

Latvia

Geography

Location: Eastern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea, between Estonia and Lithuania

Area:

total area: 64,100 sq km

land area: 64,100 sq km

Land boundaries: total 1,078 km, Belarus 141 km, Estonia 267 km, Lithuania 453 km, Russia 217 km

Coastline: 531 km

Maritime claims:

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

continental shelf: 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation

Climate: maritime; wet, moderate winters

Terrain: low plain

Natural resources: minimal; amber, peat, limestone, dolomite

Land use:

arable land: 27%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 13%

forest and woodland: 39%

other: 21%

Irrigated land: 160 sq km (1990)

Environment:

current issues: air and water pollution because of a lack of waste conversion equipment; Gulf of Riga and Daugava River heavily polluted; contamination of soil and groundwater with chemicals and petroleum products at military bases

People

Population: 2,762,899 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 22% (female 294,521; male 304,830)

15-64 years: 65% (female 933,003; male 870,128)

65 years and over: 13% (female 247,476; male 112,941) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.5% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 13.71 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 12.49 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 3.76 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 21 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 69.65 years

male: 64.6 years

female: 74.95 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.97 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Latvian(s)

adjective: Latvian

Ethnic divisions: Latvian 51.8%, Russian 33.8%, Byelorussian 4.5%, Ukrainian 3.4%, Polish 2.3%, other 4.2%

Religions: Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox

Languages: Lettish (official), Lithuanian, Russian, other

Literacy:

total population: 100%

male: 100%

female: 99%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Latvia

conventional short form: Latvia

local long form: Latvijas Republika

local short form: Latvija

former: Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic

Type: republic

Capital: Riga

Independence: 6 September 1991 (from Soviet Union)

National holiday: Independence Day, 18 November (1918)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: two horizontal bands of maroon (top and bottom), white (middle, narrower than other two bands)

Economy

Overview: Latvia is rapidly becoming a dynamic market economy, rivaled only by Estonia among the former Soviet states in the speed of its transformation. Latvia thus is in the midst of recovery, helped by the country's strategic location on the Baltic Sea, its well-educated population, and its diverse - albeit largely obsolete - industrial structure.

Industries: highly diversified; dependent on imports for energy, raw materials, and intermediate products; produces buses, vans, street and railroad cars, synthetic fibers, agricultural machinery, fertilizers, washing machines, radios, electronics, pharmaceuticals, processed foods, textiles

Agriculture: principally dairy farming and livestock feeding; products - meat, milk, eggs, grain, sugar beets, potatoes, vegetables; fishing and fish packing

Illicit drugs: transshipment point for illicit drugs from Central and Southwest Asia and Latin America to Western Europe; limited producer of illicit opium; mostly for domestic consumption; also produces illicit amphetamines for export

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 2,400 km

Highways:

total: 59,500 km

Inland waterways: 300 km perennially navigable

Pipelines: crude oil 750 km; refined products 780 km; natural gas
560 km (1992)

Ports: Daugavpils, Liepaja, Riga, Ventspils

Airports:

total: 50

Defence Forces

Branches: Ground Forces, Navy, Air and Air Defence Forces,
Security Forces (internal and border troops), Border Guard, Home
Guard (Zemessardze)