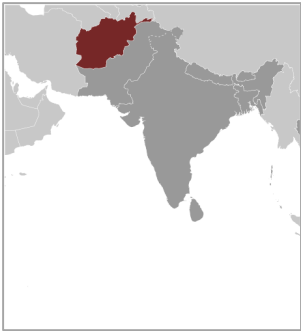


# ***CAPSTONE 20-1 SWA Field Study Trip Book Part II***

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# AFGHANISTAN



## GOVERNMENT

### Chief of State

President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf GHANI Ahmadzai

### Head of Government

President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf GHANI Ahmadzai

### Government Type

presidential Islamic republic

### Capital

Kabul

### Legislature

bicameral National Assembly consists of the Meshrano Jirga or House of Elders (102 seats) and the Wolesi Jirga or House of People (249 seats)

### Judiciary

Supreme Court or Stera Mahkama (chief and 8 justices)

### Ambassador to US

Ambassador Roya RAHMANI

### US Ambassador

Ambassador John BASS

## GEOGRAPHY

### Area

Total: 652,230 sq km

Land: 652,230 sq km

Water: 0 sq km

### Climate

arid to semiarid; cold winters and hot summers

### Natural Resources

natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semiprecious stones, arable land

## ECONOMY

### Economic Overview

recovering from decades of conflict, living standards still among the lowest in the world, highly dependent on foreign aid, and suffering from shortages of housing, water, electricity, and jobs

### GDP (Purchasing Power Parity)

\$69.45 billion (2017 est.)

### GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity)

\$2,000 (2017 est.)

### Exports

\$784 million (2017 est.)

partners: India 56.5%, Pakistan 29.6% (2017)

### Imports

\$7.616 billion (2017 est.)

partners: China 21%, Iran 20.5%, Pakistan 11.8% Kazakhstan 11%, Uzbekistan 6.8%, Malaysia 5.3% (2017)

## PEOPLE & SOCIETY

### Population

34.9 million (July 2018 est.)

### Population Growth

2.37% (2018 est.)

### Ethnicity

Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, other (includes smaller numbers of Baloch, Turkmen, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, Pashai, and Kyrgyz) (2015)

### Language

Afghan Persian or Dari (official) 80% (Dari functions as the lingua franca), Pashto (official) 47%, Uzbek 11%, English 5%, Turkmen 2%, Urdu 2%, Pashayi 1%, Nuristani 1%, Arabic 1% (2017 est.)<sup>1</sup>

### Religion

Muslim 99.7% (Sunni 84.7 - 89.7%, Shia 10 - 15%), other 0.3% (2009 est.)

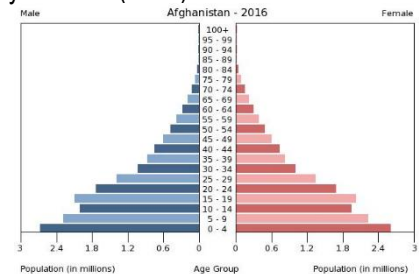
### Urbanization

urban population: 25.5% of total population (2018)

rate of urbanization: 3.37% annual rate of change (2015-20 est.)

### Literacy

38.2%



<sup>1</sup> note: percentages total more than 100% because respondents were able to provide more than one answer



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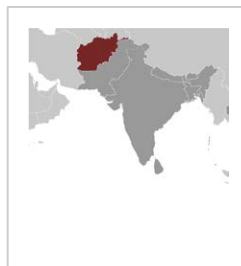
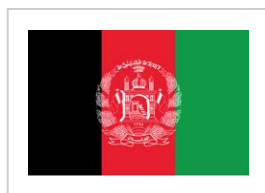
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## Introduction :: AFGHANISTAN

### Background:



Ahmad Shah DURRANI unified the Pashtun tribes and founded Afghanistan in 1747. The country served as a buffer between the British and Russian Empires until it won independence from notional British control in 1919. A brief experiment in democracy ended in a 1973 coup and a 1978 communist countercoup. The Soviet Union invaded in 1979 to support the tottering Afghan communist regime, touching off a long and destructive war. The USSR withdrew in 1989 under relentless pressure by internationally supported anti-communist mujahidin rebels. A series of subsequent civil wars saw Kabul finally fall in 1996 to the Taliban, a hardline Pakistani-sponsored movement that emerged in 1994 to end the country's civil war and anarchy. Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, a US, Allied, and anti-Taliban Northern Alliance military action toppled the Taliban for sheltering Usama BIN LADIN.

A UN-sponsored Bonn Conference in 2001 established a process for political reconstruction that included the adoption of a new constitution, a presidential election in 2004, and National Assembly elections in 2005. In December 2004, Hamid KARZAI became the first democratically elected president of Afghanistan, and the National Assembly was inaugurated the following December. KARZAI was reelected in August 2009 for a second term. The 2014 presidential election was the country's first to include a runoff, which featured the top two vote-getters from the first round, Abdullah ABDULLAH and Ashraf GHANI. Throughout the summer of 2014, their campaigns disputed the results and traded accusations of fraud, leading to a US-led diplomatic intervention that included a full vote audit as well as political negotiations between the two camps. In September 2014, GHANI and ABDULLAH agreed to form the Government of National Unity, with GHANI inaugurated as president and ABDULLAH elevated to the newly-created position of chief executive officer. The day after the inauguration, the GHANI administration signed the US-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement and NATO Status of Forces Agreement, which provide the legal basis for the post-2014 international military presence in Afghanistan. After two postponements, the next presidential election has been re-scheduled for September 2019.

The Taliban remains a serious challenge for the Afghan Government in almost every province. The Taliban still considers itself the rightful government of Afghanistan, and it remains a capable and confident insurgent force fighting for the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Afghanistan, establishment of sharia law, and rewriting of the Afghan constitution. In 2019, negotiations between the US and the Taliban in Doha entered their highest level yet, building on momentum that began in late 2018. Underlying the negotiations is the unsettled state of Afghan politics, and prospects for a sustainable political settlement remain unclear.

## Geography :: AFGHANISTAN

### Location:



Southern Asia, north and west of Pakistan, east of Iran

**Geographic coordinates:**

33 00 N, 65 00 E

**Map references:**

Asia

**Area:**

**total:** 652,230 sq km

**land:** 652,230 sq km

**water:** 0 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** [42](#)

**Area - comparative:**

almost six times the size of Virginia; slightly smaller than Texas

**Area comparison map:**



**Land boundaries:**

**total:** 5,987 km

**border countries (6):** China 91 km, Iran 921 km, Pakistan 2670 km, Tajikistan 1357 km, Turkmenistan 804 km, Uzbekistan 144 km

**Coastline:**

0 km (landlocked)

**Maritime claims:**

none (landlocked)

**Climate:**

arid to semiarid; cold winters and hot summers

**Terrain:**

mostly rugged mountains; plains in north and southwest

**Elevation:**

**mean elevation:** 1,884 m

**lowest point:** Amu Darya 258 m

**highest point:** Noshak 7,492 m

**Natural resources:**

natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semiprecious stones, arable land

**Land use:**

**agricultural land:** 58.1% (2016 est.)

arable land: 11.8% (2016) / permanent crops: 0.3% (2016) / permanent pasture: 46% (2016)

**forest:** 2.07% (2016 est.)

**other:** 39% (2016)

**Irrigated land:**

32,080 sq km (2012)



**Population distribution:**

populations tend to cluster in the foothills and periphery of the rugged Hindu Kush range; smaller groups are found in many of the country's interior valleys; in general, the east is more densely settled, while the south is sparsely populated

**Natural hazards:**

damaging earthquakes occur in Hindu Kush mountains; flooding; droughts

**Environment - current issues:**

limited natural freshwater resources; inadequate supplies of potable water; soil degradation; overgrazing; deforestation (much of the remaining forests are being cut down for fuel and building materials); desertification; air and water pollution in overcrowded urban areas

**Environment - international agreements:**

**party to:** Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection

**signed, but not ratified:** Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Life Conservation

**Geography - note:**

landlocked; the Hindu Kush mountains that run northeast to southwest divide the northern provinces from the rest of the country; the highest peaks are in the northern Vakhn (Wakhan Corridor)

**People and Society :: AFGHANISTAN****Population:**

34,940,837 (July 2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [39](#)

**Nationality:**

**noun:** Afghan(s)

**adjective:** Afghan

**Ethnic groups:**

Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, other (includes smaller numbers of Baloch, Turkmen, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, Pashai, and Kyrgyz) (2015)

**note:** current statistical data on the sensitive subject of ethnicity in Afghanistan are not available, and ethnicity data from small samples of respondents to opinion polls are not a reliable alternative; Afghanistan's 2004 constitution recognizes 14 ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Baloch, Turkmen, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, and Pashai

**Languages:**

Afghan Persian or Dari (official) 77% (Dari functions as the lingua franca), Pashto (official) 48%, Uzbek 11%, English 6%, Turkmen 3%, Urdu 3%, Pashayi 1%, Nuristani 1%, Arabic 1%, Balochi 1% (2017 est.)

