



# COUNTRY CARDS

## Law-Related Education



*Every effort has been made for the accuracy of the information contained in the Country Cards. Please report any errors to [jmiller@texasbar.com](mailto:jmiller@texasbar.com).*



All rights reserved. Permission is granted for these materials to be reproduced for classroom use only. No part of these materials may be reproduced in any other form or for any other purpose without the written consent of Law Related Education, State Bar of Texas.

For additional information on the LRE Program, please go to [www.texaslre.org](http://www.texaslre.org)



# CREDITS

## Law-Related Education



Special thanks to the State Bar of Texas Law-Related Education Department for their support and skills in making this activity guide come to life.

Jan Miller  
Director, Law-Related Education

Kim Boen  
Educator, Round Rock

Elizabeth DelaGarza  
Educator, Round Rock

Jerry Perry  
Scholar, San Angelo

Linda DeLeon  
Design

Developed in 2014 and updated yearly by Law Focused Education, Inc., a project of the State Bar of Texas. All rights reserved. Permission is granted for these materials to be reproduced for classroom use. No part of these materials may be reproduced in any other form or for any other purpose without the written consent of the Department of Public Service / Law-Related Education, State Bar of Texas.



# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **Law-Related Education**

### **NORTH AMERICA**

Canada.....	7
United States of America.....	9

### **LATIN AMERICA**

Argentina, Argentine Republic.....	13
Brazil, Federative Republic of Brazil.....	15
Chile, Republic of Chile.....	17
Costa Rica, Republic of Costa Rica.....	19
Cuba, Republic of Cuba.....	21
Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala.....	23
Haiti.....	25
Mexico, United Mexican States.....	27
Nicaragua, Republic of Nicaragua.....	29
Panama, Republic of Panama.....	31
Peru.....	33
Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.....	35

### **EUROPE**

France, French Republic.....	39
Germany, Federal Republic of Germany.....	41
United Kingdom, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Commonwealth Realm.....	43
Italy, Italian Republic.....	45
Norway, Kingdom of Norway.....	47
Russia, Russian Federation.....	49
Spain, Kingdom of Spain.....	51
Sweden, Kingdom of Sweden.....	53

### **NORTH AFRICA & SOUTHWEST ASIA**

Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.....	57
Egypt.....	59
Iran, Islamic Republic of Iran.....	61
Iraq, Republic of Iraq.....	63
Israel, State of Israel.....	65
Libya.....	67
Saudi Arabia.....	69

### **AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA**

Kenya, Republic of Kenya.....	73
Nigeria, Federal Republic of Nigeria.....	75
South Africa, Republic of South Africa.....	77
South Sudan, Republic of South Sudan.....	79
Sudan, Republic of the Sudan.....	81
Tanzania, United Republic of Tanzania.....	83
Zimbabwe.....	85

### **SOUTH & SOUTHEAST ASIA**

China, People's Republic of China.....	89
India, Republic of India.....	91
Indonesia, Republic of Indonesia.....	93
Japan.....	95
North Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea.....	97
Pakistan, Islamic Republic of Pakistan.....	99



# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **Law-Related Education**

---

South Korea.....	101
Taiwan.....	103
Vietnam.....	105
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>	
Australia, Commonwealth of Australia.....	109
<b>OTHER</b>	
Ancient Athens.....	113
European Union.....	115
Roman Republic.....	117
United Nations.....	119
Appendix.....	123
Presidential System of Government v. Parliamentary System of Government....	125



# NORTH AMERICA







# CANADA



## **Type of Government**

Parliamentary Democracy, a Federation, and a Constitutional Monarchy

## **Government Structure**

### **Executive –**

The Head of State is the Monarch (King or Queen). Since the Monarch lives in the United Kingdom, the Monarch appoints the Governor General to represent the Monarch for a minimum of five years. The role is mostly ceremonial.

The Head of Government is the Prime Minister who is chosen from the House of Commons and is usually the leader of the majority party.

### **Legislative –**

The bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (105 members appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister) and the House of Commons (308 members elected by direct popular vote for four-year terms).

### **Judicial –**

The Supreme Court of Canada has judges who are appointed by the Governor General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

## **Constitution**

Written and unwritten acts, customs, judicial decisions, and traditions make up the constitution. The Constitution Act of 1867 created a federation of four provinces. The Constitution Act of 1982 transferred formal control over the constitution from Britain to Canada and added a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as procedures to amend the constitution. The Constitution is based on English Common Law except in Quebec where law is based on the French civil code.

## **The Flag**

The official colors of Canada are red and white. The flag consists of two vertical bands of red on each side with a white square between them. An eleven-pointed red maple leaf is centered in the white square. The maple leaf is the symbol for Canada.



## **Coat of Arms**



# CANADA

**Capital:** Ottawa

**Independence:** July 1, 1867 (union of British North American colonies); December 11, 1931 (recognized by United Kingdom per statute of Westminster).

**Population:** 35,623,680 (July 2017 estimate), (rank = 38)

**GDP per capita:** \$48,100 (rank = 34)

**Ethnicity:** Canadian 32%, English 20%, French 16%, Scottish 14%, Irish 14%, German 10%, Italian 5%, Chinese 5%, North American Indian 4%(very diverse population)

**Religion:** Christian 70%, Muslim 3%, Hindu 2%, Sikh 1%, Buddhist 1%, Jewish 1%, none 22%

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 99%

## Civil Rights/Freedoms

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms of citizens. It provides for basic freedoms of religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, press and media, peaceful assembly, and association.

## Suffrage (voting)

All citizens, 18 years of age and older.

## Political Parties

Liberal Party, Conservative Party, Bloc Quebecois, and the New Democratic Party.

## Current Issues

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster





# USA United States of America



## Type of Government

Constitution-based Federal Republic

## Government Structure

### Executive -

The President is Chief of State and Head of Government and is elected directly by the Electoral College (indirectly by popular vote of citizens) for a four-year term.

### Legislative -

The bicameral Congress (meaning two separate legislative bodies) consists of the Senate (representing the interests of the states) and the House of Representatives (representing the interests of the population of their districts). The Senate has 100 members (2 from each state) that are elected by popular vote for six-year terms. The House of Representatives has 435 members that are elected by direct popular vote for two-year terms.

### Judicial -

The U.S. Supreme Court consists currently of nine justices that are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Supreme Court judges serve for life.

## Constitution

Adopted on March 4, 1789 and amended 27 times.

## The Flag

The flag consists of 13 equal stripes of red and white. In one corner there is a blue rectangle with 50 stars. The 50 stars represent the 50 states and the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies. Blue stands for loyalty, devotion, truth, justice, and friendship. Red symbolizes courage, enthusiasm, and passion. White stands for purity and honesty of conduct.

**Capital:** Washington D.C.

**Independence:** July 4, 1776 (from Great Britain)

**Population:** 326,625,791 (rank = 3)

**GDP per capita:** \$59,500 (rank = 19)

**Ethnicity:** White 72%, Black 13%, Asian 5%, Amerindian and Alaska Native 1%

**Religion:** Protestant 47%, Roman Catholic 21%, Mormon 2%, Jewish 2%, Other or Unspecified 2%, Unaffiliated 23%

**Literacy:** 99% Male and Female



**The United States Seal**



# USA

## United States of America



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The first ten amendments of the Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights protects rights such as freedom of religion, assembly, speech, press, and the right to keep and bear arms. Other amendments provide for equal protection of the law and fair treatment before the law.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

Major parties: Democratic Party, and Republican Party. Minor parties: Green Party, Libertarian Party, and many more.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



# LATIN AMERICA







# ARGENTINA

## Argentine Republic



### Type of Government

Republic

### Constitution

May 1, 1853, revised 1994.

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government.

The President and Vice President are elected by popular vote for four -year terms.

#### Legislative –

The National Congress is bicameral. The Senate consists of 72 members elected to six-year terms by direct popular vote. The Chamber of Deputies consists of 257 members popularly elected to four-year-terms .

#### Judicial –

The Supreme Court is composed of nine judges that are appointed for life by the President. The Senate confirms the appointments.

### The Flag

Three horizontal bands of light blue, white, and light blue. Centered in the white band is a radiant yellow sun with a human face known as the Sun of May. The colors represent clear skies and snow of the Andes Mountains. The sun face is that of Inti, the Inca god of the sun.



**Coat of Arms**

**Capitol:** Buenos Aires

**Independence:** July 9, 1816 (from Spain)

**Population:** 44,293,293 (rank = 31)

**GDP per capita:** \$20,900 (rank = 89)

**Ethnicity:** European 97% (mostly of Spanish and Italian descent) and Mestizo (mixed white and Amerindian), Amerindian 3%

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 92%, Protestant 2%, and Jewish 2%,

**Literacy:** 98% Male, 98% Female



# ARGENTINA

## Argentine Republic



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Argentine Constitution includes protections for freedom of speech and press, peaceful assembly, religion, freedom of movement within the country, and foreign travel.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older (optional for those over 70 years of age).

### **Political Parties**

Peronist, Radical Civic Union, numerous smaller national and local parties.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



# BRAZIL

## Federative Republic of Brazil



### Type of Government

Federal Republic

### Constitution

October 5, 1988

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President is Chief of State and Head of Government. He/She is elected by popular vote for no more than two four-year terms.

#### Legislative –

The bicameral National Congress consists of the Federal Senate (81 members elected by popular vote for eight-year terms) and the Chamber of Deputies (513 members elected by popular vote for four-year terms).

#### Judicial –

The Supreme Federal Tribunal has 11 judges appointed for life by the President and confirmed by the Senate. [note – judges are federal employees, and all federal employees have a mandatory retirement age of 70 in Brazil]

### The Flag

The flag is green with a large yellow diamond in the center bearing a blue globe with twenty-seven white five-pointed stars. The globe has a white equatorial band with the motto ORDEM E PROGRESSO (Order and Progress). The green represents the rain forest, and the yellow rhombus the country's mineral wealth. The blue globe represents the sky over Rio de Janeiro on the morning of November 15, 1889, the day the Republic of Brazil was declared. The number of stars has changed with the creation of new states. There are currently twenty-seven stars (one for each state and the Federal District).



### Coat of Arms

**Capital:** Brasilia

**Independence:** September 7, 1822 (from Portugal)

**Population:** 207,353,391 (July 2017 estimate) (rank = 5)

**GDP per capita:** \$15,600 (rank = 110)

**Ethnicity:** White 48%, Mulatto (mixed white and black) 43%, Black 8%, Others

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 65%, Protestant 22%, Spiritualist 2%, Other



# BRAZIL

Federative Republic of Brazil

**Literacy:** Male 92%, Female 93%

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

All people are equal before the law without any distinction whatsoever. Brazilians and foreigners residing in the country are ensured of their right to life, liberty, equality, security and property.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

Voluntary between 16 to 18 years of age, compulsory (mandatory) from ages 18 to 70. People in the military by law can not vote.

## **Political Parties**

Workers Party, Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, Brazilian Social Democratic Party, Democrats, and many more.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster





# CHILE

## Republic of Chile



### Type of Government

Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government and is elected by popular vote for a single four-year term.

#### Legislative –

The bicameral National Congress consists of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Senate has 38 members who are elected by popular vote and serve eight-year terms. (One half of the members are re-elected every four years.) The Chamber of Deputies has 120 members who are elected by popular vote and serve four-year terms.

#### Judicial –

The highest courts are the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, and the Electoral Court. The Supreme Court has a court president and 20 judges who are appointed by the President with approval of the Senate. The judges serve for life, but with mandatory retirement at 70 years of age. The Constitutional Court has seven judges who serve eight-year terms and are chosen in various ways.

### Constitution

The most recent constitution was adopted on September 30, 1980 (effective March 11, 1981). The constitution has been amended many times.

### The Flag

The flag has two horizontal white and red bands. A blue square is located in the top left corner of the white band. The square has a five-pointed white star in the center that represents progress and honor. Blue symbolizes the sky, and white symbolizes the snow-covered Andes Mountains. Red represents the blood spilled to achieve independence from Spain. (The design is similar to the Texas flag and was influenced by that flag.)

**Capital:** Santiago (Valparaiso is the seat of the national legislature)

**Independence:** September 18, 1810 (from Spain)

**Population:** 17,789,267 (rank=65)

**GDP per capita:** \$24,500 (rank=83)



Coat of Arms



# CHILE

**Ethnicity:** White/non-indigenous 89%, Mapuche 9%, Aymara 1%, other indigenous (native) groups 1%

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 67%, Evangelical or Protestant 16%, Jehovah’s Witnesses 1%, others 3%, none 12%, unspecified 1%

**Literacy:** Male 98%, Female 97%

## Civil Rights/Freedoms

Citizens suffered human-rights abuses for years under dictators. Today Chile is a democracy and the people have a strong desire for social justice. The government promotes economic development, and citizens have freedom of speech, press, and religion. Discrimination against native groups continues to exist. Some citizens have changed their last names to improve chances of employment and other opportunities. The government is trying to improve life for the poorest regions by providing educational opportunities, tax incentives, road building, and construction of ocean ports and water reservoirs. The Mapuche Indians continue to face serious problems. Gender discrimination has been reduced, but violence against women and children remains a problem. Education reforms have allowed all children to attend school.

## Suffrage (voting)

All citizens, 18 years of age and older.

## Political Parties

Broad Social Movement, Citizen Left, Coalition for Change, Coalition of Parties for Democracy, Communists Party of Chile, Ecological Green Party, Independent Regionalist Party, Liberal Party, National Renewal, Progressive Party

## Current Issues

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# COSTA RICA

## Republic of Costa Rica



### Type of Government

Democratic Republic (the oldest democracy in Latin America)

### Constitution

November 7, 1949

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President is the Chief of State and the Head of Government. The Vice President is elected on the same ticket with the President. Both are chosen by popular vote for a single four-year term.

#### Legislative –

The Legislative Assembly is unicameral (one house). It has 57 members elected by direct popular vote and they serve four-year terms.

#### Judicial –

The Supreme Court is made up of 22 justices. These justices are elected by the Legislative Assembly for renewable eight-year terms.

### The Flag

There are five horizontal bands of red, white, and blue. There is a coat of arms on the middle red band to the left. The blue stands for the sky, opportunity, and hard work. The white represents peace, happiness, and wisdom. The red represents the blood shed for freedom, generosity, and life of the people.



Coat of Arms

**Capital:** San José

**Independence:** September 15, 1821 (from Spain)

**Population:** 4,930,258 (July 2017 estimate), (rank = 123)

**GDP per capita:** \$16,900 (rank = 105)

**Ethnicity:** White/Mestizo 84%, Mulatto 7%, Indigenous 2%, Black (African Descent) 1%

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 76%, Evangelical 14%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1%, Others

**Literacy:** Male 98%, Female 98%



# COSTA RICA

Republic of Costa Rica



CIA World Factbook



Fact Monster

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Costa Rica has a long history of democracy and respect for human rights. The country’s political system has continued to develop and maintain democratic ideals. Many factors have contributed to this including strong leadership and educational opportunities that have created a stable middle-class. Because Costa Rica has no armed forces, it has avoided military involvement in political affairs, unlike other countries in the region.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older. Election day is a national holiday when people travel to their place of birth to vote and enjoy celebrations with family. Actual voter turnout is usually low.

