

Malta

Geography

Location: Southern Europe, islands in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily (Italy)

Area:

total area: 320 sq km

land area: 320 sq km

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 140 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

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

exclusive fishing zone: 25 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: Mediterranean with mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers

Terrain: mostly low, rocky, flat to dissected plains; many coastal cliffs

Natural resources: limestone, salt

Land use:

arable land: 38%

permanent crops: 3%

meadows and pastures: 0%

forest and woodland: 0%

other: 59%

Irrigated land: 10 sq km (1989)

Environment:

current issues: very limited natural fresh water resources;

increasing reliance on desalination

natural hazards: NA

Note: the country comprises an archipelago, with only the 3 largest islands (Malta, Gozo, and Comino) being inhabited; numerous bays provide good harbors

People

Population: 369,609 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 22% (female 39,199; male 41,581)

15-64 years: 67% (female 123,665; male 124,167)

65 years and over: 11% (female 23,597; male 17,400) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.75% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 13.22 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 7.43 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 1.7 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 7.7 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 77.02 years
male: 74.75 years
female: 79.48 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.92 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Maltese (singular and plural)
adjective: Maltese

Ethnic divisions: Arab, Sicilian, Norman, Spanish, Italian, English

Religions: Roman Catholic 98%

Languages: Maltese (official), English (official)

Literacy:
total population: 84%
male: 86%
female: 82%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Malta

conventional short form: Malta

Type: parliamentary democracy

Capital: Valletta

Independence: 21 September 1964 (from UK)

National holiday: Independence Day, 21 September (1964)

Constitution: 1964 constitution substantially amended on 13 December 1974

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: two equal vertical bands of white (hoist side) and red; in the upper hoist-side corner is a representation of the George Cross, edged in red

Economy

Overview: Significant resources are limestone, a favorable geographic location, and a productive labor force. Malta produces only about 20% of its food needs, has limited freshwater supplies, and has no domestic energy sources. Consequently, the economy is highly dependent on foreign trade and services. Manufacturing and tourism are the largest contributors to the economy.

Industries: tourism, electronics, ship repairyard, construction, food manufacturing, textiles, footwear, clothing, beverages, tobacco

Agriculture: accounts for 3% of GDP and 2% of the work force (1992); overall, 20% self-sufficient; main products - potatoes, cauliflower, grapes, wheat, barley, tomatoes, citrus, cut flowers, green peppers, hogs, poultry, eggs; generally adequate supplies of vegetables, poultry, milk, pork products; seasonal or periodic shortages in grain, animal fodder, fruits, other basic foodstuffs

Illicit drugs: transshipment point for hashish from North Africa to Western Europe

Transportation

Railroads: 0 km

Highways:
total: 1,291 km

Ports: Marsaxlokk, Valletta

Airports:
total: 1

Defence Forces

Branches: Armed Forces, Maltese Police Force