**note:** data represent most widely spoken languages; shares sum to more than 100% because there is much bilingualism in the country and because respondents were allowed to select more than one language

**note:** the Turkic languages Uzbek and Turkmen, as well as Balochi, Pashayi, Nuristani, and Pamiri are the third official languages in areas where the majority speaks them

**Religions:**

Muslim 99.7% (Sunni 84.7 - 89.7%, Shia 10 - 15%), other 0.3% (2009 est.)

**Age structure:**

**0-14 years:** 40.92% (male 7,263,716 /female 7,033,427)

**15-24 years:** 21.85% (male 3,883,693 /female 3,749,760)

**25-54 years:** 30.68% (male 5,456,305 /female 5,263,332)

**55-64 years:** 3.95% (male 679,766 /female 699,308)

**65 years and over:** 2.61% (male 420,445 /female 491,085) (2018 est.)

**population pyramid:** 

#### Dependency ratios:

**total dependency ratio:** 88.8 (2015 est.)

**youth dependency ratio:** 84.1 (2015 est.)

**elderly dependency ratio:** 4.7 (2015 est.)

**potential support ratio:** 21.2 (2015 est.)

#### Median age:

**total:** 19 years

**male:** 19 years

**female:** 19.1 years (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [203](#)

#### Population growth rate:

2.37% (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [29](#)

#### Birth rate:

37.5 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [12](#)

#### Death rate:

13.2 deaths/1,000 population (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [9](#)

#### Net migration rate:

-0.6 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [128](#)

#### Population distribution:

populations tend to cluster in the foothills and periphery of the rugged Hindu Kush range; smaller groups are found in many of the country's interior valleys; in general, the east is more densely settled, while the south is sparsely populated

#### Urbanization:

**urban population:** 25.5% of total population (2018)

**rate of urbanization:** 3.37% annual rate of change (2015-20 est.)

#### Major urban areas - population:

4.012 million KABUL (capital) (2018)

#### Sex ratio:

**at birth:** 1.05 male(s)/female

**0-14 years:** 1.03 male(s)/female

**15-24 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female



**25-54 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female

**55-64 years:** 0.97 male(s)/female

**65 years and over:** 0.86 male(s)/female

**total population:** 1.03 male(s)/female (2018 est.)

**Mother's mean age at first birth:**

19.9 years (2015 est.)

**note:** median age at first birth among women 25-29

**Maternal mortality rate:**

396 deaths/100,000 live births (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 28

**Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 108.5 deaths/1,000 live births

**male:** 115.7 deaths/1,000 live births

**female:** 100.9 deaths/1,000 live births (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 1

**Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 52.1 years

**male:** 50.6 years

**female:** 53.6 years (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 223

**Total fertility rate:**

5.02 children born/woman (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 11

**Contraceptive prevalence rate:**

22.5% (2015/16)

**Drinking water source:**

**improved:**

urban: 78.2% of population

rural: 47% of population

total: 55.3% of population

**unimproved:**

urban: 21.8% of population

rural: 53% of population

total: 44.7% of population (2015 est.)

**Current Health Expenditure:**

10.3% (2015)

**Physicians density:**

0.28 physicians/1,000 population (2016)





**Hospital bed density:**

0.5 beds/1,000 population (2014)



**Sanitation facility access:**

**improved:**

urban: 45.1% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 27% of population (2015 est.)

total: 31.9% of population (2015 est.)

**unimproved:**

urban: 54.9% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 73% of population (2015 est.)

total: 68.1% of population (2015 est.)



**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**

<.1% (2016 est.)



**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**

7,500 (2016 est.)



**country comparison to the world:** [109](#)

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**

<500 (2016 est.)



**Major infectious diseases:**

**degree of risk:** intermediate (2016)

**food or waterborne diseases:** bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever (2016)

**vectorborne diseases:** malaria (2016)



**Obesity - adult prevalence rate:**

5.5% (2016)



**country comparison to the world:** [176](#)

**Children under the age of 5 years underweight:**

25% (2013)



**country comparison to the world:** [17](#)

**Education expenditures:**

3.9% of GDP (2017)



**country comparison to the world:** [111](#)

**Literacy:**

**definition:** age 15 and over can read and write (2015 est.)

**total population:** 38.2%

**male:** 52%

**female:** 24.2% (2015 est.)



**School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):**

**total:** 10 years



**male:** 13 years

**female:** 8 years (2014)

**Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:**

**total:** 17.6%

**male:** 16.3%

**female:** 21.4% (2017)

**country comparison to the world:** [79](#)

**Government :: AFGHANISTAN**

**Country name:**

**conventional long form:** Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

**conventional short form:** Afghanistan

**local long form:** Jamhuri-ye Islami-ye Afghanistan

**local short form:** Afghanistan

**former:** Republic of Afghanistan

**etymology:** the name "Afghan" originally referred to the Pashtun people (today it is understood to include all the country's ethnic groups), while the suffix "-stan" means "place of" or "country"; so Afghanistan literally means the "Land of the Afghans"

**Government type:**

presidential Islamic republic

**Capital:**

**name:** Kabul

**geographic coordinates:** 34 31 N, 69 11 E

**time difference:** UTC+4.5 (9.5 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

**daylight saving time:** does not observe daylight savings time

**etymology:** named for the Kabul River, but the river's name is of unknown origin

**Administrative divisions:**

34 provinces (welayat, singular - welayat); Badakhshan, Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyān, Daykundi, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Herat, Jowzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, Laghman, Logar, Nangarhar, Nimroz, Nuristan, Paktika, Paktiya, Panjshir, Parwan, Samangan, Sar-e Pul, Takhar, Uruzgan, Wardak, Zabul

**Independence:**

19 August 1919 (from UK control over Afghan foreign affairs)

**National holiday:**

Independence Day, 19 August (1919)

**Constitution:**

**history:** several previous; latest drafted 14 December 2003 - 4 January 2004, signed 16 January 2004, ratified 26 January 2004

**amendments:** proposed by a commission formed by presidential decree followed by the convention of a Grand Council (Loya Jirga) decreed by the president; passage requires at least two-thirds majority vote of the Loya Jirga membership and endorsement by the president (2017)

**Legal system:**

mixed legal system of civil, customary, and Islamic law

### International law organization participation:

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; accepts ICtJ jurisdiction

### Citizenship:

**citizenship by birth:** no

**citizenship by descent only:** at least one parent must have been born in - and continuously lived in - Afghanistan

**dual citizenship recognized:** no

**residency requirement for naturalization:** 5 years

### Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

### Executive branch:

**chief of state:**

President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf GHANI Ahmadzai (since 29 September 2014); CEO Abdullah ABDULLAH, Dr. (since 29 September 2014); First Vice President Abdul Rashid DOSTAM (since 29 September 2014); Second Vice President Sarwar DANESH (since 29 September 2014); Deputy CEO Khyal Mohammad KHAN; note - the president is both chief of state and head of government