## **Political Parties**

Most Costa Ricans are members of one of two major parties: the ruling Social Christian Unity Party and the National Liberation Party.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



# CUBA

## Republic of Cuba

### Type of Government

Totalitarian Communist State  
(Current government took power by force on January 1, 1959).

### Constitution

February 24, 1976, amended July 1992 and June of 2002.

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The Chief of State and Head of Government is the President. The President and the Vice President are elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term. Fidel Castro served as President until disabled by cancer. He handed the presidency to his brother, Raul Castro in 2008.

#### Legislative –

The National Assembly of People’s Power is a unicameral legislature. The number of members is based on population. Currently there are 614 members that serve five-year terms and are elected by popular vote. The Communist Party creates the list of candidates to be on the voting ballot.

#### Judicial –

The highest court is the People’s Supreme Court (justices are elected by the National Assembly).

### The Flag

The flag has five equal horizontal bands of blue and white. A white five-pointed star is located in the center of the red triangle. The blue bands refer to the three old divisions of the island. The white bands describe the purity of the independence ideal. The triangle symbolizes liberty, equality, and brotherhood. The color red stands for the blood shed for independence. The star called the Estrella Solitaria (Lone Star) lights the way to freedom.

**Capital:** Havana

**Independence:** From Spain in 1898 and U.S. occupation ended 1902.

**Population:** 11,147,407 (July 2017 estimate) (rank = 80)

**GDP per capita:** \$12,300 (2016 estimate) (rank = 128)

**Ethnicity:** White 64%, Mulatto or mixed 27%, Black 9%

**Religion:** No official religion.

**Literacy:** Male 100%, Female 100%



Coat of Arms





# CUBA

## Republic of Cuba

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The law lessens the importance of basic freedoms to the aim of building a “socialist society”. Cuba is one of the Latin American countries that doesn’t allow basic freedoms for its citizens. The government uses harassment, secret surveillance, and threats of prison, and travel restrictions to control its citizens.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 16 years of age and older can vote.

### **Political Parties**

The Cuban Communist Party .

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook

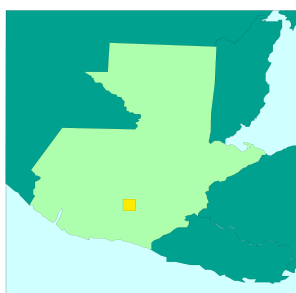


Fact Monster



# GUATEMALA

## Republic of Guatemala



### Type of Government

Constitutional Democratic Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government and is elected by popular vote for a four-year term. The President may not be re-elected for a second term.

#### Legislative –

The unicameral legislature called the Congress of the Republic has 158 members that are elected by popular vote. They serve four-year terms.

#### Judicial –

The highest court, the Supreme Court of Justice, has 13 judges that serve renewable five-year terms and are elected by the Congress of the Republic.

### Constitution

The most recent constitution became effective on January 14, 1986. It was suspended, reinstated, and amended in 1993.

### The Flag

The flag has three vertical bands: one light blue, one white, and another light blue. Centered in the white band is the nation's coat of arms. The green and red quetzal (national bird) in the coat of arms represents liberty, and the scroll notes the date of independence from Spain. The rifles in the coat of arms represent defense; the crossed swords represent honor; and the laurel wreath symbolizes victory. The blue bands represent the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, and the white band symbolizes peace and purity.

**Capital:** Guatemala City

**Independence:** September 15, 1821 (from Spain)

**Population:** 15,460,732 (rank=70)

**GDP per capita:** \$8,100 (rank=153)

**Ethnicity:** Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and Spanish European) 60%, Indigenous Mayan 39%, Others 1%

**Religion:** There is no official census of religious affiliation, but there are Roman Catholics, Protestants, and followers of indigenous Mayan beliefs.

**Literacy:** Male 87%, Female 76%



Coat of Arms



# GUATEMALA

## Republic of Guatemala

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Citizens of Guatemala are partly free and corruption is a major problem. The constitution protects freedom of speech, freedom of press, and individual privacy, but the government often is accused of violating these rights. Journalists often face death threats and violence from drug traffickers, organized crime, and government officials. Telecommunications and Internet access are limited. Incidents of human trafficking and violence against women and children have been widely reported. Many citizens have sought protection in other countries.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

Suffrage (voting): All citizens 18 years and older are eligible except active duty members of the armed forces and police who by law are restricted to their barracks on election day.

### **Political Parties**

Guatemalan Republican Front, Patriotic Party, Grand National Alliance, National Unity for Hope, Unionist Party, Social Action Center, and many more.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster





# HAITI

## Republic of Haiti

### Type of Government

Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President of Haiti is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and may not serve consecutive terms. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President with the approval of the National Assembly.

#### Legislative –

Haiti has a bicameral legislature. The National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale) consists of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Senate has 30 members elected by popular vote for six-year terms. One-third of its members are elected every two years. The Chamber of Deputies has 99 members who are elected by popular vote for four-year terms.

#### Judicial –

Haiti's highest court is the Supreme Court or Cour de Cassation. It consists of a president, vice-president and 10 judges. These judges are appointed by the president. Judges are appointed for life.

### Constitution

Haiti has had 23 previous constitutions. The latest was adopted in March, 1987, and amended in 2012.

### The Flag

Haiti's flag has two equal horizontal bands of blue (top) and red with a white rectangle in the center bearing the coat of arms. The Coat of Arms contains a palm tree flanked by flags and two cannons above a scroll bearing the motto L'UNION FAIT LA FORCE (Union Makes Strength). The colors are taken from the French Tricolor and represent the union of blacks and mulattoes.

**Capital:** Port-au-Prince

**Independence:** January 1, 1804, from France

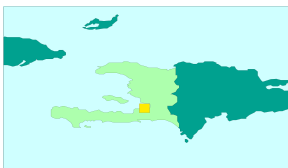
**Population:** 10,646,714 (rank = 88)

**GDP per capita:** \$1,800 (rank – 212)

**Ethnicity:** Black 95%, Mulatto and White 5%

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 55%, Protestant 29%, Voodoo 2%, none 10%, other 3% *note: roughly half of the population practices voodoo in addition to their religion*

**Literacy:** Male 64%, Female 57%



Coat of Arms



# HAITI

## Republic of Haiti

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Election delays, natural disasters, and the persistence of a deadly cholera epidemic continue to hinder the Haitian government's efforts to meet the basic needs of its people and address long-standing human rights problems, such as violence against women and inhumane prison conditions. Haiti is also the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, with a lack of natural resources. Most citizens of Haiti live on less than \$1 a day. The three-year-old cholera epidemic continues to claim lives, with an estimated 8,500 people killed and 694,000 infected since October, 2010. Hurricane Sandy in October, 2012 caused great damage. Droughts have affected harvests, thus causing high levels of food shortages. Due to these many factors, Haiti's government is understaffed and not ready to help its people rise out of poverty.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

18 years of age; universal.

### **Political Parties**

There are many political parties in Haiti. Most are so small that they need to form alliances with other parties in order to get anything done. Some of the parties are The Front for Hope, Haitian Social-Democratic Fusion Party, the Democratic Alliance Party, the Organization of the Struggling People, and the Lavalas Family.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>

CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# MEXICO

## United Mexican States



### **Type of Government**

Federal Republic

### **Government Structure**

#### **Executive –**

The President is the Chief of State, Head of Government, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The President is elected by popular vote for a single six-year term.

#### **Legislative –**

The Legislature is bicameral. The National Congress consists of the Senate which has 128 members, and the Chamber of Deputies which has 500 members. Members of the Senate serve six-year terms, and members of the Chamber of Deputies serve three-year terms. Most members are elected by popular vote.

#### **Judicial –**

Justices of the Supreme Court of Justice are chosen by the President with agreement of the Senate.

### **Constitution**

Written in 1917 and contains many liberal concepts and principles of the United States Constitution.

### **The Flag**

The Mexican flag has three equal vertical bands of green, white, and red. Mexico's coat of arms is centered in the white band. Green signifies hope, joy, and love. White represents peace, and honesty. The red stands for hardiness, bravery, strength, and courage. The coat of arms is from the story about the settling of the Aztec people and how they founded Tenochtitlan where they saw an eagle perched on a cactus holding a snake.



**Coat of Arms**

**Capital:** Mexico City

**Independence:** September 16, 1810 (from Spain)

**Population:** 124,574,795 (rank = 11)

**GDP per capita:** \$19,900 (rank = 91)

**Ethnicity:** Mestizo (Amerindian and Spanish) 62%, Amerindian 28%, other 10% (mostly European)

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 83%, Protestant 8%, others

**Literacy:** Male 96%, Female 94%



# MEXICO

## United Mexican States

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The constitution protects rights such as freedom of religion, assembly, speech, press, and the right to bear arms. One of the main problems in Mexico today is the widespread violence of the drug cartels and the Government's effort to stop this violence.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older are required to vote, but the law is not enforced. Active members of the military do not vote.

### **Political Parties**

Institutional Revolutionary Party, National Action Party, and the Party of the Democratic Revolution are the three largest political parties. Other smaller parties exist.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World Factbook



Fact Monster

# NICARAGUA

## Republic of Nicaragua



### Type of Government

Constitutional Democratic Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President who is both Chief of State and Head of Government is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The Vice-President is also elected by popular vote and serves a five-year term.

#### Legislative –

The unicameral legislature called the National Assembly has 92 members that serve five-year terms. Members are elected by popular vote. Two seats in the National Assembly are reserved for the previous President and the runner-up in the last presidential election.

#### Judicial –

The highest court, called the Supreme Court, has 16 judges. The judges are elected by the National Assembly and serve staggered five-year terms.

### Constitution

Nicaragua has had many previous constitutions. The most recent constitution became effective in 1987 and has been amended several times.

### The Flag

The flag has three equal horizontal bands: blue, white, and blue. The national coat of arms is centered in the white band. The blue bands represent the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. The white band represents the land between those two bodies of water.

**Capital:** Managua

**Independence:** September 15, 1821 (from Spain)

**Population:** 6,025,951 (rank=111)

**GDP per capita:** \$5,800 (rank=165)

**Ethnicity:** Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and White) 69%, White 17%, Black 9%, Amerindian 5%

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 50%, Evangelical 33%, others

**Literacy:** Male 82%, Female 83%



Coat of Arms



# NICARAGUA

Republic of Nicaragua



CIA World Factbook



Fact Monster

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Nicaragua's citizens are protected by a constitution. Harsh treatment of citizens by security forces and police often occurs. Government intimidation and harassment are common. The constitution calls for freedom of press, but the government has limited the press. The government owns and operates some radio stations and censors what is broadcast to the public. Human trafficking and violence against women and children are problems and often go unreported. Security forces are understaffed and poorly funded and thus, violence continues. Poverty, unemployment, low education levels, and drug violence remain major issues.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 16 years of age and older are eligible.

## **Political Parties**

Alliance for the Republic, Conservative Party, Independent Liberal Party, Liberal Constitutionalist Party, Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance, Sandinista National Liberation Front, Sandinista Renovation Movement

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



# PANAMA

## Republic of Panama



**Type of Government**  
Constitutional Democracy

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government. The President and Vice President are elected by popular vote on the same ballot. They serve five-year terms. The President is not eligible for immediate re-election, but instead must sit out two terms before being eligible for re-election.

#### Legislative –

The National Assembly is a unicameral (one house) legislature. There are 71 members who serve 5-year terms.

#### Judicial –

The highest court is the Supreme Court of Justice. Judges are appointed by the President and serve 10- year terms.



**Coat of Arms**

### Constitution

October 11, 1972 (has been amended several times, most recently in 2004)

### The Flag

The flag is divided into four equal quadrants. One of the top quadrants is white with a blue star, and the other is solid red. One of the bottom quadrants is solid blue, and the other bottom quadrant is white with a red star. Blue and red represent the main political parties (Conservative and Liberal), and white symbolizes the peace between them. The blue star stands for the civic virtues of purity and honesty, and the red star signifies authority and law.

**Capital:** Panama City

**Independence:** November 3, 1903 from Colombia and 1821 from Spain.

**Population:** 3,753,142 (rank=130)

**GDP per capita:** \$25,400 (rank=80)

**Ethnicity:** Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and White) 65%, Native American 12%, Black or African 9%, Mulatto 7%, White 7%

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 85%, Protestant 15%

**Literacy:** 96% Male, 94% Female



# PANAMA

## Republic of Panama

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Human Rights for citizens of Panama are generally respected, although some problems remain. There are generally free and fair elections. Violence against women and children occurs. Human trafficking and child labor continue to be problems. Harsh prison conditions and abuses occur. The government does not restrict or disrupt access to the Internet or censor online content. Political manipulation within the three branches of government and the security forces remains a problem.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

Democratic Change, Democratic Revolutionary Party, Nationalist Republican Liberal Movement, Panamenista Party, Popular Party.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# PERU

## Republic of Peru



### Type of Government

Constitutional Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President of Peru is both the Chief of State and the Head of Government. Although Peru has a Prime Minister, this is purely a ceremonial title with no power. The President is elected by popular vote for a five-year term, and is eligible for non-consecutive reelection.

#### Legislative –

Peru has a unicameral legislature called the Congress of the Republic of Peru or Congreso de la Republica del Peru. It has 130 seats and members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms.

#### Judicial –

Peru's highest court is the Supreme Court. This court consists of 16 judges and is divided into civil, criminal, and constitutional-social sectors. Judges are chosen by the National Council of the Judiciary or National Judicial Council (a 7-member independent body), nominated by the president, and confirmed by the Congress. All judicial appointments are reviewed by the Council every 7 years and justices are appointed for life or until age 70.

### Constitution

Peru has had several constitutions, the latest enacted in 1993 and amended in 2009.

### The Flag

The Peruvian flag has three equal, vertical bands of red, white, and red with the coat of arms centered in the white band. The coat of arms features a shield bearing a vicuña, a cinchona tree (the source of quinine), and a yellow cornucopia spilling out coins (denoting mineral wealth). The color red recalls the blood shed for independence, white symbolizes peace.

