

Country Profile: South Africa

South Africa is in its 14th year of democracy after decades of apartheid.

HISTORY

Until 1994 South Africa was ruled by a white minority government with it taking activists most of the last century before they succeeded in their fight to get rid of apartheid and extend democracy to the rest of the population. The white government which came to power in 1948 enforced a separation of races with its policy called apartheid. It dictated that black and white communities should live in separate areas, travel in different buses and stand in their own queues. The government introduced grand social engineering schemes such as the forced resettlement of hundreds of thousands of people. It poisoned and bombed opponents and encouraged trouble in neighbouring countries.

The apartheid government eventually negotiated itself out of power, and the new leadership encouraged reconciliation. But the cost of the years of conflict will be paid for a long time yet. South Africa faces major problems as it deals with the legacy of apartheid, but having held four successful national elections as well as local polls since the end of white rule, a democratic culture has taken hold, giving people at least some say in the search for solutions.

RECENT SITUATION

South Africa has the continent's biggest economy, with strong financial and manufacturing sectors. It is a leading exporter of minerals and tourism is a key source of foreign exchange. But many South Africans remain poor and unemployment is high - a factor blamed for a wave of violent attacks against migrant workers from other African countries. Land redistribution is an ongoing issue. Most farmland is still white-owned. Having so far acquired land on a "willing buyer, willing seller" basis, the government aims to transfer 30% of farmland to black South Africans by 2014. South Africa has the highest number of HIV/Aids sufferers in the world. Around one in ten of its citizens are infected with HIV. Free anti-retroviral drugs are available under a state-funded scheme. South Africa has become a driving force in African peace-keeping since the late 1990s. Working in tandem with Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria and Egypt, among other key African states, it has mooted initiatives aimed at addressing Africa's deadly conflicts. Its forces are involved in peace-keeping and associated duties in Burundi, DR Congo, Eritrea/Ethiopia and, more recently, in the Sudan. Apart from invigorating extant regional communities such as SADC and ECOWAS, these initiatives have led to the creation of important new potential anchors for peace and good governance, such as NEPAD and its African Peer Review Mechanism, as well as the AU and its Peace and Security Council.

FACTS

- **Full name:** Republic of South Africa
- **Population:** 48.6 Million (UN 2007)
- **Capital:** Pretoria (executive), Cape Town (legislative)
- **Area:** 1.22 million sq km (470,693 sq miles)
- **Internet domain:** .za
- **International dialling code:** +27
- **Major religion:** Christianity
- **Major languages:** 11 official languages including English, Afrikaans, Sesotho, Setswana, Xhosa and Zulu
- **HDI value*¹:** 129. South Africa (0.683) [1. Norway (0.971)] (2009)
- **Human Poverty Index (HPI-1)*²:** 53. South Africa (25.4) [21. UK] (2007)
- **Life expectancy at birth (years) :** 51.5 (UN 2007)
- **Probability of not surviving past 40, cohort 2005-2010(%):** 36.1
- **Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births):** 68 (2005)
- **HIV prevalence (% aged 15-49):** 18.1 (2007)



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Education

- **Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (%):**
 - 68. South Africa (77.0) [1. Australia (113.0)] (2005)
- **Adult Literacy Rate: (% ages 15 and older):**
 - 113. South Africa (82.4) [1. Cuba (98.8)] (2009)

Economy and Trade

- **GDP per capita:** No. of people lived below the national poverty line. (PPP US\$):
 - 56. South Africa (11,110) [1. Luxembourg (60,228)] (2005)
- **GNI Per Capita:** US \$4,960 (World Bank, 2005)
- **Gini Coefficient *³:** 10. South Africa (57.8) [126. Denmark (24.7)] (2007)
- **Monetary unit:** 1 Rand = 100 cents
- **Main exports:** Gold, diamonds, metals and minerals, cars, machinery
- **CO₂ emissions share of world total (%):** 1.5 (2004) [n/a (1990)]

Water, sanitation and nutritional status

- **Population without access to an improved water source (%):** 7
- **Population using improved sanitation (%):** 65 (2004) [69 (1990)]
- **Population Undernourished (% of total population):** n/a (2002-2004) n/a [(1990-1992)]

Politics

- **Government:** African National Congress (ANC)
- **President:** Jacob Zuma
- **Year Women received right to vote:** 1930, 1994
- **Internally displaced people (thousands, 2006):** n/a



*¹ The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income).

*² The Human Poverty Index for developing countries (HPI-1), focuses on the proportion of people below a threshold level in the same dimensions of human development as the HDI.

*³ The **Gini coefficient** is most prominently used as a measure of inequality of wealth distribution. A value of 0 represents absolute equality, and a value of 100 absolute inequality.

*⁴ Rankings are out of a total of 177.