

## COUNTRY PROFILE Republic of South Africa

Arguably the last African country to be liberated, South Africa has the largest economy on the continent and probably the best infrastructure in sub Saharan Africa. It has the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. It is a dynamic democracy. It proclaims itself as democratic, non racist and non sexist South Africa. It has high unemployment, significant poverty and gross inequality. Its dominant political party, the African National Congress, is the oldest liberation movement in Africa and will celebrate its centenary in 2012. South Africa hosted the World Cup in 2010, the first African nation to do so.

### SUMMARY FACTS

<b>Population:</b> 49.6 Million (UN, 2008) ,UK: 61.2 million	<b>GDP per capita:</b> US\$10,100 (PPP) (CIA, 2009), UK: \$35,200
<b>Capital:</b> Tshwane (Pretoria) (executive capital); Cape Town (legislative capital).	<b>Monetary unit:</b> 1 Rand = 100 cents
<b>Area:</b> 1.22 million sq km (470,693 sq miles), UK: 243,610 sq km (94,060 sq miles)	<b>Main exports:</b> Gold, diamonds, metals and minerals, cars, machinery
<b>Major languages:</b> 11 official languages including English, Afrikaans, Sesotho, , Xhosa and Zulu	<b>CO2 emissions share of world total:</b> 1.5%, UK: > 2%
<b>Major religion:</b> Christianity	<b>Population without access to an improved water source:</b> 7% (UN, 2008), UK: 100%
<b>Life expectancy at birth:</b> 52 years (UN, 2008), UK: 79 years	<b>Population using improved sanitation:</b> 59%, UK: 100%
<b>Under-five mortality rate:</b> 67 per 1,000 live births (UN, 2008), UK: 6 per 1,000 live births	<b>Government:</b> African National Congress (ANC)
<b>HIV prevalence:</b> 18.1% aged 15-49 (UN, 2007), UK: 0.2 % aged 15-49	<b>President:</b> Jacob Zuma
<b>Adult Literacy Rate:</b> 88% ages 15 and older (UN, 2008), UK: >99%	<b>Year Women received right to vote:</b> 1930 (for European descendants), 1994 (universal franchise), UK: 1918, 1928 (equal rights)



## History

South Africa has been populated for millions of years. In the Gauteng province there is a complex of limestone caves where fossilised evidence of hominid existence has been found dating back approximately three and a half million years. For this reason the caves complex have been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, and called the “Cradle of Humankind”.

The indigenous peoples of South Africa lived as hunter-gatherers or farmers. By **300 AD** ancestors of the Bantu-speaking majority of the population settled south of the Limpopo River, joining the Khoikoi and the San people who had lived there for thousands of years. In the **1400s**, the Zulu and Xhosa tribes established large and powerful kingdoms in the South Africa region. During the period from the **1480s**, people started arriving from Europe. The Europeans seized the lands the southern African people inhabited and farmed, and enclosed them. The colonial practices of the Europeans laid the foundations for exploitation of the indigenous African people, and the iniquitous Apartheid regimes.

From the late **15th century** onward, European traders stopped off along the coast line to collect supplies. The Dutch East India Company established a supply depot in Cape Town in **1652**. It was initially intended as a staging post but developed into a permanent settlement, the Cape Colony. Britain took the Cape Colony from the Dutch following the battle of Bloubergstrand in **1806**, where the British defeated Dutch forces. The British occupation was formalised at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in **1814** and the Cape was established as a Crown Colony.

In the **17th century** the Dutch continued to settle on land owned and occupied by the Khoikhoi hunter-gatherers and San farmers. The Khoikhoi and San people mounted rebellions to regain their lands and stolen cattle, but Europeans dominated the western half of the area by **1800**. The Europeans brought diseases with them which had not been in South Africa before, and against which the people had no resistance. Battles and smallpox decimated the San and Khoikhoi. In **1809** the British decreed that the San and Khoikhoi must work for white employers and placed restrictions on their travel. From **1816 – 1826** Shaka Zulu founded and expanded the Zulu empire into a great empire. He excelled in developing fighting strategies and created an impressive and fearless army, resisting the European colonisers. In the **19th century** there was increased migration both from Europe and from the transatlantic slave trade. The abolition of the importation of African slaves in the British colonies in **1807**, the abolition of the slave trade in **1833**, the fact that the British had seized control of the Cape and the resistance of African people, encouraged the Afrikaners, descendants of Dutch settlers, to trek north out of the Cape. These colonisers thought of this as ‘the Great Trek’. Eventually four provinces were formed: Cape and Natal controlled by the British; and Transvaal and Orange Free State controlled by the Afrikaners, known as Boers.

