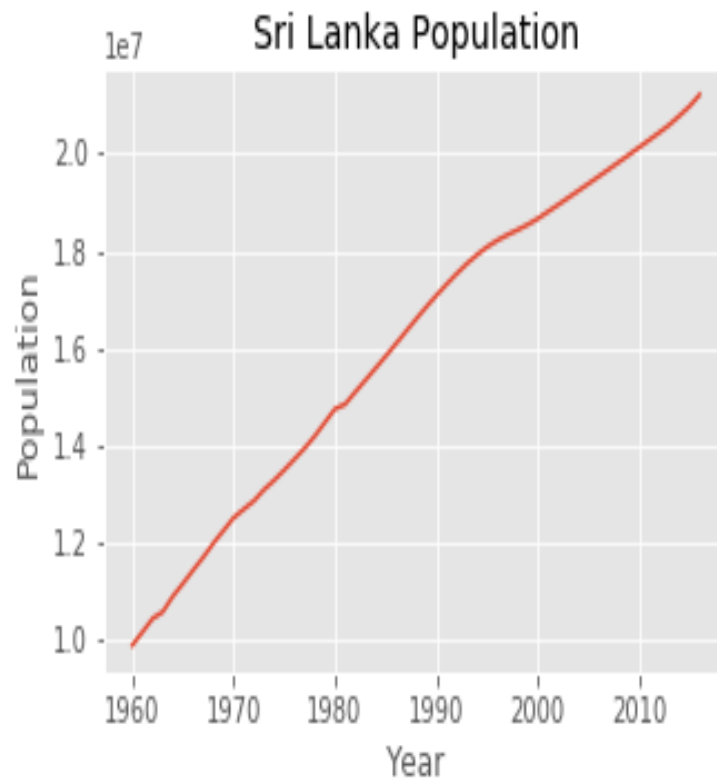


# Sri Lanka



Coordinates: 7°N 81°E﻿ / ﻿7°N 81°E﻿ / 7; 81Sri Lanka (/sriˈlæk/, -læk/, /ri-/ ( listen); Sinhala: ශ්‍රී ලංකා srī Laṅkā, Tamil: இலங்கை Ilaṅkai), officially the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, is an island country in South Asia, located southeast of India and northeast of the Maldives. The island is home to many cultures, languages and ethnicities. The majority of the population is from the Sinhalese ethnicity, while a large minority of Tamils have also played an influential role in the island's history; Christians in both groups are recent converts who have kept the traditional culture. Moors, Burghers, Malays, Chinese, and the aboriginal Vedda are also established groups on the island. Sri Lanka's documented history spans 3,000 years, with evidence of pre-historic human settlements dating back to at least 125,000 years. It has a rich cultural heritage and the first known Buddhist writings of Sri Lanka, the Pāli Canon, date back to the Fourth Buddhist council in 29 BC. Its geographic location and deep harbours made it of great strategic importance from the time of the ancient Silk Road through to the modern Maritime Silk Road.