

# Israel

## Geography

Location: Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Egypt and Lebanon

Area:

total area: 20,770 sq km

land area: 20,330 sq km

Land boundaries: total 1,006 km, Egypt 255 km, Gaza Strip 51 km, Jordan 238 km, Lebanon 79 km, Syria 76 km, West Bank 307 km

Coastline: 273 km

Maritime claims:

continental shelf: to depth of exploitation

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: temperate; hot and dry in southern and eastern desert areas

Terrain: Negev desert in the south; low coastal plain; central mountains; Jordan Rift Valley

Natural resources: copper, phosphates, bromide, potash, clay, sand, sulfur, asphalt, manganese, small amounts of natural gas and crude oil

Land use:

arable land: 17%

permanent crops: 5%

meadows and pastures: 40%

forest and woodland: 6%

other: 32%

Irrigated land: 2,140 sq km (1989)

Environment:

current issues: limited arable land and natural fresh water resources pose serious constraints; desertification; air pollution from industrial and vehicle emissions; groundwater pollution from industrial and domestic waste, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides  
natural hazards: sandstorms may occur during spring and summer

# People

Population: 5,433,134 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 29%

15-64 years: 61%

65 years and over: 10%

Population growth rate: 1.4% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 20.39 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 6.38 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

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

Infant mortality rate: 8.4 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 78.14 years  
male: 76 years  
female: 80.39 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.81 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Israeli(s)

adjective: Israeli

Ethnic divisions: Jewish 82% (Israel born 50%, Europe/Americas/Oceania born 20%, Africa born 7%, Asia born 5%), non-Jewish 18% (mostly Arab) (1993 est.)

Religions: Judaism 82%, Islam 14% (mostly Sunni Muslim), Christian 2%, Druze and other 2%

Languages: Hebrew (official), Arabic used officially for Arab minority, English most commonly used foreign language

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1992)

total population: 95%

male: 97%

female: 93%

# Government

## Names:

conventional long form: State of Israel

conventional short form: Israel

local long form: Medinat Yisra'el

local short form: Yisra'el

## Capital: Jerusalem

note: Israel proclaimed Jerusalem its capital in 1950, but the US, like nearly all other countries, does not recognize this status, and maintains its Embassy in Tel Aviv

Independence: 14 May 1948 (from League of Nations mandate under British administration)

National holiday: Independence Day, 14 May 1948 (Israel declared independence on 14 May 1948, but the Jewish calendar is lunar and the holiday may occur in April or May)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: white with a blue hexagram (six-pointed linear star) known as the Magen David (Shield of David) centered between two equal horizontal blue bands near the top and bottom edges of the flag

## Economy

Overview: Israel has a market economy with substantial government participation. It depends on imports of crude oil, grains, raw materials, and military equipment. Despite limited natural resources, Israel has intensively developed its agricultural and industrial sectors over the past 20 years.

Industries: food processing, diamond cutting and polishing, textiles and apparel, chemicals, metal products, military equipment, transport equipment, electrical equipment, miscellaneous machinery, potash mining, high-technology electronics, tourism

Agriculture: citrus and other fruits, vegetables, cotton; beef, poultry, dairy products

Illicit drugs: increasingly concerned about cocaine and heroin abuse and trafficking

## Transportation

Railroads:

total: 520 km (diesel operated; single track)

Highways:

total: 13,461 km

Pipelines: crude oil 708 km; petroleum products 290 km; natural gas 89 km

Ports: Ashdod, Ashqelon, Elat, Hadera, Haifa, Tel Aviv-Yafo

Airports:

total: 57

## Defence Forces

Branches: Israel Defense Forces (includes ground, naval, and air components), Pioneer Fighting Youth (Nahal), Frontier Guard, Chen (women); note - historically there have been no separate Israeli military services

note: military service mandatory for men and women