Diamonds were discovered in Kimberley in Northern Cape in the **1870s**, while gold was found later in Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) in **1886**. By the start of the **20th century**, Johannesburg had grown from a small rural settlement into a town boasting more than 100,000 inhabitants. From **1899 to 1902** Britain took up arms against the Afrikaners in the Anglo-Boer War in order to control South Africa’s gold and diamonds. In **1910** the Union of South Africa was formed as part of the British Empire. In **1909** a delegation went to London to plead the case of ‘non-whites’. This was followed by the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) in **1912**, making it the oldest liberation movement on the continent of Africa.

More repressive legislation was enacted from the **mid-19th century** onwards including the Masters and Servants’ Act in **1867**, the reservation of skilled work for

white people, the Native Poll Tax and the **1913** Land Act which reserved 90 per cent of the country for ownership by white people. In **1936** black Cape voters were removed from the common roll (the franchise was previously based on economic qualifications). In the following year laws were passed to stem black people moving to urban areas and compel municipalities to segregate black African and white residents.

In **1948** the National Party came to power on a platform of apartheid, an Afrikaans term meaning 'apartness'. From this time on began a period of unspeakable oppression and exploitation in South African history. In **1950** the Government passed the Population Registration Act, which classified all citizens by race as Bantu or black African; Coloured or mixed race; white or Asian. The passing of laws restricting the movement of black people followed in **1952**. The Separate Amenities Act of **1953** introduced apartheid segregation, for example, on buses and in post offices. Separate education was introduced in **1953** under the Bantu Education Act, eventually resulting in 17 different "ministries of education", although most were poorly resourced. In **1955**, during the Congress of the People, the African National Congress (ANC) adopted the Freedom Charter outlining their demands for democracy and rights in a non racial South Africa.

In **1960**, 69 unarmed South Africans were shot in the Sharpeville Massacre for protesting against the pass laws. In the immediate aftermath more than 200 further people were killed by the apartheid regime. The pass laws made it compulsory for all black South Africans over the age of 16 to carry a pass book at all times and restricted where they could visit and when they could go. After Sharpeville, the ANC and other organisations were banned. It was only then that ANC formally adopted the armed struggle, after 48 years of seeking equality peacefully through all possible means and following thousands of arrests.

In **1962** Nelson Mandela was sentenced to three years imprisonment. The following year the "Rivonia trial" began in which Mandela and comrades were charged with sabotage and conspiracy. Mandela delivered an historic speech from the dock on 20 April **1964**, claiming "the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities" was one he hoped to live to see but one for which he was prepared to die. In June **1964** Mandela and seven other defendants were found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In June **1976** police opened fire on thousands of young people in Soweto as they protested against the Government's policy to impose teaching in Afrikaans in all state schools and against apartheid rule. The uprising spread throughout the country and the response of the Government received international condemnation and resulted in economic and cultural sanctions. The founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Biko, was murdered in police custody in **1977**. In **1983** the United Democratic Front was formed inside South Africa as a coalition of trade unions, black student groups, and community and church groups. Throughout the **1980s** there was growing internal resistance and increasing international pressure, resulting in the isolation of the pro-apartheid government in South Africa.

In **1990** Mandela was released from prison after 27 years. From **1990** to **1993** negotiations led to an interim constitution, in a context of increasing violence from Inkatha against the ANC. After several massacres, many commentators predicted a descent into complete violence. Chris Hani, the leader of South Africa Communist Party and widely regarded as one the most charismatic leaders in South Africa, was assassinated in **1993**. Some white groups threatened violence and armed militias, including Inkatha, engaged in violence toward the ANC with the support of the State. In this period of transition from **1990** to **1994**, an estimated 14,000 South Africans were killed.

In **1994** South Africa held its first democratic election in which all South Africans were able to vote. The ANC were elected into Government with Nelson Mandela as President. The democratic government of South Africa inherited a deeply divided South Africa. The economy was geared to meeting the needs of the privileged white elite. There was gross inequality in all aspects of society including education, employment, housing and basic amenities (water, electricity and housing). Apartheid and its predecessors had created the most successful positive discrimination programme in the world, in favour of white people. The system and structure of government was based on delivering what white people wanted and controlling everyone else by denying their political, economic and social rights and taking away their resources. South Africa in **1994** had no basis in its structures or processes for meeting the needs of all its citizens. Mandela declared that there would be a new South Africa.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a court-like body chaired by Desmond Tutu, was established in **1996** and held public hearings into human rights abuses committed during apartheid. Seen as indicative of the “new” South Africa, the TRC was criticised by some for treating crimes committed by the apartheid regime and those committed by liberation movements fighting for democracy and rights, as the same. Notable cases included that of the family of Steve Biko, who criticised the TRC for its denial of justice and the amnesty granted to his killers who demanded they be brought before a court of law. Nevertheless, the TRC was hailed as a huge step forward for South Africa in healing the historical wounds and essential in aiding the transition from apartheid to democratic rule.