**Capital:** Lima

**Independence:** July 28, 1821 from Spain

**Population:** 31,036,656 (rank =43)

**GDP per capita:** \$13,300 (rank =120)

**Ethnicity:** Amerindian 45%, mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) 37%, white 15%, black, Japanese, Chinese, and other 3%

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 81%, Evangelical 13%, other 3%, unspecified or none 3%



### Coat of Arms

# PERU

## Republic of Peru



### **Literacy:**

Male: 97%

Female 94%

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Corruption is a serious problem in the government of Peru. Past Presidents have been convicted of taking and giving bribes and of ordering the killings of political enemies. The current President is also having problems with corruption, and his wife, despite a legal ban on the election of direct relatives, is saying that she will run for president after her husband's term. The constitution provides for freedom of religion, but in reality the Roman Catholic Church receives preferential treatment from the government. The legal system in Peru is widely mistrusted, and torture by the police and military is an ongoing problem. Crime, especially from the group called The Shining Path, remains high.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

18 years of age; universal, and mandatory until age 70.

### **Political Parties**

Alliance For Progress, Peruvian Nationalist Party, Union for Peru, American Popular Revolutionary Alliance.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# VENEZUELA

## Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



### Type of Government

Federal Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government and is elected by popular vote for a six-year term. The President is eligible to serve an unlimited number of terms.

#### Legislative -

A unicameral National Assembly consists of 165 members that are elected by popular vote for five-year terms.

#### Judicial -

The Supreme Tribunal of Justice consists of 32 magistrates, or judges, that are elected by the National Assembly for a single 12-year term.

### Constitution

Adopted on December 30, 1999 and amended February 15, 2009.

### The Flag

The flag consists of three bands of yellow, blue, and red. The coat of arms is on the side within the yellow band. There is an arc of eight white five-pointed stars in the center of the blue band. Yellow represents the riches of the land. Blue is for the courage of its people, and red for the blood shed in attaining independence. Seven stars represent the seven provinces that united during the war of independence.

Note: In 2006 President Hugo Chavez ordered an eighth star to conform to the flag proclaimed by Simon Bolivar in 1827. (Many citizens are unhappy with Chavez's decision to add the eighth star.)

**Capital:** Caracas

**Independence:** July 5, 1811 (from Spain)

**Population:** 31,304,016 (rank = 42)

**GDP per capita:** \$12,100 (rank = 131)

**Ethnicity:** Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arab, German, African, Native people

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 96%, Protestant 2%, Other 2%

**Literacy:** Male 97%, Female 97%



### Coat of Arms



# VENEZUELA

## Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



CIA World Factbook



Fact Monster

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Constitution gives power to the people and protects basic human rights. However, the current government leadership and changes to the Constitution have weakened the democratic system of checks and balances and damaged the rights and freedoms of citizens. Violent crime is extremely high. The government controls the economy and media.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

United Socialist Party of Venezuela, Communist Party of Venezuela, Democratic Action, Christian Democrats.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

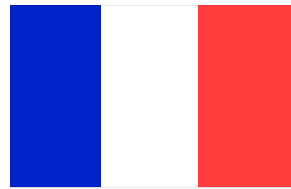
Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



# EUROPE







# FRANCE

## French Republic

### Type of Government

Republic

### Constitution

September 28, 1958. Has been amended many times.

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The Chief of State is the President, and the Head of Government is the Prime Minister. The President is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The President appoints the Prime Minister.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (348 seats, elected by an electoral college) and the National Assembly (577 seats, elected by popular vote).

#### Judicial -

The highest court is the Supreme Court of Appeals. Its judges are appointed by the President, with nominations by the Supreme Council of the Judiciary.

### The Flag

The flag has three vertical blue, white, and red bands. It is known as the French Tricolor. The origin of the flag dates from 1790 and the French Revolution, when the “ancient French color” of white was combined with the blue and red colors of the Parisian militia.



Coat of Arms

**Capital:** Paris

**Independence:** No official date of independence.

**Population:** 67,106,161 (rank = 21)

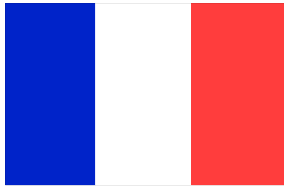
**GDP per capita:** \$43,800 (rank = 41)

**Ethnicity:** Celtic, Latin and other European groups.

**Religion:** Christian (mainly Roman Catholic) 65%, Muslim 8%, Others

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 99%





# FRANCE

## French Republic

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was approved by the National Assembly of France on August 26, 1789. It protects French citizens’ fundamental human rights, such as “liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.” The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of which France is a charter member also protects citizens’ rights.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

18 years; universal.

### **Political Parties**

Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), The Socialist Party, New Center, Democratic Movement, The Communist Party

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



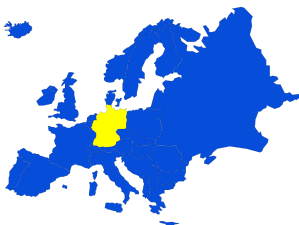
Fact Monster





# GERMANY

## Federal Republic of Germany



### Type of Government

Federal Parliamentary Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The Chief of State is the President whose duties are mainly ceremonial and is elected for a five-year term by the Federal Assembly (a body which meets only for this purpose and is made up of all members of the Bundestag and an equal number of members from state parliaments). The Chancellor is the Head of Government and is elected by an absolute majority of the Bundestag for a four-year term.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral Parliament consists of the Bundesrat (upper house) which has 69 members appointed by the different German states and the Bundestag (lower house) which has 620 members that are elected by popular vote.

#### Judicial -

Germany's principle courts are the Federal Constitutional Court, Federal Court of Justice, and Federal Administrative Court.

### The Flag

The flag has three equal horizontal bands of black, red and gold. These colors can be traced back to the banner of the Holy Roman Emperor.

### Constitution

May 23, 1949

**Capital:** Berlin

**Independence:** In 1949, after WWII, Germany was divided into East Germany and West Germany. On October 3, 1990, Germany was reunified into one country, the Federal Republic of Germany.

**Population:** 80,594,017 (rank = 19)

**GDP per capita:** \$50,400 (rank = 27)

**Ethnicity:** German 92%, Turkish 2%, Others

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 29%, Protestant 27%, Muslim 4%, unaffiliated or other 36%

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 99%



**Coat of Arms**



# GERMANY

Federal Republic of Germany

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Articles 1 through 19 in the German Constitution explain the basic rights for all German citizens. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights also protects citizens' rights.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

18 years; universal.

## **Political Parties**

Social Democratic Party, Christian Democratic Union, Christian Social Union, Alliance 90/Greens, Free Democratic Party, and the Left.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

# UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Commonwealth Realm



## Type of Government

Parliamentary Democracy with a Constitutional Monarchy

## Government Structure

### Executive -

The Chief of State is the Monarch which is a hereditary position whose duties are largely ceremonial.

The Head of Government is the Prime Minister who is a member of the House of Commons, chosen by the House of Commons, and is usually the leader of its majority party.

### Legislative -

The bicameral Parliament consists of the House of Lords (788 members elected in many different ways) and the House of Commons (650 members elected by popular vote).

### Judicial -

The new highest court is the Supreme Court which has 12 members appointed by the Monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister. There are also other courts.



Royal Coat of Arms

## Constitution

There is no written constitution. The rights of citizens are protected by many different documents from English history.

## The Flag

The flag is called the Union Jack. It has a blue field and has crosses representing Saint George (patron saint of England), Saint Patrick (patron saint of Ireland), and Saint Andrew (patron saint of Scotland).

**Capital:** London

**Independence:** January 1, 1801 (United Kingdom established)

**Population:** 65,648,100 (rank = 22)

**GDP per capita:** \$44,100 (rank=39)

**Ethnicity:** White 87%, Black 3%, Asian 2%, Indian 2%, Pakistani 2%, mixed 2%, others

**Religion:** Christian 60%, Muslim 4%, Hindu 1%, Unspecified/None 33%

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 99%



The British Isles



# UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland and  
Commonwealth Realm



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Rights of citizens are protected by such important documents as Magna Carta, the English Petition of Rights and the English Bill of Rights. The United Kingdom is also a member of the European Union, and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights protects citizens' rights.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

## **Political Parties**

Major parties are: The Conservative Party, The Labor Party, and The Liberal Democratic Party. Minor parties are: Democratic Unionist Party, Party of Wales, Scottish National Party, Sinn Fein, Social Democratic and Labor Party, Ulster Unionist Party.

## **Current Issues**

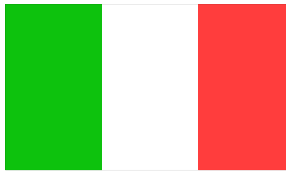
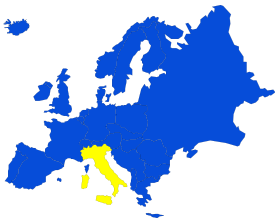
CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>

# ITALY

## Italian Republic



### Type of Government

Republic

### Constitution

January 1, 1948

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The Chief of State is the President. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister. An electoral college elects the President for a seven-year term (no term limits). The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and confirmed by Parliament.

#### Legislative -

A bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (315 members elected for five-year terms by popular vote) and the Chamber of Deputies (630 members elected by popular vote for five-year terms).

#### Judicial -

The Constitutional Court is made up of fifteen judges appointed in different ways. The Supreme Court of Cassation is another high court.

### The Flag

The flag has three equal bands of green, white, and red. The colors are of Milan (red and white) and the Milanese Civil Guard (green).



**Coat of Arms**

**Capital:** Rome

**Independence:** March 17, 1861, Kingdom of Italy proclaimed

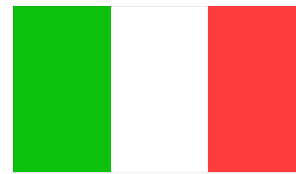
**Population:** 62,137,802 (rank = 23)

**GDP per capita:** \$38,100 (rank=50)

**Ethnicity:** Italian (includes small clusters of others)

**Religion:** Christian 80% (Roman Catholic, with small groups of Jehovah Witnesses and Protestants), Muslims/Atheists/ Agnostics 20%

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 99%



# ITALY

## Italian Republic

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Citizens of Italy have basic fundamental human rights and liberties. Italy is a member of the European Union, and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights protects citizens' rights.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older can vote except in elections for the Senate where a minimum age of 25 is needed to vote.

### **Political Parties**

People of Freedom, Democratic Party, and Future and Freedom for Italy, Italy of Values, Northern League, Union of the Center Movement for Autonomy.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

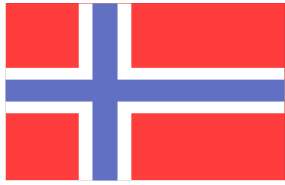
Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# NORWAY

## Kingdom of Norway

### Type of Government

Parliamentary democracy with a constitutional Monarch

### Constitution

Adopted May 17, 1814, and has been amended many times. It is the second oldest constitution in the world.

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The Chief of State is the King which is a hereditary position. His role is mainly ceremonial. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister who is the leader of the majority political party in the Storting.

#### Legislative –

The unicameral legislature is called the Storting which has 169 members. Members are elected by popular vote and serve four-year terms.

#### Judicial –

The Supreme Court is the highest court. The monarch appoints its justices.

### The Flag

The flag has field of red with a blue cross outlined in white. The colors represent Norway's past political union with Denmark and Sweden.



**Coat of Arms**

**Capital:** Oslo

**Independence:** June 7, 1905 Norway declared the union with Sweden dissolved.

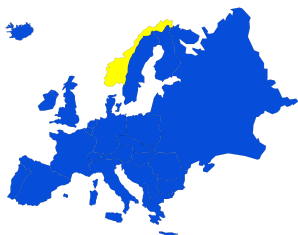
**Population:** 5,320,045 (rank= 120)

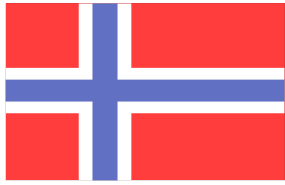
**GDP per capita:** \$71,800 (rank = 11)

**Ethnicity:** Norwegian 94%, other European 4%, and other 2%

**Religion:** Church of Norway (Evangelical Lutheran) 72%, Roman Catholic 3%, Other Christian 4%, Muslim 3%, other/unspecified 8%

**Literacy:** Male 100%, Female 100%





# NORWAY

## Kingdom of Norway

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Norwegian Constitution was originally founded on the principle of sovereignty of the people, separation of power, and human rights. Fundamental human rights such as the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion, and protection of property are all presently guaranteed by the Norwegian Constitution. Norway currently is one of the highest functioning democracies in the world with high political participation and protection of citizens' rights.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

Center Party, Christian People's Party, Conservative Party, Labor Party, Liberal Party, and Progress Party.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



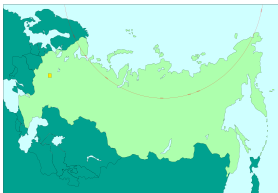
Fact Monster





# RUSSIA

## Russian Federation



### Type of Government

Federation

### Constitution

December 12, 1993

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The Chief of State is the President and the Head of Government is the Prime Minister. The President is elected to a six-year term by popular vote. The President chooses the Prime Minister.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral legislature consists of the lower house called the State Duma (450 members elected by popular vote for four-year terms) and the upper house called the Federation Council (166 members selected by the top executive and legislative officials in each of the 83 federal administrative units for four-year terms).

#### Judicial -

There are three courts: (1) the Supreme Court, (2) the Constitutional Court, and (3) the Supreme Arbitration Court. Judges for all courts are chosen for life by the Federation Council on recommendation of the President.

### The Flag

The flag has three equal horizontal bands of white, blue, and red. There is no official meaning to the colors. This flag inspired other Slav countries to adopt the same type of flag.

**Capital:** Moscow

**Independence:** August 24, 1991 from USSR.

**Population:** 142,257,519 (rank = 9)

**GDP per capita:** \$27,800 (rank = 73)

**Ethnicity:** Russian 78%, Tatar 4%, Ukrainian 1%, Bashkir 1%, Chuvash 1%, other/unspecified 14%

**Religion:** Russian Orthodox 15-20%, Muslim 10 – 15%, and other Christian 2%

**Literacy:** Male 100%, Female 100%



Coat of Arms



# RUSSIA

## Russian Federation

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Russian Constitution protects basic rights and liberties, but citizens are experiencing issues with actual enforcement of these rights. The current President, Vladimir Putin, has been in power for twelve years and has recently been re-elected to serve another six-year term as President. His authoritarian rule has been marked by suppression of the press, corruption, human trafficking and other human rights abuses.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

United Russia, Communist Party, Liberal Democratic Party, Just Russia, Yabloko, Patriots of Russia, and Right Cause.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook

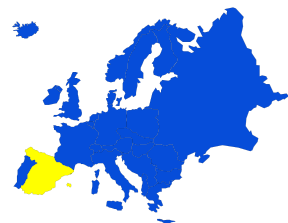


Fact Monster



# SPAIN

## Kingdom of Spain



### **Type of Government**

Parliamentary Democracy with a Constitutional Monarchy

### **Government Structure**

#### **Executive -**

The Chief of State is the King which is a hereditary, largely ceremonial position. The Head of Government is the President (equivalent to a Prime Minister) who is elected by the Congress of Deputies and is usually the leader of the majority party.