**head of government:**

President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf GHANI Ahmadzai (since 29 September 2014); CEO Abdullah ABDULLAH, Dr. (since 29 September 2014); First Vice President Abdul Rashid DOSTAM (since 29 September 2014); Second Vice President Sarwar DANESH (since 29 September 2014); Deputy CEO Khyal Mohammad KHAN

**cabinet:** Cabinet consists of 25 ministers appointed by the president, approved by the National Assembly

**elections/appointments:** president directly elected by absolute majority popular vote in 2 rounds if needed for a 5-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held in 2 rounds on 5 April and 14 June 2014 (next originally scheduled for 20 April 2019, but postponed by the Independent Election Commission to 20 July and again to 28 September 2019)

**election results:** Ashraf GHANI elected president in the second round; percent of vote in first round - Abdullah ABDULLAH (National Coalition of Afghanistan) 45%, Ashraf GHANI (independent) 31.6%, Zalmai RASSOUL 11.4%, other 12%; percent of vote in second round - Ashraf GHANI 56.4%, Abdullah ABDULLAH 43.6%

### Legislative branch:

**description:** bicameral National Assembly consists of:

Meshrano Jirga or House of Elders (102 seats; 34 members appointed by district councils to serve 3-year terms, 34 appointed by provincial councils to serve 4-year terms, and 34 appointed by the president of which 17 must be women, 2 must represent the disabled, and 2 must be Kuchi nomads; members nominated by the president serve 5-year terms)

Wolesi Jirga or House of People (249 seats; members directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote to serve 5-year terms)

**elections:**

Meshrano Jirga - all members appointed

Wolesi Jirga - last held on 20 October 2018) (next to be held in 2023)

**election results:**

Meshrano Jirga - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - NA; composition - men 84, women 18, percent of women 17.6%

Wolesi Jirga - percent of vote by party NA; seats by party - NA; composition - NA

**note:** the constitution allows the government to convene a constitutional Loya Jirga (Grand Council) on issues of independence, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity; it consists of members of the National Assembly and chairpersons of the provincial and district councils; a Loya Jirga can amend provisions of the constitution and prosecute the president; no constitutional Loya Jirga has ever been held, and district councils have never been elected; the president appointed 34 members of the Meshrano Jirga that the district councils should have indirectly elected

### Judicial branch:

**highest courts:** Supreme Court or Stera Mahkama (consists of the supreme court chief and 8 justices organized into criminal, public security, civil, and commercial divisions or dewans)

**judge selection and term of office:** court chief and justices appointed by the president with the approval of the Wolesi Jirga; court chief and justices serve single 10-year terms

**subordinate courts:** Appeals Courts; Primary Courts; Special Courts for issues including narcotics, security, property, family, and juveniles

#### Political parties and leaders:

note - the Ministry of Justice licensed 72 political parties as of April 2019

#### International organization participation:

ADB, CICA, CP, ECO, EITI (candidate country), FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (NGOs), ICt, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, ILO, IMF, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent), ITSO, ITU, ITUC (NGOs), MIGA, NAM, OIC, OPCW, OSCE (partner), SAARC, SACEP, SCO (dialogue member), UN, UNAMA, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

#### Diplomatic representation in the US:

**chief of mission:** Ambassador Roya RAHMANI (since 24 November 2018)

**chancery:** 2341 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008

**telephone:** [1] (202) 483-6410

**FAX:** [1] (202) 483-6488

**consulate(s) general:** Los Angeles, New York, Washington, DC

#### Diplomatic representation from the US:

**chief of mission:** Ambassador John BASS (since December 2017)

**embassy:** Bibi Mahru, Kabul

**mailing address:** U.S. Embassy Kabul, APO, AE 09806

**telephone:** [00 93] 0700 108 001

**FAX:** [00 93] 0700 108 564

#### Flag description:

three equal vertical bands of black (hoist side), red, and green, with the national emblem in white centered on the red band and slightly overlapping the other 2 bands; the center of the emblem features a mosque with pulpit and flags on either side, below the mosque are Eastern Arabic numerals for the solar year 1298 (1919 in the Gregorian calendar, the year of Afghan independence from the UK); this central image is circled by a border consisting of sheaves of wheat on the left and right, in the upper-center is an Arabic inscription of the Shahada (Muslim creed) below which are rays of the rising sun over the Takbir (Arabic expression meaning "God is great"), and at bottom center is a scroll bearing the name Afghanistan; black signifies the past, red is for the blood shed for independence, and green can represent either hope for the future, agricultural prosperity, or Islam

**note:** Afghanistan had more changes to its national flag in the 20th century - 19 by one count - than any other country; the colors black, red, and green appeared on most of them

#### National symbol(s):

lion; national colors: red, green, black

#### National anthem:

**name:** "Milli Surood" (National Anthem)

**lyrics/music:** Abdul Bari JAHANI/Babrak WASA

**note:** adopted 2006; the 2004 constitution of the post-Taliban government mandated that a new national anthem should be written containing the phrase "Allahu Akbar" (God is Greatest) and mentioning the names of Afghanistan's ethnic groups

**Economy :: AFGHANISTAN****Economy - overview:** 

Despite improvements in life expectancy, incomes, and literacy since 2001, Afghanistan is extremely poor, landlocked, and highly dependent on foreign aid. Much of the population continues to suffer from shortages of housing, clean water, electricity, medical care, and jobs. Corruption, insecurity, weak governance, lack of infrastructure, and the Afghan Government's difficulty in extending rule of law to all parts of the country pose challenges to future economic growth. Afghanistan's living standards are among the lowest in the world. Since 2014, the economy has slowed, in large part because of the withdrawal of nearly 100,000 foreign troops that had artificially inflated the country's economic growth.

The international community remains committed to Afghanistan's development, pledging over \$83 billion at ten donors' conferences between 2003 and 2016. In October 2016, the donors at the Brussels conference pledged an additional \$3.8 billion in development aid annually from 2017 to 2020. Even with this help, Government of Afghanistan still faces number of challenges, including low revenue collection, anemic job creation, high levels of corruption, weak government capacity, and poor public infrastructure.

In 2017 Afghanistan's growth rate was only marginally above that of the 2014-2016 average. The drawdown of international security forces that started in 2012 has negatively affected economic growth, as a substantial portion of commerce, especially in the services sector, has catered to the ongoing international troop presence in the country. Afghan President Ashraf GHANI Ahmadzai is dedicated to instituting economic reforms to include improving revenue collection and fighting corruption. The government has implemented reforms to the budget process and in some other areas. However, many other reforms will take time to implement and Afghanistan will remain dependent on international donor support over the next several years.

**GDP (purchasing power parity):** 

\$69.45 billion (2017 est.)

\$67.65 billion (2016 est.)

\$66.21 billion (2015 est.)

**note:** data are in 2017 dollars

**country comparison to the world:** [101](#)

**GDP (official exchange rate):** 

\$20.24 billion (2017 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 

2.7% (2017 est.)

2.2% (2016 est.)

1% (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [124](#)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):** 

\$2,000 (2017 est.)

\$2,000 (2016 est.)

\$2,000 (2015 est.)

**note:** data are in 2017 dollars

**country comparison to the world:** [209](#)

**Gross national saving:** 

22.7% of GDP (2017 est.)

25.8% of GDP (2016 est.)

21.4% of GDP (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [78](#)

**GDP - composition, by end use:**



**household consumption:** 81.6% (2016 est.)

**government consumption:** 12% (2016 est.)

**investment in fixed capital:** 17.2% (2016 est.)

**investment in inventories:** 30% (2016 est.)

**exports of goods and services:** 6.7% (2016 est.)

**imports of goods and services:** -47.6% (2016 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**



**agriculture:** 23% (2016 est.)

**industry:** 21.1% (2016 est.)

**services:** 55.9% (2016 est.)

**note:** data exclude opium production

**Agriculture - products:**



opium, wheat, fruits, nuts, wool, mutton, sheepskins, lambskins, poppies

**Industries:**



small-scale production of bricks, textiles, soap, furniture, shoes, fertilizer, apparel, food products, non-alcoholic beverages, mineral water, cement; handwoven carpets; natural gas, coal, copper

**Industrial production growth rate:**



-1.9% (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [181](#)

**Labor force:**



8.478 million (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [61](#)

**Labor force - by occupation:**



**agriculture:** 44.3%

**industry:** 18.1%

**services:** 37.6% (2017 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**



23.9% (2017 est.)