In **1999**, the ANC won the country's second democratic elections with Thabo Mbeki becoming President of the country. He was re-elected again in **2004** after a landslide victory. Following allegations of possible corruption, Mbeki dismissed future President Jacob Zuma from his role as deputy leader of the country; however he remained Deputy President of the ANC. The allegations were never proven. In **2007**, Jacob Zuma was elected President of the ruling ANC. In **2008** the ANC recalled Mbeki who resigned as leader of the country and Kgalema Motlanthe was elected President. After the election win for the ANC in **2009**, Jacob Zuma became President, the fourth post-apartheid president of the country.

South Africa has achieved much since **1994**. It is a dynamic functioning democracy. Many millions have benefited from access to water, sanitation, electricity, new homes and millions rather than thousands now receive social benefits (pensions and a form of child benefit). Yet some have benefited more than others and there is still significant poverty, unemployment and great inequality.

## Population

South Africa has a mainly urban based population of 49.6 million (UN 2008 estimate); an increase of 9 million since the fall of apartheid in 1994. Often referred to as the Rainbow Nation, South Africa has a population of diverse origins, cultures and languages. Nine of the country's 11 official languages are African, reflecting a variety of ethnic groupings in South Africa. In terms of religious affiliation, about two-thirds of South Africans are Christian, mainly Protestant. Other significant religions are Islam, Hinduism and Judaism.

## Politics

The South African constitution is one of the leaders in the world in codifying the rights of its people. The country's parliament consists of the National Assembly of 400 seats and a National Council of Provinces of 90 seats. The President, who is also the head of state, is elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term. Each of the country's nine provinces has its own provincial government, a premier and an

executive, all elected for a five year term. South Africa held elections in April 2009, which the ruling ANC won with 65.9% of vote on a turnout of 77 % (UK 2010 turnout 65%), and its leader Jacob Zuma, who served 12 years as a prisoner on Robben Island and years in exile became President.

Since the end of apartheid, the South African foreign policy has focused on its African partners, particularly in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). South Africa has played a key role as a mediator in African conflicts over the last decade and become a driving force in African peacekeeping.

### **Economy**

Since the end of apartheid in 1994 the Republic of South Africa has experienced sustained economic growth for 16 consecutive years, entering a recession in 2009 as a result of the global economic crisis. It is Africa's largest, most advanced economy. With abundant natural resources and well-developed financial, legal, energy, and transport sectors, South Africa leads the continent in industrial output and mineral production. However, daunting economic problems remain from the apartheid era, especially chronic poverty and lack of economic empowerment among the most vulnerable groups. In a context of high inequality, growth, which has averaged approx 3.5 % since 1994 has not been strong enough to cut into unemployment, which is estimated at 40%.

### **Civil society and Trade Unions**

South Africa has a large and active civil society including trade unions and church linked groups. Many have their genesis in the period of the liberation struggle. Today, their cross-cutting themes are poverty reduction, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and environmental issues. South Africa's trade union movement is widely recognised as the most developed on the continent. Its role in dismantling apartheid legislation and practices in the workplace remain its major achievement. There are three prominent trade union federations with affiliates operating in South Africa: the largest is the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU,) which is in an alliance with the ANC (and South African Communist Party) the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA), and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU).

### **Achievements:**

1. South Africa works. There is inequality, crime but there has not been the bloodshed and chaos that some commentators feared and predicted.
2. Pride in South Africa and being South African: most South Africans- black and white feel South African and proud to be South African. They believe their country has achieved something significant yet intangible: the recognition of the other, of rights and needs, a functioning, vibrant democracy. Development does involve meeting basic needs - food, shelter, water but it is much more than that, it is about rights and dignity, recognising our diversity but that we are of equal worth and value. Apartheid denied this.
3. Constitution: the Constitution of South Africa is now widely regarded as one of the best in the world in providing rights for its citizens.
4. Women: in parliament and provincial legislatures women comprise 33%.
5. Housing: more than 2.8 million new homes have been built since 1994.
6. Water: access to safe water has increased from 59% of the population in 1994 to 85% of the population by 2007.