#### **Legislative -**

The bicameral National Assembly is made up of the Senate (264 seats, 56 appointed by regional legislatures and 208 elected by popular vote for four-year terms) and the Congress of Deputies (350 seats chosen by popular vote by proportional representation – the number of people living in an area determines how many representatives the area has).

#### **Judicial -**

Spain has two High Courts: (1) the Supreme Court and (2) the Constitutional Court.

The Supreme Court is the court of last resort for all cases not pertaining to the Constitution. Its members are appointed for life (until retired at 70) by the King and the General Council of the Judicial Power.

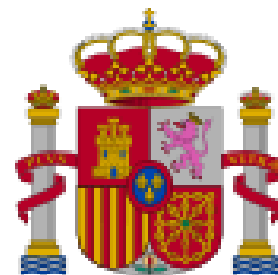
The Constitutional Court deals with questions of constitutional law and has 12 members who are appointed for nine-year terms by the National Assembly and the President.

### **Constitution**

January 1, 1978

### **The Flag**

The flag has three horizontal bands of red, yellow (double width) and red. The national coat of arms is in the yellow band representing the traditional kingdoms of Spain.



**Coat of Arms**



# SPAIN

## Kingdom of Spain

**Capital:** Madrid

**Independence:** Many separate kingdoms eventually were merged into the modern country of Spain in 1492.

**Population:** 48,958,159 (rank = 28)

**GDP per capita:** \$38,300 (rank = 49)

**Ethnicity:** Mediterranean and Nordic Types

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 68%, atheist 9%, non-believer 18%, unspecified 3%, others (2016 estimate)

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 98%

### Civil Rights/Freedoms

The Constitution of Spain guarantees the protection of human rights. Spain is also a member of the European Union, and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights also protects the basic human rights of the citizens of Spain.

### Suffrage (voting)

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

### Political Parties

Spanish Socialist Workers Party, Popular Party, United Left, and a few other regional parties.

### Current Issues

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

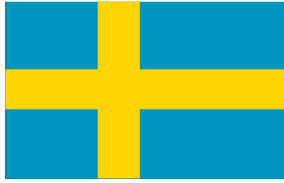
Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# SWEDEN

## Kingdom of Sweden



### **Type of Government**

Parliamentary Democracy with a Constitutional Monarchy

### **Constitution**

January 1, 1975

### **Government Structure**

#### **Executive -**

The Chief of State is the King which is a hereditary position. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister who is elected by the majority political party or a coalition of parties in the legislature.

#### **Legislative -**

The unicameral legislature is called the Riksdag. It has 349 members that are elected by popular vote for four-year terms.

#### **Judicial -**

The Supreme Court is called the Hogsta Donstolen. Its judges are appointed by the Prime Minister and the cabinet and serve until retirement age.

### **The Flag**

The flag has a blue field with a golden yellow cross. The colors reflect those of the Swedish coat of arms.



**Coat of Arms**

**Capital:** Stockholm

**Independence:** June 6, 1523, which is the day of the founding of the Kingdom of Sweden.

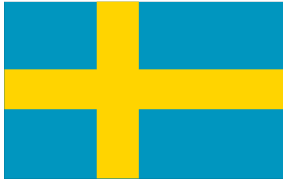
**Population:** 9,960,487 (rank = 91)

**GDP per capita:** \$51,500 (rank=26)

**Ethnicity:** Native population (Swedish), ethnic Finns, ethnic Sami

**Religion:** Lutheran 64%, Other (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist) 8%, none 28%

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 99%



# **SWEDEN**

## **Kingdom of Sweden**

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Swedish Constitution protects all fundamental rights of its citizens. Sweden is a member of the European Union, and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights protects citizens' rights.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

Moderate Party, Liberal Party, Center Party, Christian Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, Left Party, Green Party, and Sweden Democrats.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# NORTH AFRICA & SOUTHWEST ASIA









# AFGHANISTAN

## Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



### Type of Government

Islamic Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is Chief of State and Head of Government. There is also a First Vice President and Second Vice President. They are elected by popular vote for a five-year term and eligible for a second term. The winner must win at least fifty percent of the vote.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral (two houses) National Assembly consists of the Meshrano Jirga, or House of Elders (102 members chosen in different ways for different terms.), and the Wolesi Jirga, or House of People (250 members chosen by popular vote for five-year terms).

#### Judicial -

The highest court is the Supreme Court which has nine judges appointed by the President for up to two four-year terms. The nation's law is a mix of civil law and Sharia (Islamic law).

### Constitution

Sixth constitution drafted December 14, 2003-January 4, 2004; Signed January 16, 2004; ratified January 26, 2004

### Flag

There are three equal vertical bands of black, red, and green. The national emblem is in white centered on the red band. The black band represents the past, the red band symbolizes the blood shed for independence, and the green represents hope or the Islamic religion. The emblem is a mosque with pulpit and flags on either side. Bordered by sheaves of wheat on the left and right, in the upper center is an Arabic inscription of the Shahada (Muslim creed). Below the Shahada are rays of the rising sun over the Takbir ("God is Great").

**Capital:** Kabul

**Independence:** August 19, 1919 (from UK control over Afghan foreign affairs)

**Population:** 34,124,811 (rank = 39)

**GDP per capita:** \$2,000 (rank = 207)

**Ethnicity:** Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, others



Coat of Arms



# AFGHANISTAN

## Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



CIA World Factbook



Fact Monster

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim 87%, Shia Muslim 12%, Other 1%

**Literacy:** Male 52%, Female 24%

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The government has struggled to expand its control over local areas. A few areas have remained under the control of regional leaders. There continue to be instances of torture and killings by different local tribal groups. Extensive human rights abuses have led to increased actions against abusers.

Terrorist attacks, armed rebels, and violence continue throughout the country. The Taliban and other anti-government forces have threatened, robbed, attacked, and occasionally killed local villagers, political opponents, and non-governmental organization (NGO) workers. Increased Taliban, al-Qa'ida, and other anti-government activity, particularly in the south and southeast, complicated security challenges faced by the government. United Nations agencies and NGOs have temporarily stopped their activities at various times because of these problems.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

There are many political parties based on religious, tribal, and ethnic groups.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

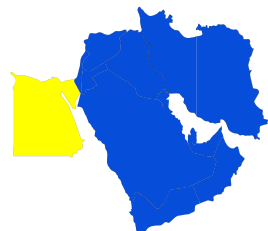
Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



# Egypt

## Arab Republic of Egypt



### **Type of Government**

Republic

### **Government Structure**

#### **Executive -**

The Chief of State is the President. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and is the Head of Government. The President is elected by popular vote and serves a 4-year term and can be reelected once. Under the new constitution, both offices seem to share the power of the executive. The president must choose the Prime Minister out of the choices given to him by the House of Representatives. The President cannot dismiss his cabinet or ministers; this power rests in the Prime Minister.

#### **Legislative -**

The new constitution changed the legislature to a unicameral House of Representatives. It consists of a minimum of 450 members that serve five-year terms.

#### **Judicial -**

The highest court is called the Court of Cassation. Its main function is to interpret the law. All judges and justices are appointed by the president and serve 4 years or until retirement age set currently at age 70.

### **Constitution**

A draft of the new constitution was released in December 2013. It includes provisions that protect citizens from violence, particularly women. Police and military forces were expanded to provide for these protections. The new constitution outlaws religious political parties. In January 2014, 98% of voters favored the new constitution.

### **Flag**

The flag has three equal horizontal bands of red (top), white, and black. The national emblem, a gold Eagle of Saladin (the first sultan of Egypt) facing the hoist side with a shield superimposed on its chest above a scroll bearing the name of the country in Arabic, is centered in the white band. The band colors come from the Arab Liberation flag and represent oppression (black), the victory through bloody struggle (red), which is replaced by a bright future (white).



**Coat of Arms**



# Egypt

## Arab Republic of Egypt

**Capital:** Cairo

**Independence:** February 28, 1922 (from Great Britain)

**Population:** 97,041,072 (2017 estimate) (rank=14)

**GDP Per Capita:** \$12,700 (2017 estimate) (rank=123)

**Ethnicity:** Egyptian 99%

**Religion:** Islam (Mostly Sunni) 90%, Christian 10%

**Literacy:** Male 82%, Female 65%

### **Political Parties:**

Alliance for Egypt, Light Party, Constitution Party, Democratic Alliance for Egypt, Democratic Peace Party, Egyptian Citizen Party, Freedom Party, Nation Party, National Party of Egypt, People's Party, Popular Current Party, Reform and Development Party, Revolution Continues Party, Strong Egypt Party, The Revolution Continues Alliance

### **Civil Freedoms:**

Currently there is political violence due to the instability of the current government. Escalating street violence has also increased due to the unstable government.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



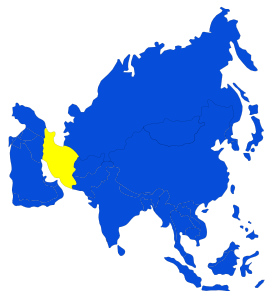
CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

# IRAN

## Islamic Republic of Iran



### Type of Government

Theocratic Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The Chief of State is the Supreme Leader who is chosen for life by the Assembly of Experts (a popularly elected body of 86 Islamic scholars and jurists charged with choosing the Supreme Leader and with deciding whether legislation is constitutional and faithful to Islamic Law). The Head of Government is the President elected by popular vote for a four-year term.

#### Legislative –

The Islamic Consultative Assembly has 290 members that are elected by popular vote.

#### Judicial –

The Supreme Court and the four member High Council of the Judiciary have a single head and overlapping responsibilities. They supervise the enforcement of all laws. The Supreme Leader appoints members for a five-year term.

### Constitution

Adopted December 2 and 3, 1979, and revised in 1989.

### The Flag

The flag has three equal horizontal bands of green, white, and red. The national emblem is centered in the white band and represents the word Allah.

ALLAH AKBAR (God is Great) is repeated twenty-two times in white Arabic script. Green is the color of Islam and growth, white symbolizes honesty and peace, and red stands for bravery and martyrdom.

**Capital:** Tehran

**Independence:** April 1, 1979 (Islamic Republic of Iran proclaimed)

**Population:** 82,021,564 (July 2017 estimate) (rank=17)

**GDP per capita:** \$20,200 (rank = 90)

**Ethnicity:** Persian, Azeri, Kurd, others

**Religion:** Muslim 99% (Shia 93%, Sunni 7%)

**Literacy:** Male 91%, Female 83%



Coat of Arms

# IRAN

## Islamic Republic of Iran



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Fear of the government and security services is not as bad today as it was under the former Shah's rule. The current Islamic Republic's intelligence services, although sometimes as cruel as the former leader, spend far less time and effort policing free speech inside private homes. Human rights groups worldwide are making it difficult for the government to commit crimes against its citizens. Citizens in Iran are recognizing their own human rights, making it more difficult for the government to deny these rights.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

Formal political parties are new in Iran and most conservatives still prefer to work through political pressure groups. These are groups that do not support candidates for election, but instead seek to influence government policy. Often political parties, or political groups, are formed right before elections and break up soon after.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>

# IRAQ

## Republic of Iraq

الله اكبر



### Type of Government

Parliamentary Democracy

### Constitution

October 15, 2005

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The Chief of State is the President who is elected by the Council of Representatives (Parliament) to serve a four-year term.

The Head of Government is the Prime Minister who is also elected by the Parliament to serve a four-year renewable term.

#### Legislative –

The Council of Representatives is a unicameral Parliament which has 325 members who are popularly elected for four-year terms.

#### Judicial –

The Iraq constitution calls for a Supreme Court whose members are selected by the Prime Minister and confirmed by the Council of Representatives.

### The Flag

There are three equal horizontal bands of red, white, and black. The Takbir (“God is Great”) is in green in the center, written in Arabic. The color black represents oppression, red represents the blood spilled to overcome oppression, and the white represents a bright future.

**Capital:** Baghdad

**Independence:** October 3, 1932 (from League of Nations under British administration); June 28, 2004 (from the Coalition Provisional Authority)

**Population:** 39,192,111 (July 2017 estimate) (rank=35)

**GDP per capita:** \$17,000 (rank=104)

**Ethnicity:** Arab 75%-80%, Kurdish 15%-20%, Other 5%

**Religion:** Muslim 98% (Shia 67%, Sunni 33%)

**Literacy:** Male 86%, Female 74%



### Coat of Arms

# IRAQ

## Republic of Iraq

الله أكبر

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The 2005 constitution guarantees basic rights. Iraqis are equal before the law regardless of gender, opinion, belief, nationality, religious group, or origin. Religion plays an important role in government and law. There are still issues with the rights of women and religious minorities in Iraq. Protection for rights of journalists is also an issue.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

There are many political parties that are associated with ethnic or religious groups. Some of the major parties are; United Iraqi Alliance, Iraqi National List, Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, Kurdistan Alliance, and National Congress Coalition.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



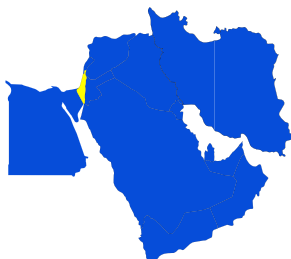
Fact Monster





# ISRAEL

## State of Israel



### Type of Government

Parliamentary Democracy

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is the Chief of State which is mainly a ceremonial role. The President is elected by the Knesset for a seven-year term. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government. The Prime Minister is usually chosen by the political party with a majority of members in the Knesset.

#### Legislative -

The unicameral legislature is called the Knesset. It has 120 members who are elected by popular vote for a four-year term.

#### Judicial -

The 15 justices of the Supreme Court are appointed by a committee representing all three branches of the government. The mandatory retirement age for these judges is 70.

### Constitution

There is no formal constitution. Some of the functions of a constitution are served by various documents. There is a working draft of a new constitution currently before a committee of the Knesset.

### The Flag

The Israeli flag has a white field with a blue Star of David centered between two horizontal blue bands. The basic design resembles a Jewish prayer shawl. The Star of David dates back to medieval times.



Coat of Arms

**Capital:** Jerusalem\* (Note: The U.S. and other nations recognize Tel Aviv as the capital and maintain their embassies there.)

**Independence:** May 14, 1948, from the League of Nations Mandate, under British Administration.

**Population:** 8,299,706 (rank = 97)

**GDP per capita:** \$36,300 (rank= 54)

**Ethnicity:** Jewish 75%, non-Jewish (mostly Arab) 25%

**Religion:** Jewish 75%, Muslim 18%, and Christian 2%

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 97%



# ISRAEL

## State of Israel

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

In the proposed Constitution of the State of Israel, there is a section for Civil and Human Liberties that guarantees basic civil and human rights for all Israeli citizens. The ongoing conflict between Palestinians and Jews over land rights in Israel continues to cause conflict in this country.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

Kadima, Labor, Likud, Shas, and the Yisrael Beytenu.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# LIBYA

## Type of Government

Transitional Government

## Government Structure

Currently, there is a transitional government (Libyan Transitional National Council) that is trying to move Libya towards a democratic government.

