

South Africa

Geography

Location: Southern Africa, at the southern tip of the continent of Africa

Area:

total area: 1,219,912 sq km

land area: 1,219,912 sq km

Land boundaries: total 4,750 km, Botswana 1,840 km, Lesotho 909 km, Mozambique 491 km, Namibia 855 km, Swaziland 430 km, Zimbabwe 225 km

Coastline: 2,798 km

Maritime claims:

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

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: mostly semiarid; subtropical along east coast; sunny days, cool nights

Terrain: vast interior plateau rimmed by rugged hills and narrow coastal plain

Natural resources: gold, chromium, antimony, coal, iron ore, manganese, nickel, phosphates, tin, uranium, gem diamonds, platinum, copper, vanadium, salt, natural gas

Land use:

arable land: 10%

permanent crops: 1%

meadows and pastures: 65%

forest and woodland: 3%

other: 21%

Irrigated land: 11,280 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: lack of important arterial rivers or lakes requires extensive water conservation and control measures; growth in water usage threatens to outpace supply; pollution of rivers from

agricultural runoff and urban discharge; air pollution resulting in acid rain; soil erosion; desertification
natural hazards: prolonged droughts

Note: South Africa completely surrounds Lesotho and almost completely surrounds Swaziland

People

Population:

total: 45,095,459 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 40% (female 8,842,764; male 9,091,722)

15-64 years: 56% (female 12,825,617; male 12,508,039)

65 years and over: 4% (female 1,047,285; male 780,032) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate:

total: 2.61% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 33.39 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 7.42 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0.17 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 45.8 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 65.42 years

male: 62.68 years

female: 68.25 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 4.35 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: South African(s)

adjective: South African

Ethnic divisions: black 75.2%, white 13.6%, Colored 8.6%, Indian 2.6%

Religions: Christian (most whites and Coloreds and about 60% of blacks), Hindu (60% of Indians), Muslim 2%

Languages: eleven official languages, including Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, Zulu

Literacy:

total population: 76%

male: 78%

female: 75%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of South Africa

conventional short form: South Africa

Type: republic

Capital: Pretoria (administrative); Cape Town (legislative);
Bloemfontein (judicial)

Independence: 31 May 1910 (from UK)

National holiday: Freedom Day, 27 April (1994)

Constitution: 27 April 1994 (interim constitution, replacing the constitution of 3 September 1984)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: two equal width horizontal bands of red (top) and blue separated by a central green band which splits into a horizontal Y, the arms of which end at the corners of the hoist side, embracing a black isosceles triangle from which the arms are separated by narrow yellow bands; the red and blue bands are separated from the green band and its arms by narrow white stripes
note: prior to 26 April 1994, the flag was actually four flags in one - three miniature flags reproduced in the center of the white band of the former flag of the Netherlands, which has three equal horizontal bands of orange (top), white, and blue; the miniature flags are a vertically hanging flag of the old Orange Free State with a horizontal flag of the UK adjoining on the hoist side and a horizontal flag of the old Transvaal Republic adjoining on the other side

Economy

Overview: Many of the white one-seventh of the South African population enjoy incomes, material comforts, and health and educational standards equal to those of Western Europe. In contrast, most of the remaining population suffers from the poverty patterns of the Third World, including unemployment and lack of job skills. The main strength of the economy lies in its rich mineral resources, which provide two-thirds of exports.

Industries: mining (world's largest producer of platinum, gold, chromium), automobile assembly, metalworking, machinery, textile, iron and steel, chemical, fertilizer, foodstuffs

Agriculture: accounts for about 5% of GDP and 30% of labor force; diversified agriculture, with emphasis on livestock; products - cattle, poultry, sheep, wool, milk, beef, corn, wheat, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables; self-sufficient in food

Illicit drugs: transshipment center for heroin and cocaine; cocaine consumption on the rise; world's largest market for illicit methaqualone, usually imported illegally from India through various east African countries

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 20,638 km

Highways:

total: 188,309 km

Pipelines: crude oil 931 km; petroleum products 1,748 km; natural gas 322 km

Ports: Cape Town, Durban, East London, Mosselbaai, Port Elizabeth, Richards Bay, Saldanha

Airports:

total: 853

Defence Forces

Branches: South African National Defence Force (SANDF; includes Army, Navy, Air Force, and Medical Services), South African Police Service (SAPS)