22.6% (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [194](#)

**Population below poverty line:**



54.5% (2017 est.)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**



**lowest 10%:** 3.8%

**highest 10%:** 24% (2008)

**Distribution of family income - Gini index:**



29.4 (2008)

country comparison to the world: [136](#)

**Budget:**

revenues: 2.276 billion (2017 est.)

expenditures: 5.328 billion (2017 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

11.2% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [210](#)

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

-15.1% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [217](#)

**Public debt:**

7% of GDP (2017 est.)

7.8% of GDP (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: [202](#)

**Fiscal year:**

21 December - 20 December

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

5% (2017 est.)

4.4% (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: [171](#)

**Commercial bank prime lending rate:**

15% (31 December 2016 est.)

15% (31 December 2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [37](#)

**Stock of narrow money:**

\$6.644 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$6.192 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: [94](#)

**Stock of broad money:**

\$6.945 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$6.544 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: [95](#)

**Stock of domestic credit:**

-\$240.6 million (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: [192](#)

**Market value of publicly traded shares:**

NA

**Current account balance:**

\$1.014 billion (2017 est.)



\$1.409 billion (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [48](#)

**Exports:**

\$784 million (2017 est.)

\$614.2 million (2016 est.)

**note:** not including illicit exports or reexports

**country comparison to the world:** [171](#)

**Exports - partners:**

India 56.5%, Pakistan 29.6% (2017)

**Exports - commodities:**

opium, fruits and nuts, handwoven carpets, wool, cotton, hides and pelts, precious and semi-precious gems, and medical herbs

**Imports:**

\$7.616 billion (2017 est.)

\$6.16 billion (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [114](#)

**Imports - commodities:**

machinery and other capital goods, food, textiles, petroleum products

**Imports - partners:**

China 21%, Iran 20.5%, Pakistan 11.8%, Kazakhstan 11%, Uzbekistan 6.8%, Malaysia 5.3% (2017)

**Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:**

\$7.187 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$6.901 billion (31 December 2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [85](#)

**Debt - external:**

\$2.84 billion (FY/)

**country comparison to the world:** [144](#)

**Exchange rates:**

afghanis (AFA) per US dollar -

7.87 (2017 est.)

68.03 (2016 est.)

67.87 (2015)

61.14 (2014 est.)

57.25 (2013 est.)

**Energy :: AFGHANISTAN**

**Electricity access:**

**population without electricity:** 18,999,254 (2012)

**electrification - total population:** 84.1% (2016)

**electrification - urban areas:** 98% (2016)



**electrification - rural areas:** 79% (2016)

**Electricity - production:**

1.211 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [146](#)

**Electricity - consumption:**

5.526 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [119](#)

**Electricity - exports:**

0 kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [96](#)

**Electricity - imports:**

4.4 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [42](#)

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

634,100 kW (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [138](#)

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

45% of total installed capacity (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [159](#)

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [32](#)

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

52% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [34](#)

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

4% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [111](#)

**Crude oil - production:**

0 bbl/day (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [101](#)

**Crude oil - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [82](#)

**Crude oil - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [84](#)

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

0 bbl (1 January 2018 est.)



country comparison to the world: [99](#)

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [110](#)

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

35,000 bbl/day (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: [117](#)

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [124](#)

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

34,210 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [97](#)

**Natural gas - production:**

164.2 million cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [79](#)

**Natural gas - consumption:**

164.2 million cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [108](#)

**Natural gas - exports:**

0 cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [57](#)

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [81](#)

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

49.55 billion cu m (1 January 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [62](#)

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**

9.067 million Mt (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [111](#)

**Communications :: AFGHANISTAN**

**Telephones - fixed lines:**

total subscriptions: 118,769 (2017 est.)

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: less than 1 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [138](#)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**

total subscriptions: 23,929,713

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 70 (2017 est.)



**country comparison to the world:** [52](#)

**Telephone system:**



**general assessment:** progress has been made on Afghanistan's first limited fixed-line telephone service and nationwide optical fibre backbone; aided by the presence of multiple providers, mobile-cellular telephone service continues to improve swiftly; the Afghan Ministry of Communications and Information claims that more than 90% of the population live in areas with access to mobile-cellular services (2018)

**domestic:** less than 1 per 100 for fixed-line teledensity; 70 per 100 for mobile-cellular; an increasing number of Afghans utilize mobile-cellular phone networks (2018)

**international:** country code - 93; multiple VSAT's provide international and domestic voice and data connectivity (2019)

**Broadcast media:**



state-owned broadcaster, Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA), operates a series of radio and television stations in Kabul and the provinces; an estimated 174 private radio stations, 83 TV stations, and about a dozen international broadcasters are available (2019)

**Internet country code:**



.af

**Internet users:**



**total:** 3,531,770

**percent of population:** 10.6 (July 2016 est.)

**Broadband - fixed subscriptions:**



**total:** 16,810 (2017 est.)

**subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:** less than 1 (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [156](#)

**Transportation :: AFGHANISTAN**

**National air transport system:**



**number of registered air carriers:** 4 (2015)

**inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers:** 20 (2015)

**annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers:** 1,929,907 (2015)

**annual freight traffic on registered air carriers:** 33,102,038 mt-km (2015)

**Civil aircraft registration country code prefix:**



YA (2016)

**Airports:**



43 (2016)

**country comparison to the world:** [99](#)

**Airports - with paved runways:**



**total:** 25 (2017)

**over 3,047 m:** 4 (2017)

**2,438 to 3,047 m:** 4 (2017)

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 14 (2017)

**914 to 1,523 m:** 2 (2017)

**under 914 m:** 1 (2017)

### Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 18 (2016)

2,438 to 3,047 m: 1 (2016)

1,524 to 2,437 m: 8 (2016)

914 to 1,523 m: 4 (2016)

under 914 m: 5 (2016)

### Heliports:

9 (2013)

### Pipelines:

466 km gas (2013)

### Roadways:

total: 34,903 km (2017)

paved: 17,903 km (2017)

unpaved: 17,000 km (2017)

country comparison to the world: [92](#)

### Waterways:

1,200 km (chiefly Amu Darya, which handles vessels up to 500 DWT) (2011)

country comparison to the world: [58](#)

### Ports and terminals:

river port(s): Kheyraabad, Shir Khan

## Military and Security :: AFGHANISTAN

### Military expenditures:

0.92% of GDP (2017)

0.89% of GDP (2016)

0.99% of GDP (2015)

1.33% of GDP (2014)

1.06% of GDP (2013)

country comparison to the world: [122](#)

### Military branches:

Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) comprised of military, police, and other security elements: Afghan National Army (includes Afghan Air Force and Afghan Special Security Forces), Afghan National Police, Afghan Local Police, and the National Directorate of Security (2019)

### Military service age and obligation:

18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service; no conscription (2017)

## Terrorism :: AFGHANISTAN

### Terrorist groups - home based:

#### al-Qa'ida (AQ):

aim(s): eject Western influence from the Islamic world, unite the worldwide Muslim community, overthrow governments perceived as un-Islamic, and ultimately, establish a pan-Islamic caliphate under a strict Salafi Muslim interpretation of sharia

**area(s) of operation:** maintains established networks and a longtime operational presence in Afghanistan, especially in the south, northwest, and northeast near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border (April 2018)

#### **Islamic Jihad Union (IJU):**

**aim(s):** drive NATO forces out of Afghanistan and destabilize the country; overthrow the Government of Uzbekistan

**area(s) of operation:** conducts attacks in collaboration with other extremist groups, including the Taliban, against NATO and Afghan forces across the country, especially in the northern and eastern Paktika, Paktia, and Nangarhar provinces (April 2018)

