any Combination" numbers occurred. "Alone or in Any Combination" should be considered the maximum population size in any analysis that uses Census Bureau data.

About This Profile

This is one of a series of Asian American population profiles prepared by the Asian American Federation Census Information Center (CIC) to increase understanding of the rapidly-growing and diverse Asian American population in the New York metropolitan area.

Data citations from this profile should include the following acknowledgment: "Data derived from analysis by the Asian American Federation Census Information Center."

For more information regarding this profile, please contact the Asian American Federation Census Information Center at (212) 344-5878 x219 or howard.shih@aafederation.org, or visit www.aafny.org/cic/.

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