### Executive -

Transition

### Legislative -

Transition

### Judicial -

Transition

**Capital:** Tripoli

**Independence:** December 24, 1951 from the United Nations (released from Italy in 1947)

**Population:** 6,653,210 (rank = 106)

**GDP per capita:** \$10,000 (rank = 140)

**Ethnicity:** Berber/Arab 97%, other 3%

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim 97% (official religion), Christian 3%

**Literacy:** Male 97%, Female 86%

## Constitution

A constitution is in draft stage, outlining the transition of Libya to a democratic government.

## Civil Rights/Freedoms

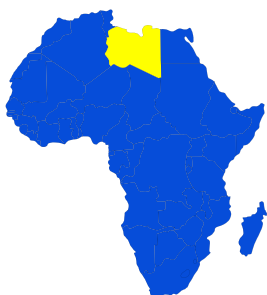
The former government of Muammar Qadhafi was totalitarian and harsh. Toppled during the “Arab Spring” in 2011, Qadhafi was killed after being captured. Three days after his death, Libya was declared a free nation by its citizens and is currently run by a transitional government with the goal of democracy.

## The Flag

The flag has three horizontal bands of red, black (double width) and green with a white crescent and star centered in the black stripe. The National Transitional Council reintroduced this flag of the former kingdom of Libya (1951-1969).

## Political Parties

The Homeland Party, Justice and Construction Party, National Front, and the National Forces Alliance



**Seal of  
National  
Transitional  
Council**



# LIBYA

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All Citizens of 18 years of age and older.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



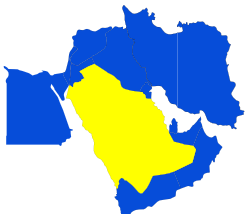
CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

# SAUDI ARABIA

## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



### Type of Government

Monarchy

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The King is both Chief of State and Prime Minister (Head of Government). The Deputy Prime Minister and heir to the throne is the Crown Prince. The King serves for life. The House of Al Saud (family) has ruled the nation since 1932. In 2006 a royal decree established a committee of Saudi princes that will play a role in deciding who will inherit the throne in the future after the current Crown Prince.

#### Legislative -

The Consultative Council or Majlis al-Shura consists of 150 members who are appointed by the monarch to serve renewable four-year terms.

#### Judicial -

The Saudi Court system consists of three main parts. The largest is the Shari'ah Courts, which hear most cases in the Saudi legal system. (Islamic law)

### Constitution

The Quran (holy book) and the Sunna ("traditions and sayings of the prophet Muhammad") serve as the country's constitution.

### The Flag

The flag is green (the traditional color in Islamic flags), with the Muslim Creed centered in large white Arabic script. The translation of the creed is: "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God." Below the Creed is a horizontal saber (sword). The flag is designed so as to read correctly on both sides.

**Capital:** Riyadh

**Independence:** September 23, 1932 (Became an independent nation when two kingdoms joined)

**Population:** 28,571,770 (rank=47)

**GDP Per Capita:** \$54,800 (rank=22)

**Ethnicity:** Arab 90%, Afro-Asian 10%

**Religion:** Islam (official) 100% (85%-90% Sunni, 10%-15% Shia)

(Note: The two most sacred Islamic cities of Mecca and Medina are located in Saudi Arabia)

**Literacy:** Male 97%, Female 91%



**Coat of Arms**



# SAUDI ARABIA

## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

### **Suffrage (voting)**

21 years of age; males only.

### **Political Parties**

There are no political parties.

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The most important human rights problems include citizens' lack of the right and legal means to change their government and strict restrictions on universal rights such as freedom of speech (including the Internet) and freedom of assembly. The government keeps track of citizens' friends and where citizens travel. Freedom of religion is not protected by law. In practice, the government severely restricts any religion other than the "official religion" which is Sunni Islam. Religious police sometimes harass and assault citizens and foreigners.

Women have few rights. They can't vote, own property, drive, or travel in public without permission from a male relative. Criminal punishments include public beheadings, stoning, amputations, and lashing. The law prohibits torture but sometimes it does occur.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



# AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA









# KENYA

## Republic of Kenya



### Type of Government

Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President is both Head of Government and Chief of State and is elected by popular vote for a five-year term.

#### Legislative –

The new constitution (2010) changed the legislature to a bicameral Parliament made up of a 290 member National Assembly and a 94 member Senate. Members of both houses serve five-year terms and are chosen by popular vote.

#### Judicial –

The 2010 Constitution creates three Superior Courts: (1) a Supreme Court, (2) a Court of Appeals, and (3) a High Court. There are three subordinate (lower) courts, including a Kadhis court which decides laws concerning Islam.

Judges for these courts are appointed by a Judicial Service Commission, with the chief justice being chosen by the President. Judges currently serve for life.

Kenya uses a mixed legal system based on English common law, Islamic law, and customary law.

### Constitution

The new constitution adopted in 2010 abolished the position of Prime Minister and established a bicameral legislature. Many details have yet to be finalized and will require significant legislative action.

### The Flag

The Kenyan flag has three equal horizontal bands of black, red, and green with white bands separating the colors. A large Maasai warrior's shield covering crossed spears is superimposed at the center. Black symbolizes the majority population, red the blood shed in the struggle for freedom, green stands for natural wealth, and white for peace. The shield and crossed spears symbolize the defense of freedom.

**Capital:** Nairobi

**Independence:** December 12, 1963 (from UK)

**Population:** 47,615,739 (rank = 30)

**GDP per capita:** \$3,500 (rank = 188)



**Coat of Arms**



# KENYA

## Republic of Kenya

**Ethnicity:** Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, and many more (these are African Tribes, which are considered by Africans to be ethnic groups).

**Religion:** Christian 83%, Muslim 11%

**Literacy:** Male 81%, Female 75%

### Civil Rights/Freedoms

Once completely implemented, the new constitution will result in many changes to the current government structure and many improvements in the freedoms allowed citizens. New elections are slated for March 4, 2013, but many observers are concerned that these will be delayed.

Ethnic clashes, many of which have been during elections, have emerged as one of the most serious human rights issues in Kenya. Most of these clashes have taken place in the Rift Valley, and are the result of long standing land disputes between tribes. Cases of torture, poor prison conditions and police brutality are common. Although many new freedoms are guaranteed by the new constitution, the courts have been accused of denying freedom to political opponents of the current government.

### Suffrage (voting)

All citizens age 18 and older.

### Political Parties

There are over forty registered political parties. The Party of National Unity and the Orange Democratic Movement are dominant. Others include the Kenyan African National Union, Forum for the Restoration of Democracy – Kenya, Forum for the Restoration of Democracy – Asili, National Rainbow Coalition.

### Current Issues:

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

# NIGERIA

## Federal Republic of Nigeria

### Type of Government

Federal Republic

### Constitution

Adopted May 5, 1999 and took effect May 9, 1999.

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The President is Head of State and Head of Government and is elected by popular vote for a four-year term. The President is eligible to serve another term.

#### Legislative –

The National Assembly is bicameral. It consists of the Senate which has 109 members and the House of Representatives which has 360 members. Members of both are elected by popular vote for four-year terms.

#### Judicial –

The Supreme Court consists of 15 justices that are appointed by the President and serve until the age of 70.

Law is based on English law, Islamic law, and traditional law.

### The Flag

The flag of Nigeria was adopted on October 1, 1960. It consists of vertical bands of green, white, and green. The green stands for Nigeria's green land and the white stands for peace and unity.



**Coat of Arms**

**Capital:** Abuja

**Independence:** October 1, 1960 (from UK)

**Population:** 190,632,261 (rank = 7)

**GDP per capita:** \$5,900 (rank = 164)

**Ethnicity:** Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with more than 250 ethnic groups. The largest ethnic groups (and those with the most political influence) are Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, and many others

**Religion:** Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, Indigenous beliefs 10%

**Literacy:** Male 69%, Female 50%





# NIGERIA

**Federal Republic of Nigeria**

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Nigerian Constitution protects basic rights and liberties, but there are issues with political dishonesty. Police and government often ask for bribes in order to conduct business and investigate crimes. Police and soldiers are often accused of torture and killings of people they believe guilty of crimes. Violence still exists between Christians and Muslims. Many people have been killed or injured because of religious/ethnic conflicts.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age or older.

## **Political Parties**

People's Democratic Party, All Nigeria People's party, Action Congress of Nigeria, Progressive People's Alliance, Communist Party of Nigeria, Democratic People's Party, and many others.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# SOUTH AFRICA

## Republic of South Africa



### Type of Government

Republic

### Constitution

December 10, 1996

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government and is chosen by the National Assembly for a five-year term.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral Parliament consists of the National Council (90 members elected by the 9 provincial legislatures for 5 year terms) and the National Assembly (400 members elected by popular vote for five-year terms).

#### Judicial -

The Supreme Court consists of 22 judges that are chosen by the President for a non-renewable term of 12 years and must retire at the age of 70.

### The Flag

The flag was adopted April 27, 1994. The colors black, yellow, green, white, red, and blue represent the nation's rainbow of peoples. The "Y" design symbolizes the union of groups that form South Africa.



**Coat of Arms**

**Capital:** Pretoria

**Independence:** May 31, 1910 from Colonial Britain, May 31, 1961 Republic declared, April 27, 1994, first democratic election.

**Population:** 54,841,552 (rank = 25)

**GDP per capita:** \$13,500 (rank =119)

**Ethnicity:** Black African 80%, White 8%, Colored 9%, Others

**Religion:** Protestant 37%, Catholic 7%, Muslim 2%, Other Christian 36%, Others

**Literacy:** Male 95%, Female 93%



# SOUTH AFRICA

Republic of South Africa

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The South African Constitution and Bill of Rights protect the basic rights of citizens such as freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. A safe environment, health care, housing and education are also rights. A fair and impartial judiciary is also part of the Constitution. High criminal activity is a concern in this country.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

## **Political Parties**

ANC (African National Congress), DA (Democratic Alliance), IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party), UDM (United Democratic Movement), ACDP (African Christian Democratic Party)

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# SOUTH SUDAN

## Republic of South Sudan



### Type of Government

Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government. He/She is elected by popular vote and must receive at least fifty percent of the total votes. The term is five years and he/she can be re-elected for another term. The President appoints two Vice Presidents.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral national legislature consists of the National Legislative Assembly (332 members who serve four-year terms) and the Council of States (50 members who serve four-year terms) and are elected by popular vote.

#### Judicial -

The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice, a Deputy Chief Justice and not less than nine Justices chosen by the President.

### Constitution

Transitional constitution effective July 9, 2011.

### The Flag

The flag has three equal horizontal bands of black, red and green. The red band is edged in white. A blue triangle is based on the left side and contains a gold five-pointed star. Black represents the people of South Sudan, red the struggle for freedom, green the verdant land, and blue the waters of the Nile River. The gold star represents the unity of the states that make up South Sudan.

**Capital:** Juba

**Independence:** July 9, 2011 from Sudan

**Population:** 13,026,129 (rank = 73)

**GDP per capita:** \$1,500 (rank=220)

**Ethnicity:** (tribal groups) Dinka, Nuer, Kakawa, Bari, Azande, Shilluk, Kuku, Murle, Mandari, Didinga, Ndogo, Bviri, Lndi

**Religion:** Animist (traditional), and Christian

**Literacy:** Male 40%, Female 16%



Coat of Arms



# SOUTH SUDAN

## Republic of South Sudan

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Sudan has experienced civil war for most of its existence. This conflict has been rooted in deep cultural and religious differences and has slowed Sudan’s political and economic development. This war has also caused massive displacement of its people. The people of north Sudan have controlled the country and have tried to unify it using Islam and Arab culture. Non-Muslims living in the south, west, and east resisted. In January 2011, the south voted to secede from Sudan and declared its independence by establishing the Republic of South Sudan.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

Not indicated at this time.

### **Political Parties**

Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, National Congress Party, Sudan People’s Liberation for Democratic Change.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster





# SUDAN

## Republic of the Sudan

### Type of Government

Federal Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government. He/she is elected by popular vote and must receive at least fifty percent of the total votes. The term is for five-years and he/she can be re-elected once. The President appoints two Vice-Presidents.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral National Legislature consists of the Council of States (50 members indirectly elected by state legislatures for six-year terms) and the National Assembly (450 members elected various ways for six-year terms).

#### Judicial -

The Supreme Court consists of 70 judges that are appointed by the President and reaches decisions by majority vote. The judges rule on civil, criminal, and Sharia law (strict Islamic law).

### Constitution

Interim national constitution adopted July 5, 2005.

### The Flag

The flag has three equal bands of red, white, and black with a green triangle on the left side. Based on the Arab revolt flag of World War I, the color red signifies the struggle for freedom. White is the color of peace, light, and love. The color black represents Sudan itself (in Arabic, Sudan means black). Green represents the color of Islam, agriculture and prosperity.

**Capital:** Khartoum

**Independence:** January 1, 1956 from Egypt and the United Kingdom.

**Population:** 37,345,935  
(rank = 37)

**GDP per capita:** \$4,600  
(rank = 174)

**Ethnicity:** Sudanese Arab 70%, Fur, Beja, Nuba, Fallata.

**Religion:** Sunni Muslim and a small Christian minority.

**Literacy:** Male 83%,  
Female 69%



### Coat of Arms



# SUDAN

## Republic of the Sudan

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Sudan has experienced civil war for most of its existence. This conflict has been rooted in deep cultural and religious differences and has slowed Sudan's political and economic development. This war has also caused massive displacement of its people. The people of north Sudan have controlled the country and have tried to unify it using Islam and Arab culture. Non-Muslims living in the south, west and east resisted. In January 2011, the south voted to secede from Sudan and declared its independence by establishing the Republic of South Sudan.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 17 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

Democratic Unionist Party, Democratic Unionist Party – Original, National Congress Party, Popular Congress Party, Umma Federal Party, Umma Renewal and Reform Party.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# TANZANIA

## United Republic of Tanzania



### Type of Government

Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is both Head of State and Head of Government. He/She is elected by popular vote for a five-year term and is eligible for a second term.

#### Legislative -

The legislature is a unicameral National Assembly. It has 357 members most of whom are elected by direct popular vote. The Assembly makes laws that apply to only mainland Tanzania.

#### Judicial -

The Judicial branch consists of the Court of Appeals, the High Court, District Courts, and Primary Courts.

The High Court has 30 judges chosen by the President to supervise lower courts.

The Court of Appeals is the highest court in civil and criminal cases. It has five judges appointed by the President for five-year terms. Law is based on English common law.

### Constitution

Adopted on April 25, 1977. Major revisions were made in October, 1984.

### The Flag

The flag of Tanzania is divided diagonally by a gold-edged black band. The upper triangle is green and the lower triangle is blue. The color green represents the natural vegetation of the country and gold represents the rich mineral deposits. Black represents the native Swahili people and blue the country's many lakes, rivers, and the Indian Ocean.