#### **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU):**

**aim(s):** enhance its networks and secure territory in Afghanistan to establish a secure presence from which it can pursue its historic goal of establishing an Islamic state in the Fergana Valley, a fertile valley spread across eastern Uzbekistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and northern Tajikistan

**area(s) of operation:** operates mostly in the north along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, with its heaviest presence in Badakhshan Province, where IMU has operated paramilitary training camps and bases

**note:** the IMU is fractured and mostly supports ISIS-K although some members have continued working with the Taliban (April 2018)

#### **Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham-Khorasan (ISIS-K):**

**aim(s):** establish an Islamic caliphate in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and parts of Central Asia; counter Westerners and Shia Muslims

**area(s) of operation:** stronghold in Nangarhar Province near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and operating in Kunar, Laghman, Jowzjan provinces with pockets of support throughout Afghanistan

**note:** recruits from among the local population, Central Asian extremists in Afghanistan, and other militant groups, such as Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (April 2018)

#### **Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP):**

**aim(s):** drive foreign troops from Afghanistan; remove Pakistani forces from Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and, ultimately, overthrow the Pakistan Government to implement TTP's strict interpretation of sharia

**area(s) of operation:** headquartered in several eastern Afghanistan provinces near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border; operates primarily along the northeastern Afghanistan-Pakistan border, especially in Kunar and Paktika provinces, where TTP has established sanctuaries (April 2018)

#### **Terrorist groups - foreign based:**



#### **al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS):**

**aim(s):** establish an Islamic caliphate in the Indian subcontinent

**area(s) of operation:** heaviest presence is in Afghanistan, especially in the eastern and southern regions, where most of the Afghan-based leaders are located

**note:** targets primarily Afghan military and security personnel and US interests (April 2018)

#### **Haqqani Taliban Network (HQN):**

**aim(s):** expel US and Coalition forces and replace the Afghan Government with an Islamic state operating according to a strict Salafi Muslim interpretation of sharia under the Afghan Taliban

**area(s) of operation:** stages attacks from Kurram and North Waziristan Agency in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) across from Afghanistan's southeastern border; operational throughout the country, especially in Kabul and Paktiya and Khost provinces

**note:** plays a leading role in planning and executing high-profile attacks against Afghan personnel, NATO's Resolute Support Mission, US and Coalition Forces, and other US and Western interests (April 2018)

#### **Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI):**

**aim(s):** implement sharia in Afghanistan; enhance its networks and drive foreign troops from Afghanistan

**area(s) of operation:** operations throughout Afghanistan, targeting primarily Afghan Government personnel and Coalition forces (April 2018)

#### **Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM):**

**aim(s):** enhance its networks and paramilitary training in Afghanistan and, ultimately, incorporate Kashmir into Pakistan; establish an Islamic state in Kashmir

**area(s) of operation:** maintains paramilitary training camps in eastern Afghanistan (April 2018)

### Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps -- Qods Force (IRGC-QF):

**aim(s):** initially supported anti-Taliban initiatives that complemented US goals in 2001, however, more recently it has embraced an anti-NATO/anti-government strategy, is at odds with US goals, and has begun supplying weapons to insurgents;

**area(s) of operations:** Taliban-dominated areas of Afghanistan

(June 2019)

### Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM):

**aim(s):** participate in the insurgency against Afghan and international forces to support a Taliban return to power in Afghanistan and annex the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan

**area(s) of operation:** historically operated in Afghanistan's eastern provinces (April 2018)

### Jaysh al Adl:

**aim(s):** enhance its operational networks and capabilities for staging cross-border attacks into Pakistan and Iran

**area(s) of operation:** operational in the greater Balochistan area, where fighters stage attacks targeting Shia Muslims in Iran and Pakistan

**note:** formerly known as Jundallah (April 2018)

### Lashkar i Jhangvi (LJ):

**aim(s):** enhance its networks and paramilitary training in Afghanistan; exterminate Shia Muslims, rid the Afghanistan-Pakistan region of Western influence

**area(s) of operation:** headquartered in the east; operates paramilitary training camps near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border across from the central area of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) region; operatives conduct operations inside Afghanistan (April 2018)

### Lashkar-e Tayyiba (LT):

**aim(s):** annex the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan and foment Islamic insurgency in India; attack Western, Indian, and Afghan interests in Afghanistan; support the Taliban's return to power; enhance its recruitment networks and paramilitary training in Afghanistan, and, ultimately, install Islamic rule throughout South Asia

**area(s) of operation:** targets Coalition forces and Western interests throughout the country; maintains several facilities, such as paramilitary training camps, medical clinics serving locals, and schools for youths; targets Pashtun youth for recruitment Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) region; operatives conduct operations inside Afghanistan (April 2018)

## Transnational Issues :: AFGHANISTAN

### Disputes - international:



Afghan, Coalition, and Pakistan military meet periodically to clarify the alignment of the boundary on the ground and on maps and since 2014 have met to discuss collaboration on the Taliban insurgency and counterterrorism efforts; Afghan and Iranian commissioners have discussed boundary monument densification and resurvey; Iran protests Afghanistan's restricting flow of dammed Helmand River tributaries during drought; Pakistan has sent troops across and built fences along some remote tribal areas of its treaty-defined Durand Line border with Afghanistan which serve as bases for foreign terrorists and other illegal activities; Russia remains concerned about the smuggling of poppy derivatives from Afghanistan through Central Asian countries

### Refugees and internally displaced persons:



**refugees (country of origin):** 72,194 (Pakistan) (2018)

**IDPs:** 2.598 million (mostly Pashtuns and Kuchis displaced in the south and west due to natural disasters and political instability) (2018)

### Illicit drugs:



world's largest producer of opium; poppy cultivation increased 63 percent, to 328,304 hectares in 2017; while eradication increased slightly, it still remains well below levels achieved in 2015; the 2017 crop yielded an estimated 9,000 mt of raw opium, a 88% increase over 2016; the Taliban and other antigovernment groups participate in and profit from the opiate trade, which is a key source of revenue for the Taliban inside Afghanistan; widespread corruption and instability impede counterdrug efforts; most of the heroin consumed in Europe and Eurasia is derived from Afghan opium; Afghanistan is also struggling to respond to a burgeoning domestic opiate addiction problem; a 2015 national drug use survey found that

roughly 11% of the population tested positive for one or more illicit drugs; vulnerable to drug money laundering through informal financial networks; illicit cultivation of cannabis and regional source of hashish (2018)

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## Afghanistan country profile



**Landlocked and mountainous, Afghanistan has suffered from such chronic instability and conflict during its modern history that its economy and infrastructure are in ruins, and many of its people are refugees.**

The Taliban, who imposed strict Islamic rule following a devastating civil war, were ousted by a US-led invasion in 2001 but have recently been making a comeback.

The internationally-recognised government set up following the adoption of a new constitution in 2004 has struggled to extend its authority beyond the capital and to forge national unity.

Nato-led foreign combat troops had the main responsibility for maintaining security after 2001, and the formal end of Nato's combat mission in December 2014 was followed by an upsurge in Taliban activity.



# FACTS

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## Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

### Capital: Kabul

- Population 31.6 million
- Area 652,864 sq km (251,827 sq miles)
- Major languages Dari, Pashto
- Major religion Islam
- Life expectancy 59 years (men), 62 years (women)
- Currency Afghani

UN, World Bank  
Getty Images

# LEADERS

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President: Ashraf Ghani



Image copyright [Getty Images](#)

President Ghani, right, heads a unity government along with former rival and now chief executive Abdullah Abdullah, left. He was sworn in as president in September 2014.

He replaced Hamid Karzai, who led the country for twelve years after the Taliban were overthrown in 2001.

# MEDIA



Image copyright [Tolo TV](#) Image caption Afghans now have access to a wide range of media, unlike when the Taliban was in control and destroyed TV sets

There is a lively private media scene, which includes dozens of TV networks and more than 170 radio stations.

Reporters Without Borders says that journalists and the media are under constant threat from militants, warlords and corrupt officials.