7. Sanitation: in 1994 50% of the population had access to decent sanitation by 2007 this was 71%.
8. Electricity: 4.2 million homes were electrified between 1994 and 2006 and 80% of homes now have electricity.
9. Health: it is free to children under 6, pregnant women and people with disabilities; Immunisation is widespread (90% of population) and polio has been eliminated.
10. Education: schools without access to safe water reduced from 8,823 to 3,152 in 10 years. Schools with electricity increased from 11,174 to 20,713 in the same period while the percentage of overcrowded schools reduced from 51% to 24%.
11. Pensions and benefits systems: South Africa provides a pension system for its citizens and increasingly a benefits system for those in need. Pensions have been shown to have the greatest potential for reducing poverty amongst the elderly. 12 million South Africans now receive social grants.
12. Macro-economic stability: South Africa has had the longest period of economic growth in its history. It has not relied on the IMF or World Bank for loans with conditions on its economic policy as many other African countries were forced to do.
13. The region: the struggle against apartheid defined the region of southern Africa. Namibia achieved its independence in 1990. The war in Mozambique, which had been initiated by support from apartheid South Africa and “the illegal Rhodesia regime”, ended in 1992. The authoritarian regime of Banda in Malawi came to an end in 1994.
14. South Africa in Africa: It was only after 1994 that South Africa really became part of the continent of Africa. It is now a key player in the Africa Union and in southern Africa - SADC. It has led the call for leadership from Africa to deal with Africa’s problems. The African parliament is located in South Africa. South Africa mediated in various regional conflicts.
15. South Africa in the world: a leader in non-aligned movement, in G20 group.
16. World Cup 2010: South Africa was the first African nation to hold an international sporting event of this magnitude and one with so much global coverage; in doing so successfully it has contributed to change in how many people around the world see Africa and South Africa.

### **Development Challenges**

1. Poverty and unemployment: the latter is 25% at official government view or 40% the widely accepted real figure. A key challenge is how to ensure that macro economic stability and economic growth translates into jobs.
2. Continuing inequality: many South Africans are locked into poverty and inequality. There is a developing black middle class and even black rich elite but it is relatively small compared to numbers still in poverty. There are two South Africas. There is still a divide by race (70% of management posts are held by whites, approx 12% of the population) and gender (more than 50% of management posts held by men). But there is also a divide of class. One South Africa has employment of skilled people, who are globally competitive and well educated, the other South Africa is of people with low education and skill levels, unemployed or in the informal sector and marginalised.

3. HIV/AIDS: South Africa now has an agreed national plan and strategy for which there is broad consensus but for years the approach of the South Africa government was mired in controversy, delay and, to many, denial of the science that HIV causes AIDS.
4. Crime: most victims of crime are those who are poor, living in poverty and crime is not a recent phenomenon. The apartheid system was one of control and coercion. The struggle against apartheid involved discipline. For some with little prospect of employment in a society of still great inequality crime is or becomes an option.
5. Education: this is still in transition. South Africa has had to build a new education system geared to all and not the few, which prepares its youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This was not going to happen overnight and it hasn't yet.
6. Capacity: service delivery is an ongoing challenge. Since 1994 South Africa has been trying to meet the needs of all its population, not just 12 to 15 % of population. This requires resources, policies but also the capacity to deliver. This has involved building effectively a new system of government. It requires people with the education, knowledge, skills, information to ensure policies translate into effective action on the ground.
7. Land reform and rural development: rural development, food security and land redistribution are ongoing issues. The government aims to transfer 30% of farmland to black South Africans by 2014.
8. Migration: an estimated 8 million people have moved to South Africa since the early 1990s. Prior to this the apartheid system used migrant labour for such as work in the mines. It strictly controlled who came in, where they went. Such controls became largely inoperative from around 1992 onwards. There have been instances of resentment from some South Africans to migrants - "xenophobic violence". There is also internal migration. It has been estimated that the population of major cities such as Cape Town is increasing by 16% per year with the consequent increased demand and competition for scarce resources including housing and jobs.
9. Region: It was hoped a democratic South Africa would stimulate regional growth, development and integration. Yet is the region as a whole stronger or at least where people hoped it may be by 2010? Is it more able to deal with such as droughts and floods? There are the challenges of democracy and human rights in Swaziland and Zimbabwe and issues of governance in Lesotho. There are issues of regional trade and integration and who benefits. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (formerly a grouping of front line states opposed, directly impacted by apartheid South Africa) has become a larger regional body of 15 member states including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Madagascar.

**For more information on South Africa, visit the following websites:**

- Comprehensive country information for investors, tourists, citizens and South Africans abroad - [www.southafrica.info](http://www.southafrica.info)
- South African government's website that provides news and information along with background material about the land, its people and history - [www.info.gov.za](http://www.info.gov.za)
- Established to preserve South Africa's history it provides an extensive record of crucial historical events as well as biographies of important South Africans- [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)
- Cosatu :Trade Union Federation formed in 1985, a part of the Tri-partite Alliance with the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party - [www.cosatu.org.za](http://www.cosatu.org.za)
- The Nelson Mandela Foundation website is an integrated information resource on the life and times of Nelson Mandela - [www.nelsonmandela.org](http://www.nelsonmandela.org)