**Capital:** Dar es Salaam

**Independence:** April 26, 1964 (from UK)

**Population:** 53,950,935 (rank = 26)

**GDP per capita:** \$3,200 (rank = 192)

**Ethnicity:** African 99% (95% Bantu, more than 130 other tribes)

**Religion:** Christian 61%, Muslim 35%, others

**Literacy:** Male 83%, Female 73 %



### Coat of Arms



# TANZANIA

United Republic of Tanzania

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Constitution includes a Bill of Rights for citizens, but the government does not always enforce these rights. There is corruption within the government and reports of child labor, human trafficking, a poor education system, and use of excessive force. Killings have been connected to the belief in witchcraft.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

## **Political Parties**

Party of Democracy and Development, Revolutionary Party, Democratic Party, National Convention for Construction and Reform, Tanzania Labor Party, United Democratic Party.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook

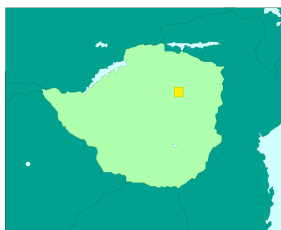


Fact Monster



# ZIMBABWE

## Republic of Zimbabwe



### Type of Government

Parliamentary Democracy

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is Chief of State and Head of Government and is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. There are no limits to the number of terms served. Robert Mugabe has been President of Zimbabwe since its independence in 1980.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral (two houses) legislature consists of a Senate (93 members) elected in different ways and a House of Assembly (210 members) elected by popular vote. Both houses serve five-year terms.

#### Judicial -

The highest court is the Supreme Court which has a chief justice and four judges appointed by the President. They normally serve until age 65, but may elect to serve until age 70.

### Constitution

May 16, 2013 (The newest constitution limits future Presidents to two five-year terms, does not allow the President to veto legislation, and includes a Bill of Rights).

### The Flag

The flag has seven equal bands of green, yellow, red, black, red, yellow, and green. There is a white triangle on the hoist side with a yellow Zimbabwe bird and a red star in the background. The star represents peace, and the bird represents the long history of the country. Green represents agriculture, yellow the mineral wealth, and red the blood that was shed to achieve independence. Black represents the native people.

**Capital:** Harare

**Independence:** April 18, 1980 (Formerly known as the Republic of Southern Rhodesia from 1965-1979 after declaring independence from Great Britain)

**Population:** 13,805,084 (rank=72)

**GDP per capita:** \$2,300 (rank=201)

**Ethnicity:** African 99%, other 1%



**Coat of Arms**



# ZIMBABWE

## Republic of Zimbabwe



CIA World Factbook



Fact Monster

**Religion:** Protestant 75%, Roman Catholic 7%, Other Christian 5%, Traditional 2% (Traditional beliefs and practices are often combined with religions.)

**Literacy:** Male 89%, Female 85%

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The citizens of Zimbabwe are currently experiencing repression, such as; hunger, lack of food, no health care, lack of education, unemployment, inflation, disease, and political instability. During the last elections, the process was considered flawed and was criticized by those monitoring the election. Neighboring countries are guarding their borders because thousands of Zimbabweans are fleeing the country to find work and to escape harassment by the government. The new constitution has not improved human or civil rights for Zimbabwean citizens due to the lack of implementation of the many rights it protects. The economy is unstable.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

18 years of age; universal

### **Political Parties**

Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front, Movement For Democratic Change, Movement for Democratic Change, Zimbabwe African People’s Union, Zimbabwe National African Union-NDONGA

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



# **SOUTH & SOUTHEAST ASIA**







# CHINA

## People's Republic of China



### Type of Government

Communist State

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The Chief of State is the President. There is also a Vice President. The National People's Congress elects both for a five-year term. The Head of Government is the Premier. There is an Executive Vice Premier and several other Vice Premiers all nominated by the President and confirmed by the National People's Congress.

#### Legislative –

The National People's Congress is unicameral. It has 2,987 members. Municipal, regional and local people's congresses, and the People's Liberation Army elect members to serve five-year terms.

#### Judicial –

The Supreme People's Court is the highest court. Judges are appointed by the National People's Congress. There are many Local People's Courts and Special People's Courts.

### Constitution

October 1, 1949; revised several times, most recently in 2004.

### The Flag

The flag has a red background with a large yellow five pointed star and four smaller yellow five pointed stars arranged in a vertical arc toward the middle of the flag in the upper left corner. The color red represents revolution and the stars represent the four social classes united under the Communist Party of China.

**Capital:** Beijing

**Independence:** January 1, 1912 the Republic of China replaced the Qing Dynasty. October 1, 1949 the People's Republic of China was established.

**Population:** 1,379,302,711 (July 2017 estimate), (rank = 1)

**GDP per capita:** \$16,700 (rank = 108)

**Ethnicity:** Han Chinese 92%, others 9%

**Religion:** Buddhist 18%, Christian 5%, Islam 2 % (Officially Atheist) 2010 est.

**Literacy:** Male 98%, Female 95%



Coat of Arms



# CHINA

## People's Republic of China

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Communist Party is the largest political party in the world. It is tightly organized and is harsh in keeping its grip on power. The party controls many aspects of peoples' lives – what they learn at school and watch on TV, their jobs and housing, even the number of children they are allowed.

Citizens above the age of 18 are entitled by the Chinese constitution to basic political rights such as freedom of religion, free press and speech. China has long rejected worldwide criticism of its human rights record. Recently the government issued the National Human Rights Action Plan of China, which aims to expand democracy and the rule of law for millions of Chinese.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older.

### **Political Parties**

Chinese Communist Party

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# INDIA

## Republic of India



### Type of Government

Federal Republic – The largest democracy in the world.

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The Chief of State is the President who is elected by an electoral college for a five-year term and whose duties are largely ceremonial. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister who is chosen by members of the majority party in the People’s Assembly.

#### Legislative –

India has a bicameral Parliament. The Council of States has 245 members that serve six year terms. Twelve members are appointed by the President and the rest are chosen by the legislatures of the states and territories. The People’s Assembly has 545 members that serve five-year terms. 543 of the members are elected by popular vote and two members are selected by the President.

#### Judicial –

The Supreme Court consists of one Chief Justice and twenty five associate justices that are selected by the President and stay in office until age 65 or until removed because of “proved” misbehavior. Common Law is based on the English model, with separate personal law codes for Muslims, Christians, and Hindus.

### Constitution

Adopted on January 26, 1950, and amended many times.

### The Flag

The saffron color on the top represents courage and sacrifice, the white represents purity, and the green represents peace and progress. The symbol in the center is the Ashoka Chakra, the wheel of law of Dharma (natural law).

**Capital:** New Delhi

**Independence:** August 15, 1947 (from the UK)

**Population:** 1,281,935,911 (July 2017 estimate), (rank = 2)

**GDP per capita:** \$7,200 (rank = 157)

**Ethnicity:** Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and others 3%.

**Religion:** Hindu 80%, Muslim 14%, Christian 2%, Sikh 2%

**Literacy:** Male 81%, Female 61%



सत्यमेव जयते

### Coat of Arms



# INDIA

## Republic of India

### **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Constitution of India protects equality before the law, speech, religion, culture and information.

### **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens, 18 years of age and older are able to vote.

### **Political Parties**

India National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India – Marxist, and many regional and small national parties.

### **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



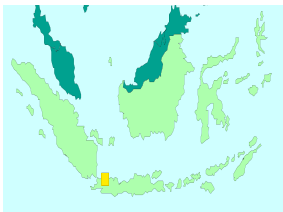
CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

# INDONESIA

## Republic of Indonesia



### **Type of Government**

Republic

### **Government Structure**

The Indonesian government is based on a set of beliefs known as Pancasila. Pancasila consists of five principles: (1) belief in one God, (2) humanitarianism, (3) unity of Indonesia, (4) democracy, and (5) social justice for all people. It is the official state doctrine and all religious, professional, and cultural organizations are required to adopt Pancasila.

### **Executive –**

The President is Chief of State, Head of Government, and commander of the armed forces and is elected by direct vote of the citizens for a five-year term.

### **Legislative –**

Indonesia has a bicameral legislature made up of The People's Consultative Assembly and The People's Representative Council. The People's Consultative Assembly has the authority to amend the constitution. It consists of 695 members that are elected in different ways. The People's Representative Council has 500 members that are elected by popular vote and serve five-year terms.

### **Judicial –**

The Supreme Court is the final court of challenge. Judges are chosen by the President from a list of candidates that are selected by the legislature.

There are special religious courts that handle personal matters among Muslims, such as divorce and inheritances. There are no juries in Indonesia.

### **Constitution**


The constitution was written in August 1945 and amended in 1999, 2001, and 2002.

### **The Flag**

The flag has equal red and white horizontal bands. The red band symbolizes courage and the white band represents purity. The colors come from the banner of the Majapahit Empire that ruled during the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries.



**Coat of Arms**



# INDONESIA

## Republic of Indonesia



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

**Capital:** Jakarta

**Independence:** August 17, 1945 (declared); December 27, 1949 (from the Netherlands)

**Population:** 260,580,739 (July 2017 estimate) (rank=4)

**GDP per capita:** \$12,400 (rank=127)

**Ethnicity:** Javanese 40%, Sudanese 16%, Malay 4%, Batak 4%, others 40%

**Religion:** Muslim 87%, Protestant 7%, Roman Catholic 3%, Hindu 2%

**Literacy:** Male 97%, Female 94%

### Civil Rights/Freedoms

While not an Islamic state, Indonesia has the fastest growing population of Muslims in the world. Indonesia has made great strides recently in becoming a stable democracy, but concerns over human rights still remain. Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are main areas of concern. Child labor and human trafficking are also problems.

### Suffrage (voting)

All citizens 17 years of age and older and married persons regardless of age.

### Political Parties

Some of the major political parties are: Functional Groups Party, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, National Awakening Party, United Development Party, and the Democratic Party.

### Current Issues

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>

# JAPAN



## Type of Government

Parliamentary Democracy with a constitutional Monarch

## Government Structure

### Executive –

The Chief of State is the Emperor (a hereditary position). The Head of Government is the Prime Minister. The Diet selects the Prime Minister who is the leader of the majority party in the Diet.

### Legislative –

The bicameral legislature is called the Diet and consists of the House of Representatives (480 members elected for a four-year term by popular vote) and the House of Councilors (242 members elected for a six-year term by popular vote). In the event of a disagreement between the houses, the House of Representatives prevails.

### Judicial –

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is chosen by the Emperor. The other justices are chosen by the executive cabinet members.

## Constitution

May 3, 1947 - The current constitution was adopted as an amendment to the Meiji Constitution because of United States influence after World War II.

## The Flag

The flag is white with a red circle in the middle. The red circle symbolizes, the sun and is known as “Hinomaru” which in Japanese means “circle of the sun”.

**Capital:** Tokyo

**Independence:** No colonial ruler

**Population:** 126,451,398  
(rank=10)

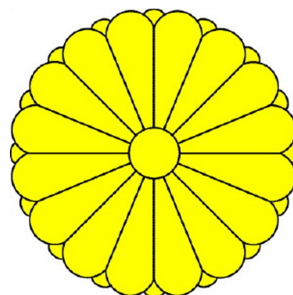
**GDP per capita:** \$42,800  
(rank=42)

**Ethnicity:** Japanese 99%

**Religion:** Shintoism 79%,  
Buddhism 67%, Christianity 2%

*Note: total exceeds 100% because many people belong to both Shintoism and Buddhism (2012)*

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 99%



## Coat of Arms



# JAPAN

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Because of American influence at the end of World War II, the Japanese Constitution includes a Bill of Rights similar to the U.S. Bill of Rights.

Japan is a parliamentary democracy with a purely symbolic monarchy. Elections are free and fair. While all citizens have equal political rights under the law, few women are represented in political office. Japan's news media are overwhelmingly private and independent. Japanese of all faiths can worship freely. The constitution guarantees freedoms of assembly and association. There are many large but peaceful protests against nuclear power and the US military presence in Okinawa. Japan's judiciary is independent. Suspects of crimes are generally judged fairly and quickly. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, creed, sex, or social status. However, there is still discrimination against foreign-born Japanese and small indigenous island groups. Japanese citizens enjoy broad freedom in their choices of residence, profession, and education.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 20 years of age and older can vote.

## **Political Parties**

Democratic Party of Japan, Social Democratic Party, People's New Party, Liberal Democratic Party, New Komeito Party, Japan Communist Party, Your Party.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# NORTH KOREA

## Democratic People's Republic of Korea



### Type of Government

Totalitarian Communist State /  
One Man Dictatorship

### Constitution

Adopted 1948, revised many  
times, most recently in 2011.

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The Chief of State is the  
President who is chosen by the  
Supreme People's Assembly for  
an unspecified term. The Head  
of Government is the Premier  
chosen by the Supreme People's  
Assembly for an unspecified  
term.

#### Legislative -

The Supreme People's  
Assembly is a unicameral  
legislature which has 687  
members elected by popular  
vote for a five-year term. The  
ruling Communist Party  
approves candidates who are  
elected without opposition.

#### Judicial -

The judges of the Central Court  
are elected by the Supreme  
People's Assembly.

### The Flag

The flag has three horizontal  
bands of blue, red (triple width)  
and blue. Red symbolizes the  
revolutionary traditions. White  
stands for purity, strength, and  
dignity. The blue bands  
symbolize sovereignty, strength,  
and friendship. The Red Star  
represents socialism.



Coat of Arms

**Capital:** Pyongyang

**Independence:** August 15, 1945, from Japan

**Population:** 25,248,140 (rank = 51)

**GDP per capita:** \$1,700 (rank = 215)

**Ethnicity:** Korean, small population of Chinese and Japanese

**Religion:** Buddhist and Confucianist, some Christian

**Literacy:** Male 100%, Female 100% (Estimate 2015)



# NORTH KOREA

Democratic People's  
Republic of Korea



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The new, young dictator, Kim Jong Un, is following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather whose governments were secretive and harsh. Citizens have the opportunity to vote, but the Communist Party is the only political party and chooses the one person to vote for. There are government sponsored religious groups that exist only to give the impression of religious freedom. The government has total control over every aspect of peoples' lives, including where they can live, work, go to school, or travel. There is no freedom of speech. The government controls the media which is heavily censored.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 17 years of age and older.

## **Political Parties**

Korean Worker's Party (Communist)

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>

# PAKISTAN

## Islamic Republic of Pakistan



### Type of Government

Federal Republic

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The Chief of State is the President who is elected by secret ballot by an electoral college made up of members of the Senate, the National Assembly, and provincial assemblies. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister who is selected by the National Assembly.

#### Legislative -

The bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (100 members elected indirectly by provincial assemblies and their representatives for six-year terms) and the National Assembly (342 members, 272 elected by popular vote, 60 seats reserved for women, 10 seats reserved for non-Muslims, for five-year terms).