Internet access can be expensive. Facebook tends to be used by younger Afghans and the political elite.

# TIMELINE

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Some key dates in Afghanistan's history:



Image copyright [Getty Images](#) Image caption Soviet troops withdrew after a bloody decade fighting the Afghan resistance

**1979** - Soviet Army invades and props up communist government. More than a million people die in the ensuing war.

**1989** - Last Soviet troops leave. US- and Pakistan-backed mujahideen push to overthrow Soviet-installed Afghan ruler Najibullah triggers devastating civil war.

**1996** - Taliban seize control of Kabul and impose hard-line version of Islam.

**2001** - US intervenes militarily following September 11 attacks on the United States. Taliban are ousted from Kabul and Hamid Karzai becomes head of an interim power-sharing government.

**2002** - Nato assumes responsibility for maintaining security in Afghanistan.

**2004** - Loya Jirga adopts new constitution which provides for strong presidency. Hamid Karzai is elected president.

**2014** - Ashraf Ghani elected president. NATO formally ends its combat mission in Afghanistan, handing over to Afghan forces, who face a growing insurgency.



Image copyright



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

## BACKGROUND

### Land and Climate

Located in central Asia, Afghanistan is a little larger than France and a little smaller than the U.S. state of Texas. Afghanistan is a landlocked country of rugged mountains. The most prominent mountain range is the Hindu Kush, which extends about 600 miles (966 kilometers) from the far northeast to the southwest, effectively bisecting the country. Mount Nushaq, which lies on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, is Afghanistan's highest peak and reaches 24,580 feet (7,492 meters).

The Wakhan Corridor (the extreme northeasterly part of Afghanistan, which borders China, Tajikistan, and Pakistan) sits at the junction of the highest mountain systems in the world (including the Himalayas, Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and others), which together are sometimes called the "roof of the world." North of the Hindu Kush, the Turkestan Plains run down to the Amu Darya (River) on the northern border. After broadening into the Hazarajat central plateau, the mountains disappear into western deserts such as the Registan. Northern Afghanistan is subject to major earthquake activity.

For water, Afghanistan relies on four major river systems: the Amu Darya, the Kabul, the Helmand, and the Hari Rud. Many villages in Afghanistan use a *qanat* well system (a string of connected wells) to irrigate more arid parts of the country.

The climate varies according to elevation and location. Generally, the capital city of Kabul (at 5,873 feet, or 1,790

meters) has cold winters and temperate summers; Jalalabad (1,800 feet, or 549 meters) has a subtropical climate; and Kandahar (3,500 feet, or 1,067 meters) is mild year-round. Central and northeastern Afghanistan experience heavy snowfall during winter.

### History

#### *Ancient Empire and Early Dynasties*

Located along the Silk Road (a trade route extending from China to Europe), Afghanistan has been the Crossroads of Asia since ancient times and thus subject to repeated invasion. Emperors and conquerors (Persians, Greeks, central Asians, and others) throughout history have attempted to control or pacify the region's inhabitants, most often finding them fiercely independent and formidable military opponents aided by the country's natural defense—mountains.

Islam was introduced in the seventh century and flourished in the Ghaznavid Empire (977–1186). Great destruction occurred in the 13th century with the Mongol invasions of Genghis Khan. His Turko-Mongol descendant Tamerlane (also known as Timur) established the Timurid Dynasty (1370–1506), famed for its arts and architecture. The Mughal Dynasty (1526–1707) rose to control eastern Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent, while the Persian Safavid Dynasty (1501–1732) held western Afghanistan. Afghanistan's roots as a modern state are in the Durrani Dynasty, founded in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durrani.

#### *The Great Game and Independence*

During Durrani's reign, Afghanistan was caught in the 19th-century struggle for territory and influence between the Russian and British empires (called the Great Game);

Afghanistan was used by the British as a buffer between Russia and India, Britain's colony. While Afghanistan was never ruled by a European power, Britain had nominal control over the country's foreign policy. Afghanistan achieved full independence from Britain after the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919.

Despite the efforts of Shah Amanullah Khan (leader of Afghanistan at independence) to modernize and Westernize the country, his reforms were largely rejected by the conservative religious leaders (for his progressive attitudes, including those toward women) and tribal leaders (who were afraid of a strong centralized government). In 1929, Amanullah was deposed by Habibullah Kalakani, a Tajik who led the revolt against Amanullah. Less than a year after assuming office, Habibullah was overthrown by Muhammad Nadir Shah, who tried to pacify the concerns of the religiously conservative while still implementing reform.

In 1973, Muhammad Zahir Shah, successor and son of Nadir Shah, was ousted by his cousin Prince Muhammad Daoud Khan in a bloodless coup. Daoud established the Republic of Afghanistan and made himself president. During his time in office, Daoud tried to decrease Afghanistan's reliance on the Soviet Union.

#### ***Soviet Era***

Although Daoud was supported by the national Communist Party, the United States and regional powers (including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Iran) were concerned about Soviet influence in Afghanistan. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) coordinated with these regional powers to supply and arm local rebel groups in order to counter Soviet power in Afghanistan. For its part, the Soviet Union was concerned about Afghanistan's relationship with the United States and its connection with these Islamic states. Five years after Daoud came to power, the Soviets, in coordination with sympathetic elements in the army, aided in a military coup. Once in power, the Soviet-backed communists instituted a number of reforms that were strongly opposed by many of Afghanistan's devoutly Muslim citizens. Soon, an anti-communist rebellion, which was supported by the United States, broke out in Afghanistan.

Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to prevent the communist government's collapse. The resulting Soviet-Afghan War caused widespread destruction, killed 1.5 million people, and drove more than 6 million refugees into Pakistan and Iran. The Soviet troops withdrew in 1989 and put in place a puppet regime led by Muhammad Najibullah. Following the Soviet withdrawal, civil war broke out between the communist government of Najibullah and Muslim *mujahideen* (Islamic fighters) from several political parties. In 1992, Najibullah's government was defeated by *mujahideen*.

#### ***Taliban Rule***

Between 1992 and 1996, different factions of *mujahideen* in Kabul began fighting each other for control of the country. In 1994, one group of *mujahideen*, known as the *Taliban* ("Students," referring to Muslim youth studying Islam), took control of the city of Kandahar and promised to bring order to the city. The Taliban, which received direct support from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and many war-weary Afghans, consolidated its power and expanded its control over large

swaths of territory, capturing Kabul in 1996.

By 2001, the Taliban controlled more than 90 percent of the country. The Northern Alliance, a coalition of militias opposed to the Taliban, kept control over a small area of northern Afghanistan. Despite its dominance, the Taliban saw its support slip as it imposed strict laws based on its interpretation of *shari'ah* (Islamic law) and on pre-Islamic Pashtun tribal codes.

Following the 2001 September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States, U.S. and British forces joined with the Northern Alliance in a military campaign to oust the Taliban, which was sheltering al-Qaeda terrorists accused of masterminding the attacks. By the end of 2001, the U.S.-led invasion was successful in removing the Taliban from power.

#### ***Struggle for Stability and Security***

Attempts to build a stable democratic government ensued. A constitution was adopted in January 2004, and Afghanistan voted for its first democratically elected president later that year. In the following years, the government of Afghanistan sought to rebuild a devastated infrastructure, bridge longstanding differences among the nation's tribes, and combat a lucrative drug trade (based on the cultivation of opium poppies). These goals, however, largely failed, as the new Afghan government was widely viewed as weak, ineffective, and corrupt.

By the time North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops fully assumed control of military operations from the U.S.-led coalition in 2006, insurgent attacks had increased dramatically, as the Taliban started employing suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). As troop and civilian casualties climbed, the war's support in the United States and other NATO countries waned, leading to increased pressure in those nations to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. At the same time, anti-U.S. and anti-Western views became common among Afghans, who increasingly resented their nation's worsening security situation and the presence of foreign troops. NATO's combat mission officially ended in December 2014, when Afghan forces assumed full responsibility for the nation's internal security.

