

Iceland

Geography

Location: Northern Europe, island between the Greenland Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, northwest of the UK

Area:

total area: 103,000 sq km

land area: 100,250 sq km

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 4,988 km

Maritime claims:

continental shelf: 200 nm or to the edge of the continental margin

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: temperate; moderated by North Atlantic Current; mild, windy winters; damp, cool summers

Terrain: mostly plateau interspersed with mountain peaks, icefields; coast deeply indented by bays and fiords

Natural resources: fish, hydropower, geothermal power, diatomite

Land use:

arable land: 1%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 20%

forest and woodland: 1%

other: 78%

Irrigated land: NA sq km

Environment:

current issues: water pollution from fertilizer runoff; inadequate wastewater treatment

natural hazards: earthquakes and volcanic activity

Note: strategic location between Greenland and Europe; westernmost European country; more land covered by glaciers than in all of continental Europe

People

Population: 265,998 (July 1995 est.)

note: population data estimates based on average growth rate may differ slightly from official population data because of volatile migration rates

Age structure:

0-14 years: 24% (female 31,482; male 32,912)

15-64 years: 65% (female 84,559; male 87,089)

65 years and over: 11% (female 16,554; male 13,402) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.92% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 15.85 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 6.7 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 4 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 78.98 years
male: 76.69 years
female: 81.39 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.06 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Icelander(s)
adjective: Icelandic

Ethnic divisions: homogeneous mixture of descendants of
Norwegians and Celts

Religions: Evangelical Lutheran 96%, other Protestant and Roman
Catholic 3%, none 1% (1988)

Languages: Icelandic

Literacy:
total population: 100%

Labor force: 127,900

by occupation: commerce, transportation, and services 60.0%,
manufacturing 12.5%, fishing and fish processing 11.8%,
construction 10.8%, agriculture 4.0% (1990)

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Iceland

conventional short form: Iceland

local long form: Lyoveldio Island

local short form: Island

Capital: Reykjavik

Independence: 17 June 1944 (from Denmark)

National holiday: Anniversary of the Establishment of the Republic,
17 June (1944)

Constitution: 16 June 1944, effective 17 June 1944

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: blue with a red cross outlined in white that extends to the edges of the flag; the vertical part of the cross is shifted to the hoist side in the style of the Dannebrog (Danish flag)

Economy

Industries: fish processing, aluminum smelting, ferro-silicon production, geothermal power

Agriculture: accounts for about 15% of GDP; fishing is most important economic activity, contributing nearly 75% to export earnings; principal crops - potatoes, turnips; livestock - cattle, sheep; fish catch of about 1.1 million metric tons in 1992

Transportation

Railroads: 0 km

Highways:

total: 11,373 km

Ports: Akureyri, Hornafjordur, Isafjordur, Keflavik, Raufarhofn, Reykjavik, Seydhisfjordhur, Straumsvik, Vestmannaeyjar

Airports:

total: 90

Defence Forces

Branches: no regular armed forces; Police, Coast Guard; note - Iceland's defense is provided by the US-manned Icelandic Defence Force (IDF) headquartered at Keflavik