#### Judicial -

The highest court is the Supreme Court with justices appointed by the Prime Minister. The Pakistan Constitution empowers the courts to examine and decide whether any law or provision of law conflicts with restrictions of Islam as outlined in the Holy Qur'an.

### The Flag

The flag is green with a vertical white band. White symbolizes the role of religious minorities. The large white crescent moon and star on the field of green symbolize Islam.

**Capital:** Islamabad

**Independence:** August 14, 1947 from British India

**Population:** 204,924,861 (rank = 6)

**GDP per capita:** \$5,400 (rank = 172)

**Ethnicity:** Punjabi 45%, Sindhi 14%, Sariaiki 8%, Muhajirs 8%, others

**Religion:** Muslim (official) 96% (Sunni 88%, Shia 12%)

**Literacy:** Male 70%, Female 46%

### Constitution

Adopted in 1948 and revised many times, most recently in 2011.



**Coat of Arms**

# PAKISTAN

Islamic Republic of Pakistan



## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The Pakistan Constitution provides basic rights and freedoms for citizens. The 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment added in 2011 ended the President's ability to dissolve Parliament and provided citizens' right to information. It also gave the provinces (like states) more freedom to make their own decisions but told them to provide free education to all children. Due to strict readings of Islamic Law (Sharia Law), women and religious minorities still do not have full rights. Freedom of speech is still an issue. These rights are protected under the Pakistani Constitution except "in the interests of the Glory of Islam".

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older.

## **Political Parties**

Pakistan People's Parliamentarians, Pakistan Muslim League, Muttahidda Quomi Movement, Awami National Party, and many others.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster

# SOUTH KOREA

## Republic of Korea



### **Type of Government**

Republic

### **Government Structure**

#### **Executive -**

The President is Chief of State and is elected by popular vote for a single five-year term. The Prime Minister is Head of Government and is appointed by the President with the consent of the National Assembly.

#### **Legislative -**

The unicameral (one house) legislature is called the National Assembly. It has 300 members (246 members are elected from single-member districts and 54 are elected by the population within a certain area) Members serve four-year terms.

#### **Judicial -**

The highest courts are the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court. The Supreme Court consists of a chief justice and 13 judges. The Chief Justice is appointed by the President upon recommendation of the National Assembly and serves a six-year non-renewable term. The other justices serve renewable six-year terms. The Constitutional Court consists of a lead justice called the President of the Constitutional Court and 8 other justices. All justices are appointed by the country's President. The lead

justice serves until retirement at age 70, and the other justices serve six-year renewable terms until required to retire at age 65.

### **Constitution**

October 29, 1987

### **The Flag**

The flag consists of a white background with a red and blue yin-yang symbol in the center. In each corner there are different trigrams from the ancient Book of Changes. White is the traditional color and represents peace and purity. Blue represents the negative cosmic forces of the yin and red symbolizes the opposite forces of the yang. Each trigram represents the four universal elements, which together express the principle of movement and harmony.

### **Coat of Arms**





# SOUTH KOREA

## Republic of Korea



CIA World Factbook



Fact Monster

**Capital:** Seoul

**Independence:** August 15, 1945 from Japan

**Population:** 50,181,299 (rank=27)

**GDP per capita:** \$39,400 (rank=47)

**Ethnicity:** Korean

**Religion:** Christian (Protestant 20%, Roman Catholic 8%), Buddhist 16%, None 57% (Many people practice Confucianism) (2015 estimate)

### Civil Rights/Freedoms

The government generally respects the civil and human rights of its citizens. There are still issues with police brutality and with human trafficking of women, and there is no freedom of speech to support the Communist Party or the government of North Korea. Problems continue with North Korea over the country's border.

### Suffrage (voting)

19 years of age; universal

### Political Parties

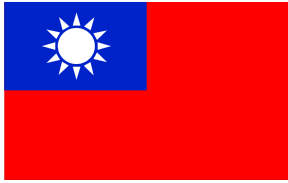
New Frontier Party (formerly the Grand National Party); Democratic United Party (formerly the Democratic Party); Liberty Forward Party; Unified Progressive Party; Renewal Korea Party; K Party

### Current Issues

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



# TAIWAN

## Type of Government

Multi-party democracy

## Government Structure

### Executive -

The Chief of State is the President who is elected by popular vote for a four-year term and is eligible for a second term. The Head of Government is the Premier who is appointed by the President.

### Legislative -

The Legislative Yuan is a unicameral (one house) legislature. It has 113 members who are elected in many different ways. The number of people who live in an area determines how many members that area has. Members serve four-year terms.

### Judicial -

The Judicial Yuan is the name of the judicial branch. There are 15 judges that are appointed by the President and serve eight year non-consecutive terms with approval of the Legislative Yuan.

## Constitution

Adopted on December 25, 1946, effective December 25, 1947 and amended many times.

## The Flag

The flag has a red field with a dark blue rectangle in the top left corner. In the rectangle there is a white sun with 12 sun rays. Blue symbolizes liberty, justice, and democracy. Red stands for fraternity, sacrifice, and nationalism. White represents equality, frankness, and the livelihood of the people. The 12 rays of the sun represent the months of the twelve traditional Chinese hours with each ray representing two hours.

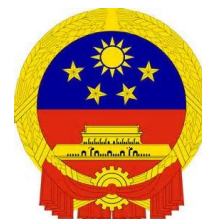
**Capital:** Taipei

**Independence:** In 1949, hundreds of thousands of Nationalists fled the Communist Revolution in mainland China. They moved to the island of Formosa, established their own government, and claimed to be the Republic of China. (Mainland China does not recognize Taiwan as independent.)

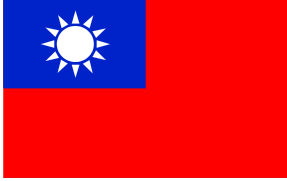
**Population:** 23,508,428 (rank=55)

**GDP per capita:** \$50,300 (rank=28)

**Ethnicity:** Han Chinese 95%



**Coat of Arms**



# TAIWAN

**Religion:** Buddhist 35%, Taoist 33%, Christian 4%, others

**Literacy:** Male 100%, Female 97%

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Citizens of Taiwan have a voice in their government and can make changes through voting. Citizens enjoy basic rights and freedoms.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 20 years of age and older can vote.

## **Political Parties**

Democratic Progressive Party, Nationalist Party, Non-Partisan Solidarity Union, People First Party.

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>

CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# VIETNAM

## Socialist Republic of Vietnam



### Type of Government

Communist state

### Government Structure

#### Executive -

The President is the Chief of State and is elected by the National Assembly from among its members for a five-year term. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government and is appointed by the President from among the members of the National Assembly and serves a five-year term.

#### Legislative -

Vietnam has a unicameral legislature called the National Assembly or Quoc Hoi. It has 500 members who are elected by popular vote for a five-year term.

#### Judicial -

The highest court is the Supreme People's Court, which consists of a Chief Justice and 13 judges. The Chief Justice is elected by the National Assembly on the recommendation of the President for a 5-year, renewable term. Other judges are appointed by the President for 5-year terms.

### Constitution

April 15, 1992, and amended in 2001.

### The Flag

The flag has a red field with a large yellow five-pointed star in the center. The red symbolizes revolution and blood. The yellow star represents the five elements of the people of Vietnam – peasants, workers, intellectuals, traders, and soldiers.

**Capital:** Hanoi (Ha Noi)

**Independence:** September 2, 1945, from France

**Population:** 96,160,163 (rank = 15)

**GDP per capita:** \$6,900 (rank=159)

**Ethnicity:** Kinh (Viet) 86%, Tay 2%, Thai 2%, Muong 2%, Khmer 2%, Mong 1%, Nung 1%, others 5%

**Religion:** Buddhist 8%, Catholic 7%, Hoa Hoa 2%, Cao Dai 1%, none 82%

**Literacy:** Male 96%, Female 93%



### Coat of Arms



# Vietnam

Socialist Republic of Vietnam



CIA World Factbook



Fact Monster

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

The communist party announced independence from France sparking a war of resistance. In 1954, Vietnam was divided into North (Communist) and South (Supported by France and the U.S.). In the early 1960's the French abandoned Vietnam and left the war to the US. The U.S. pulled out in a 1973 cease fire agreement. In 1975 Vietnam reunified as one country.

Although the Vietnamese Constitution says that it protects basic human rights, in reality, it does little to actually protect the fundamental rights of its citizens. The human rights situation in Vietnam has deteriorated significantly in recent years. This last year was marked by a severe and intensifying crackdown on critics, including long prison terms for many peaceful activists whose "crime" was calling for political change. Vietnam actively suppresses free speech and religious freedom. Vietnamese courts are controlled by the Communist Party and lack impartiality. The economy is controlled by the government.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

18 years of age; universal.

## **Political Parties**

Communist Party of Vietnam (Vietnam is a one party state)

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/home>



# AUSTRIA







# AUSTRALIA

## Commonwealth of Australia



### Type of Government

Federal Parliamentary Democracy and member of the British Commonwealth with a Constitutional Monarchy

### Government Structure

#### Executive –

The Chief of State is the Monarch (Monarchy is hereditary). Because the Monarch lives in the United Kingdom, on the advice of the Prime Minister, she appoints a Governor General who represents her in Australia. The Governor General's role is mainly ceremonial.

The Head of Government is the Prime Minister who is the leader of the majority party in the House of Representatives.

#### Legislative –

The bicameral Federal Parliament consists of the Senate (76 seats) and the House of Representatives (150 Seats). They are elected by popular vote. Terms are up to three years, and no state can have fewer than five representatives.

#### Judicial –

The High Court consists of seven justices that are appointed by the Governor-General and serve until the age of 70. The law is based on English Common Law.

### Constitution

July 9, 1900: Effective January 1, 1901

### The Flag

On a blue background with the flag of the UK is in the upper left corner. A large seven pointed star in the lower left corner (known as the Commonwealth or Federation Star) represents the Federation of the Colonies in 1901. The star has one point for each of the six original states and one point representing all of Australia's internal and external territories. The right side represents the Southern Cross constellation.



### Coat of Arms

**Capital:** Canberra

**Independence:** January 1, 1901 (from the Federation of UK Colonies)

**Population:** 23,232,413 (rank = 56)

**GDP per capita:** \$50,300 (2017 estimate) (rank = 29)

**Ethnicity:** English 26%, Australian 25%, Irish 8%, Scottish 6%, Italian 3%, German 3%, Chinese 3%, Indian 1%, Greek 1%, Dutch 1%, other (includes Australian Aboriginal) 16%, unspecified 5%. \*(some people reported two ancestries)



# AUSTRALIA

Commonwealth of Australia

**Religion:** Protestant 23%, Catholic 23%, other Christian 4%, Buddhist 3%, Muslim 3%, Hindu 2%, others/unspecified 10%, none 22%

**Literacy:** Male 99%, Female 99%

## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Australia's approach to human rights and freedoms reflects its liberal democratic ideals and the equal and inalienable rights of all people as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

All citizens 18 years of age and older are required to vote in all federal and state elections. Those who do not vote may be fined.

## **Political Parties**

Labor Party, Liberal Party and the National Party .

## **Current Issues**

CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Fact Monster, Countries of the World: <http://www.factmonster.com/countries.html>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>



CIA World  
Factbook



Fact Monster



# OTHER







# ANCIENT ATHENS



## **Type of Government**

Direct Democracy

## **Government Structure**

In this “Direct Democracy”, sometimes called a “pure democracy”, citizens made policy and law in person without going through representatives and legislatures. Citizenship in Athens meant that you were a man (women were not eligible for citizenship), at least 18 years of age, who could prove past citizenship of his parents (This changed at different times in the history of this democracy).

## **Executive -**

The leader was chosen by lot, which meant pulling a person’s name out of a pile of possible leaders, like a lottery. Leaders were also chosen by citizens’ direct vote. The length of time a leader held office varied at different times in Ancient Athens.

## **Legislative -**

In Athens, democracy was instituted through the Council of 500. All male citizens over the age of thirty could serve for a term of one year on the Council and no one could serve more than two terms in a lifetime. Such an organization was necessary so that every citizen would learn from direct political

experience. The Council of 500 was responsible for the smooth running of the city-state of Athens.

## **Judicial -**

Around 460 BC, Pericles became the new leader of Athens. Athenian Democracy came to mean equality of justice and equality of opportunity. Equality of justice was secured by the jury system which ensured that slaves and other non-citizens were represented through patrons (wealthy benefactors). “Equality of opportunity “ did not mean that every man had the right to anything he wanted. What it did mean was that the criteria for choosing citizens for office were quality and efficiency, not wealth.

## **Constitution**

The Constitution of Athens (320 B.C.) is generally thought to have been written by Aristotle. This is generally considered to be the first democratic constitution in history.



# ANCIENT ATHENS



## **Civil Rights/Freedoms**

Before the time of Pericles, citizenship in Athens was limited to males above the age of 18 whose fathers had been citizens. Citizenship did not extend to women, children, or slaves. During Pericles rule, citizenship was given to males who could prove that both parents were citizens of Athens, thus granting women the status of citizenship without the rights of a citizen.

Citizens were allowed to own property, to serve in the Athenian government, and to vote. Being a citizen in Athens was considered very important. People who were not citizens were looked down upon.

## **Suffrage (voting)**

Males who were citizens age 18 and above.

## **More Information**

[http://www.ancientgreece.com/s/Main\\_Page/](http://www.ancientgreece.com/s/Main_Page/)

<http://greece.mrdonn.org/athensdemocracy.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/>



# EUROPEAN UNION



**Type of Government**  
Hybrid intergovernmental and supranational organization

**Government Structure**  
**Executive -**  
The European Council sets the overall political direction. It is led by its President and comprised of national heads of state.  
It meets at least four times per year. The Council has no power to pass laws.

The European Council elects its President out of its members by a majority vote. The Presidents' term is for 2 1/2 years and can be re-elected once.

**Legislative -**  
The European Union has three legislative bodies. One is the Council of the European Union (28 members) The voting system requires a majority of 55% in support. Voting occurs if a majority of members are present. Another legislative body is the European Parliament (751 seats shared among member states in proportion to population; members are elected by popular vote for a five-year term). The third body is the European Commission which represents the interests of the Union as a whole.

**Judicial -**  
Court of Justice of the European Union (insures that the treaties are

interpreted and applied uniformly throughout the EU, resolves disputed issues among the EU institutions, issues opinions on questions of EU law referred by member state courts) - 28 judges (one from each member state) appointed for a six-year term.  
General Court (a court below the Court of Justice) - 28 judges (one from each member state) appointed for a six-year term.  
Civil Service Tribunal - 7 judges appointed for a three-year term

**Constitution**  
There is no written constitution, but there are many treaties that function as the blueprint for the government. Especially important is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which helps protect the human and civil rights of citizens.