Nevertheless, thousands of NATO-led troops, mostly from the United States, remain in Afghanistan to train, advise, and assist Afghan forces in their counterinsurgency operations. The presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan continues to be controversial. Additionally, the Taliban has regained substantial territory in recent years despite the presence of foreign troops. Peace talks with the Taliban have been unsuccessful thus far. Since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001, tens of thousands of Afghan civilians and more than 100,000 Afghan and Taliban fighters have been killed. And decades of instability and violence have devastated Afghanistan's infrastructure and economy and displaced millions of Afghans.

## **THE PEOPLE**

### **Population**

Afghanistan's major cities include Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar, Herat, and Jalalabad. However, the majority of

Afghans live in rural areas. Millions of Afghan refugees live in Pakistan and Iran. Repatriation efforts have been hindered by drought, the presence of land mines, and a lack of infrastructure.

Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, the Pashtun, can be divided into several major subtribes and live mostly in the east and south. The second-largest ethnic group, the Tajik, live mainly in the north. Uzbek generally live in the north-center, and Hazara in the center. Smaller numbers of Brahui, Kyrgyz, Nuristani, Qizilbash, and Turkmen together account for the rest of the population. Traditionally, the Pashtun have been politically dominant in Afghanistan, including during the reign of the Taliban (though not every member of the Taliban was Pashtun, and not every Pashtun was a member of the Taliban). Smaller ethnic groups formed militias to fight against the Taliban and to secure their own autonomy, such as the Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara.

### Language

More than 40 languages are spoken in Afghanistan. Dari (a dialect of Farsi also known as Afghan Persian) is spoken most widely and has several dialects. Pashto, spoken by the Pashtun, has two major variants and many dialects. Dari and Pashto both use a modified Arabic alphabet. Both Dari and Pashto are official languages, and most Afghans speak both. While Dari is more common, Pashto is the language of the national anthem. Depending on the dominant language of the area, school instruction may be in either Dari or Pashto. The Uzbek and Turkmen speak Turkic languages. Smaller ethnic groups speak their own languages or a dialect of a major language. The Hazara, for example, speak a Dari dialect. In some areas with high concentrations of ethnic minorities, there is a third official language—such as Uzbek or Turkmen.

### Religion

Islam is the religion of virtually all Afghans. About 85 to 90 percent of Afghans are Sunni Muslims, while between 10 and 15 percent (primarily Hazara and some Dari speakers) are Shi'i Muslims. Small numbers of Sikhs and Hindus live in urban areas. Zoroastrianism (a faith that was founded by the Iranian prophet Zoroaster in the sixth century BC) was a major religion for centuries in Afghanistan prior to the introduction of Islam in the seventh century, when it was almost completely extinguished. Buddhism, which spread to Afghanistan in the fourth century, was also prominent but gradually faded after Islam was introduced.

Founded by the prophet Muhammad in 622, Islam is based on the belief in one God (*Allah*). Islam shares many biblical figures with Judaism and Christianity, but Muslims cite Muhammad as the last prophet to receive divine revelation from God. Both Sunni and Shi'i Muslims believe the *Qur'an* (Islamic holy book) contains the will of God as revealed through the angel Gabriel to Muhammad. Devout Muslims express their faith through the Five Pillars of Islam: declaring there is no god but *Allah* and Muhammad is his prophet; praying five times daily; fasting during the holy month of *Ramadan*; donating to the poor; and making a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, if they can afford it.

Islam has also played a significant role in Afghanistan's

political history. In 1979, the war against the Soviets was considered a war to defend Islam, waged by the *mujahideen* (Islamic fighters, sometimes called holy warriors). Through the successful defense of Afghanistan by the *mujahideen*, Islam's political power increased.

Culturally, Islam guides most people's lives from birth to death. Its influence on daily activities is often shared with such local behavior codes as the *Pashtunwali* (code of the Pashtuns). The *Pashtunwali* dictates social behavior in various areas of life and emphasizes the principles of bravery, honor, and generosity. The *Pashtunwali* serves as an unwritten social code among the Pashtun.

### General Attitudes

Although people identify themselves as Afghans, primary loyalty is usually to their family, kin group, clan, or tribe. The various family and tribal codes are often strict and inflexible, stressing honor and one's responsibility to fulfill expected roles. Personal disputes are not solved easily because of the need to protect one's honor. Family honor is also affected by personal behavior (particularly the behavior of women), so living the code properly is considered essential. Piety and stoicism are widely admired traits. Many Afghans highly value knowledge, wisdom, and education.

Traditionally, rural Afghans value wealth as defined by land ownership or a large family. Today, urban residents are more likely to view wealth in terms of money or possessions. Nomadic Afghans traditionally define wealth by the size of their herds.

Many Afghans' outlook on life is influenced by a great faith that God (*Khuda*, in Dari and Pashto) controls everything and that everything happens according to his will, a belief that may help some Afghans accept a very hard life.

### Personal Appearance

Nearly all men wear Afghanistan's national *perahan tunban*. This consists of a knee-length shirt (*perahan*) worn over baggy trousers (*tunban*) pulled tight with a drawstring. Men may wear a dress coat or open vest (*vaskat*) over the *perahan tunban*. Men commonly wear a white shawl called a *pato* over their shoulders. Shoes are removed for prayers, with the exception of special shoes called *mash*, worn by some older Afghans.

The most common headwear is a *lungi* (turban) with a *kolah* (turban cap) in a color and design that may relate to the wearer's ethnic or regional background. Pashtun and Nuristani men cover their heads with a flat wool cap. Men also commonly have beards (growing beards by adult men was a law under Taliban rule). Many dye their beards red with henna.

Women typically wear a long colorful dress with a short jacket, long coat, and *chador* (shawl) to cover their hair. Some women wear a head-to-toe covering called a *burqa* over their clothing; faces are covered by an intricately embroidered window, through which the wearer can see. The *burqa* was required public attire for all women during the Taliban era and is still prevalent in some areas; the *burqa* is more common among the Pashtun than among other ethnic groups. In the capital of Kabul, most women do not wear the *burqa*.



Jewelry made from gold and silver is common. Many people, especially children, wear a *tawiz* (amulet) to protect against evil.

## CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

### Greetings

A handshake is common among men, who tend to be expressive in greeting friends and may pat backs during an embrace. Lengthy verbal greetings are often accompanied by placing the right hand over the heart. A man does not shake hands with or otherwise touch a woman in public, although he may greet her verbally. Female friends and family members embrace and kiss on alternating cheeks. Some women might also shake hands with each other, but this is not common.

Greetings vary by region and ethnic group, but Arabic greetings are accepted universally. *Assalaam 'alaikum* (Peace be upon you) is replied to with *Wa 'alaikum assalaam* (And peace be upon you). A common Dari greeting is *Chetori?* (How are you?); the Pashto equivalent is *Sanga ye?* ("Good-bye" is *Khoday paman* in Pashto. "Thank you" is *Tashakoor* in Dari and *Manana* in Pashto.

In formal situations, using a title is essential. *Haji* (pilgrim) is reserved for those who have made a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. A religious cleric is addressed with the title *Mullah* (meaning "master"). Socioeconomic status can also determine which title to use (such as *Saheb*, meaning "sir"). Some people are respectfully referred to only by a single title (for example, *Haji*) or by multiple titles (*Haji saheb*). Usually, however, titles are combined with names. Friends use given names and nicknames among themselves.

### Gestures

Most Afghans do not use the hands much while speaking. During conversation, men often finger prayer beads (*tasbih*), used in praying or in reciting the 99 names of God (*Allah*). Male friends often link arms or hold hands while walking, but members of the opposite sex do not touch in public. To beckon a person, one motions downward, with the palm of the hand facing down. To request divine assistance at the beginning or end of an activity (trip, meal, project), one holds both hands in front of the chest, palms up as if holding a book. Afghans typically sit with legs crossed but make sure not to point the soles of the feet toward someone else, as doing so is impolite. When shaking hands or eating food, it is generally considered impolite to use the left hand.