**The Flag**  
The flag has a blue field with 12 five-pointed gold stars arranged in a circle in the center. Blue represents the sky of the Western world. The circle of stars represent the peoples of Europe, a symbol of unity. The number of stars is fixed and does not change.





# EUROPEAN UNION



**Capital:** Brussels

**Created:** February 7, 1992 (Maastricht Treaty signed establishing the EU) and November 1, 1993 (Maastricht Treaty took effect)

**Population:** 516,195,432

**GDP per capita:** \$40,900 (rank = 45)

**Ethnicity:** Many different nationalities.

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 48%, Protestant 12%, Orthodox 8%, Muslim 2%

**Literacy:** Varies from member country to country.

## Civil Rights/Freedoms

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU was created in 2000 and protects many human rights of citizens.

## Suffrage (voting)

18 years of age; universal.

## Political Groups

European People's Party (EPP), Progressive Alliance of Socialist and Democrats (S&D), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

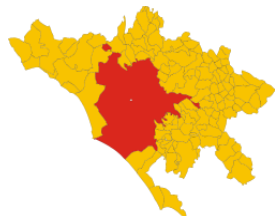
## Current Issues

Official European Union website  
[http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)

CIA World Factbook  
[www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html)

**Current European Union Countries:** (28 countries)  
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom. Candidate countries: Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey.

# ROMAN REPUBLIC



## **Type of Government**

Republic

## **Government Structure**

Rome was the first “republic”, which is a form of government in which the general population elects representatives to govern the nation. It’s different from a “pure” form of democracy, where the general population is the government. Ancient Athens was a “pure” democracy, while Ancient Rome was a “true” republic. In Athens, all landowning male citizens served in the legislature at some point, while in Rome citizens voted for representatives. Today, both “democracy” and “republic” are commonly used terms to describe any nation governed by freely elected representatives. The United States currently has this form of government.

### **Executive -**

Two elected magistrates called “Consuls” served as Head of Government. The executive office was always held by at least two men. The term of office was usually limited to one year.

### **Legislative -**

The Senate was composed of leaders from the patricians, who were rich landowners. They were the law- makers and they

controlled spending. Members of the Senate were not elected. They were chosen by the Consuls. Once chosen, they served for life. When a seat opened, a new Senator was selected by the current Consuls.

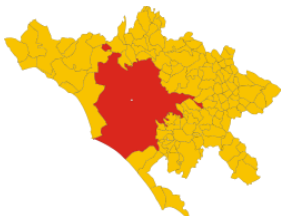
The Assembly was composed of all the plebeians, or common men of Rome. It was the right of the common man to assemble in the Forum (the open center of the city where business was conducted and events were held) and vote.

### **Judicial -**

Before the Roman Republic, laws were not written down. About 50 years after the Republic was formed, the leaders wrote down many of the old laws, to make sure everyone understood them. History refers to this group of laws as “The Twelve Tables” because the written laws were organized into 12 sections. These laws talked about property, crime, family, theft, marriage and inheritance. The laws tried to be fair, and they were put on display so that everybody could see them. These laws applied to every Roman citizen. Only adult free Roman men were citizens. Women, children, and slaves were not citizens of Rome, and thus had no voice in the government.



# ROMAN REPUBLIC



## Constitution

There was no written constitution. Rome was governed by a set of guidelines and principles passed down by prior generations.

**Capital:** Rome

**Independence:** Began with the consolidation of several kingdoms and small city-states.

**Population:** 4 to 5 million by the end of the first century

**Ethnicity:** Latins, Sabine, Etruscans, and the progeny of slaves taken from distant lands.

**Religion:** Polytheistic religion with many festivals and ceremonies.

**Literacy:** Literacy hovered around 10%, with upper and working class males making up most of that 10%.

## Civil Rights/Freedoms

The requirements for Roman citizenship changed over time as Rome grew and expanded into an empire. All males born to Roman citizens or freed slaves automatically became Roman citizens. Citizenship could also be earned through military service or good public deeds or bought in various other ways, but women and slaves could not become citizens.

## Suffrage (voting)

All citizens of Rome could vote. Age was not a factor.

## Political Groups

Plebeians and Patricians were the main political parties in Rome, although there were many sub-interests within these large groups. The Patricians were the rich landowners, while the Plebeians were the common men who owned businesses and worked with their hands. These two groups constantly fought for power in the Roman Republic.

## More Information:

BBC Rome for Kids

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/romans/US>



# UNITED NATIONS

## **History**

The United Nations Charter is a treaty that officially began in 1945, when a majority of representatives from 50 nations came together. The Charter established six principle agencies: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. There are currently 192 members. The headquarters is in New York City, but the land and buildings are international territory. The UN has its own flag and uses six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.

The goals of the United Nations are: to keep peace throughout the world, to develop friendly relations between nations, to work together to help people live better lives, to eliminate poverty, disease and illiteracy in the world, to stop environmental destruction, to encourage respect for every individual and nation's rights and freedoms, and to be a center for helping nations achieve these aims.

## **Government Structure** **Executive**

The Charter describes the Secretary-General as "chief administrative officer" of the United Nations, and directs him to perform "such other functions

as are entrusted" to him by United Nation agencies. The Charter also empowers the Secretary-General to "bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security".

The Secretary General is appointed on recommendation of the Security Council by the General Assembly, for a term of five years, with the option of reappointment for another five years.

## **Legislative**

Two of the most important legislative bodies of the United Nations are the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The General Assembly is the main deliberative organization of the UN, and is composed of representatives of all Member States.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. It has ten elected members, and five permanent members (China, United States, France, United Kingdom and Russian Federation).

The General Assembly elects the non-permanent members for two year terms. They are distributed on a regional basis. According to the Charter, the



# UNITED NATIONS

Security Council is mandated to act on behalf of all members of the UN to ensure prompt and effective action to maintain international peace and security. This can include sending armed peace keeping troops to an area to enforce the peace.

## **Judicial**

The International Court of Justice is located at The Hague in the Netherlands. It is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It settles legal disputes between states and gives advisory opinions to the UN and its agencies.

The Court is composed of 15 judges, who are elected for 9-year terms by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. Its official languages are English and French.

## **Constitution**

The UN's constitution is called a Charter. The Member States approved the Charter in 1945.

## **The Flag /Emblem**

The flag has the official emblem of the United Nations in the center, on a field of blue.

The current United Nations emblem was approved in 1946. The design is a map of the world surrounded by olive leaves, symbolizing peace around the world.

## **Suffrage**

In the General Assembly, all member states in good standing can vote on all issues. Some issues are decided by a two-thirds majority vote, but a simple majority decides other issues.

In the Security Council (which doesn't meet regularly, but only when there is a reason to meet) to pass a resolution, nine members of the Council must vote "yes", but if any of the five permanent members votes "no", it is called a veto, and the resolution does not pass.

## **Current Issues**

United Nations Cyberschool

<http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/>

The United Nations official website

<http://www.un.org>





# APPENDIX

## Law-Related Education





# Vocabulary List — Country Cards

Bicameral	Having two parts of a legislature. “Bi” means two.
Capital City	The city where a state or nation houses its government.
Chief of State	The formal head of a nation, as distinguished from a Head of Government. In most nations, this is a ceremonial role, with little power.
Civil Rights/Freedoms	Rights that protect individual freedoms, such speech, religion, assembly, petition, and property.
Communist	Government owns everything, including the businesses, farms, and property, and also provides health care, education and general welfare for its citizens.
Constitutional	Having a Constitution (form of government written down).
Democracy	A government where the people rule, either by themselves directly or through elected representatives.
Dictatorship	A country that is ruled by a single leader, who is not elected, and uses force to keep control.
Direct Democracy	A form of democracy where citizens themselves serve as their government, voting and acting on every issue. There are no elected representatives. Examples are Ancient Athens and townships in the New England area of the United States.
Electoral College	Electors chosen by the voters of each state that elect the president and vice-president of the United States of America.
Ethnicity	A group of people that share common heritage and a common culture.
Executive	Branch of government that includes the Head of State and Head of Government. Examples are Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Chancellors.
Federal	A group of states with a republican form of government. There is usually a division of powers between the states and the federal government.
Federation	There is a division of powers between governments such as states or provinces and the national government.
GDP	Gross Domestic Product is the market value of all officially recognized final goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time.
Head of Government	A person in charge of a country’s government. Example: President, Prime Minister, and Chancellor. This is the person who holds real power in the government.
Independence	Freedom from a colonial ruling power, or date that a region becomes an independent country.
Islamic Republic	A form of government that is ruled by and controlled by followers of the Islamic faith.

# Vocabulary List — Country Cards

Judicial	A branch of government that interprets the meaning of law and settles disputes.
Legislative	A branch of government that makes the laws and is also tasked with other duties such as approving executive appointees.
Limited Government	A type of government where the leaders have limited power and must follow the same laws all citizens follow .
Literacy	The ability to read and write.
Monarchy	A ruling position that is passed down within a certain family (hereditary). Usually a King or a Queen. Rule by one.
Nation or State	A politically organized body of people under a single government.
Parliament	A national legislative body (the same as the US Congress).
Per Capita	Value of goods and services a person produces in a given time. Usually shown in an average dollar amount.
Political Parties	A political organization that seeks to influence government policy by nominating candidates and trying to elect them to positions in government.
Popular Vote	The process by which qualified voters choose their candidates or vote on issues.
Province	An administrative division of a nation (the equivalent of a state in the United States).
Republican Government	A government where the power rests with the people. The people elect representatives to represent them in government.
Socialist	An economic system of community ownership. In this system the people control the means of production and distribution for the good of all people.
Suffrage	The right to vote.
Theocracy	A government which is controlled by a particular religious group.
Totalitarian	A country with one political party. Citizens are forced to do what the government tells them to do, and are usually prevented from leaving their country.
Transitional	A nation that is passing from one form of government to another.
Unicameral	Having one legislative body. “Uni” means one.
Unitary	A government where most or all of the power is in the hands of a central (national) government.
Universal	Including every citizen in a country.
Unlimited Government	A type of government where the leaders have no limits to their power.



# **PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT v. PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT**

## **PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT**

In a presidential system of government citizen voters directly or indirectly elect the chief executive or Head of Government. They also separately and independently choose members of the legislature. The chief executive and members of the executive cabinet cannot at the same time be members of the legislature. The executive serves for a definite, set term of office and may or may not also serve as the nation's ceremonial Head of State.

## **PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT**

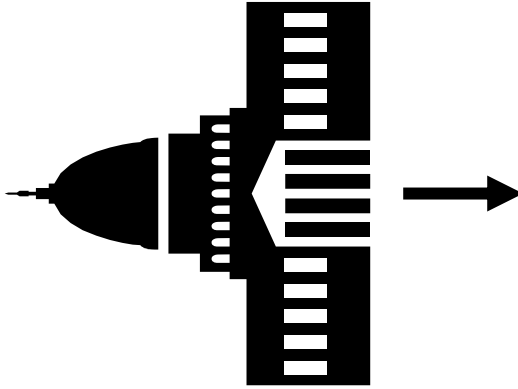
In a parliamentary system of government citizen voters directly elect members of the legislature. The members of this popularly elected legislature then choose one of their members (usually a member of the majority party) to serve as the chief executive or Head of Government. The Head of Government does not serve for a definite, set term but instead only for as long he/she enjoys the support of a majority of the members of the legislative body. Members of the executive cabinet are also at the same time members of the nation's legislature. In most nations with a parliamentary system a different individual (such as an hereditary monarch) serves as the ceremonial Head of State.

# SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

## Unitary

UNITARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT --- Most or all governmental power is in the hands of a central (national) government. Governments such as states or provinces have only those powers granted them by the central government. Their primary role is to carry out duties given them by the central government. This is the type of governmental system found in Great Britain and most nations of the world today.

### **Central Government**

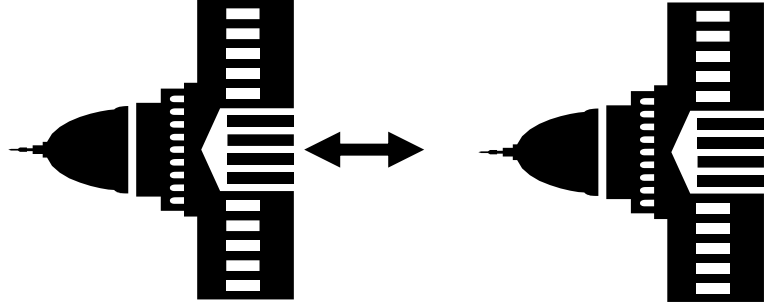


Local Governments

## Federal

FEDERAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT --- Power is divided between a central (national) government and a series of other governments such as states or provinces. Each has certain powers not possessed by the other, but there are some powers which both possess. This is the type of governmental system found in the United States today as well as in such other countries as Mexico and Canada.

### **Central Government**

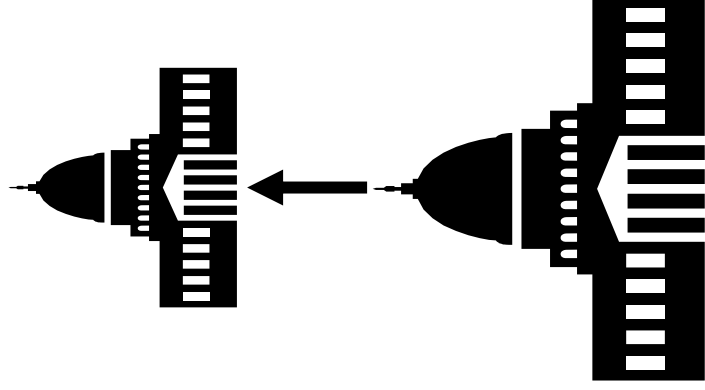


State Governments

## Confederation

CONFEDERATION SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT --- Most or all governmental power is in the hands of a series of governments called by different names in different countries. In the United States and Mexico, for example, these governments are called states. In Canada they are called provinces. There usually is a central (national) government, but it has little power. It is created by, gets its power from, and can be destroyed by the states (or whatever these governments may be called). This is the governmental system which the United States had under its first national constitution, the Articles of Confederation.

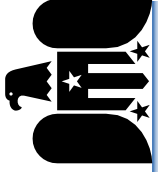
### **Central Government**



State Governments



## TYPES OF GOVERNMENT



TYPE	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLES
DEMOCRACY	The people govern themselves by meeting together and making laws for their society (PURE).	
DICTATORSHIP	One person rules the nation with no limits on his power and does whatever he wishes.	
MONARCHY	One person rules for life usually as a result of inheriting the position as a member of a certain family. Power may or may not be limited.	
REPUBLIC	Through elections the people choose those who govern them. (INDIRECT DEMOCRACY)	
THEOCRACY	Those who rule do so because they are members of a particular religious faith.	
TOTALITARIAN	One or a few individuals possess total control over the government as well as the economy. No opposition is permitted.	