### Visiting

Visiting between family, friends, and neighbors provides the mainstay of Afghan social life. Women are sometimes required to observe *purdah* ("curtain," a practice that places physical and social boundaries between men and women), which means that they are not seen by males who are not close family members and that visiting is mostly segregated by gender. Women generally must be accompanied by a male relative when visiting the house of a family member or female friend. Married women who live far from their parents return to visit their families twice a year, usually for several weeks

at a time. Winter is a common time to visit family, as there is less farm work.

Homes often have a special room (called *mehman-khana* in Dari, or *kota* in Pashto) where the male host receives male guests. Females socialize elsewhere in the compound. Hosts serve guests tea and, depending on the time of day, something to eat. It is polite for guests to have more than one cup of tea. Any business discussions occur after refreshments. Guests do not bring gifts. The ability of an Afghan to generously receive guests is a sign of social status.

### Eating

At meals, Afghans usually sit on the floor around a mat on which food is served in a communal dish. To eat, one uses the fingers of the right hand or a piece of *naan* (unleavened bread). Most families bake bread in an oven called a *tandur*, though in some cities, people buy bread from the market. One never uses the left hand to serve oneself, as it is traditionally reserved for personal hygiene. One eats until satisfied. In many areas, belches are considered a sign of a satisfied diner. Families normally eat together, but if a male guest is present, females eat separately. Most Afghans do not eat at restaurants, but some restaurants have booths or a separate dining area for families, so women may dine out when they are with their families—women do not dine out alone or with friends.

## LIFESTYLE

### Family

#### Structure

Life centers on the extended family, which provides the basis for most social, economic, and political interaction. The average urban family has five children, but rural families may be much larger. Often several generations live together in the same, adjoining, or nearby compounds. When young men marry, they move out of their parental home and into an adjoining home.

#### Parents and Children

Afghans often have large families, and parents usually view children as a source of pride. Children are expected to respect their parents, and they show that respect in part by being willing to assist in the daily chores. Household tasks are divided by gender, age, and experience. Girls between five and seven years old begin assisting their mothers with daily chores such as cooking and washing. Young boys may assist their fathers with the family business after they return from school. Very poor families may have teenage sons work to help support the family. Adult children continue to pay respect to their parents by spending time with them and seeking their counsel in life decisions. Even if the children live or study far away from the home, weekly visits are expected.

#### Gender Roles

Male family members handle most contact with the outside world. Only adult males participate in the *jirga* (village council) or other political events, but women are well-informed about local happenings and are influential in

shaping men's opinions. Within family compounds, the senior male (father or grandfather) leads the family. The wife of the senior male is the most influential female in the family.

Afghan women's lives center generally on the household. Although they help in farming, they also do all the cooking, washing, and cleaning. Under the Taliban rule, women did not have access to education, and firmly established customs also prevented women from working. Today, few rural women work outside of their home, but if they do, they are generally employed in the health or education sectors. In urban areas, women commonly work outside of the home as cleaners, office assistants, and occasionally as managers.

## Housing

### Urban

Kabul and other large cities feature Western-style dwellings. Urban homes are generally made of concrete or brick and usually have a yard surrounding the house. Homes in urban areas typically have three to four bedrooms and one or two bathrooms. Many urban homes are painted bright colors; interiors are often painted white. Homes generally feature rugs, cushions, and pillows, although some homes have sofas.

Urban homes are equipped with appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines and are wired for electricity; however, an aging energy infrastructure causes frequent power outages, leaving some areas without power for all but a few hours per day. Urban homes also have indoor plumbing and modern plumbing fixtures.

### Rural

Rural homes are usually made of mud brick and are generally located on much larger plots than urban homes. Nomadic groups such as Turkmen, Kyrgyz, and Baluchi live in tents. Exteriors of rural homes are plastered with mud and straw. Rural compounds are typically surrounded by high mud walls, which provide security from enemies, seclusion for women, and a pen for animals. Rooms are arranged around an open courtyard.

Most rural houses have a kitchen or oven room (*tandur khana*), where bread is baked in a *tandur* (underground oven). Most rural homes connect the *tandur* to an adjacent room (called *tawa khana*) through vents. The heat from the *tandur* heats the adjacent room, which is where the family gathers to keep warm on cold winter days. Rural homes do not have access to electricity or running water. Rural families often collect water from nearby streams.

### Home Life

Both urban and rural homes have an entrance for visitors that leads to a greeting room (*mehman-khana* in Dari; *kota* in Pashto). Next to this is a relatively large area where male guests can talk apart from the women, who have the rest of the house to themselves. Brothers share bedrooms with brothers, and sisters with sisters. Married children have their own room if they live in their parents' home.

### Ownership

Rural residents are more likely to own land and build a home than urban residents, who typically find home ownership to be unattainable due to the high cost of land and building materials in urban areas. Urban residents sometimes share a rented home with another family. Home ownership is a goal

that most aspire to.

## Dating and Marriage

### Marriage Arrangement

Dating is nonexistent because boys and girls are segregated at puberty. Marriages normally are arranged, and often older female family members play a prominent role in arranging a match. In some areas in the south, matchmakers (*roybar*) may engage in negotiations over the bride-price (paid by the groom's family to the bride's) and dowry (property the bride brings to the marriage). Among urban or Westernized families, the prospective bride and groom may be permitted to meet or view each other and approve or reject the union.

### Marriage in Society

Islam encourages its adherents to marry. Afghan law does not dictate a minimum marriage age. Young women generally marry between the ages of 14 and 22, and young men typically marry between 18 and 24. Women are legally able to choose a spouse, but only urban women are regularly allowed to do so; conservative religious families may not allow women to choose their husbands. Marriages between cousins are common because they strengthen family ties. A man may have as many as four wives, but he must care for each equally; this limits most men to one wife. Premarital and extramarital sex (*zinnah*) are strictly forbidden for men and women and may be grounds for severe punishment (including death). Sexual relations between same-sex partners are illegal in Afghanistan, and same-sex marriage is not legally recognized.

### Weddings

Marriage rituals are numerous, varied, and complex. Most wedding celebrations are held at the bride's family home and some at the groom's home. These traditionally last three days. Most activities occur with the sexes segregated, but all gather for the contract signing and *Qur'an* (Islamic holy book) recitation, which occurs on the first day of the wedding. Generally held in the presence of only family members, the contract signing ceremony (*nikah*) binds man and wife together in marriage. The bride and groom kneel in front of an *imam* (Muslim cleric), who asks the bride three times if she accepts the marriage. The *imam* recites from the *Qur'an* to complete the ceremony.

Celebrations begin later in the evening, after the contract ceremony. The newly married couple enters a celebration hall, where they are led by their parents to be seated on cushions. In some tribes (like Pashtun living in the south), the couple may be presented with a mirror, which they lift together to view themselves for the first time as a married couple. The couple may recite from the *Qur'an* together as well. The groom's father applies henna to their hands, and the bride and groom feed each other sweet food. By tradition, guests and family members are supposed to honor and obey the bride and groom on their wedding day. During the celebrations, the *attan* (national dance of Afghanistan) is performed by dancing and twirling in a circle.

The traditional Afghan *dastarkhan* (an elaborate spread of food), consisting of skewered meats, rice dishes, stuffed grape leaves, pickled vegetables, and breads, is served during wedding celebrations. In urban areas, the couple cuts the

wedding cake after the meal, often while the wedding musician plays the traditional Afghan wedding song "*Baada, Baada Elahee Mubarak Baada. Man Dil Ba Tu Dada Am, Tawakol Ba Khuda*" (Congratulations, I gave you my heart; now I leave it to God). Three days after the ceremony, the bride and groom receive guests at their home or a hotel. Guests bring gifts, generally household items.

#### **Divorce**

Divorce is much easier for men to obtain than women. In the past, according to Islamic tradition, the man needed only to publicly announce three times his decision to divorce his wife. Today, Afghan men are required by law to formalize a divorce by signing official documents, rather than issuing a verbal proclamation three times. Women find it difficult to initiate divorces, and few women do. To initiate a divorce, women must petition a court, who will then rule on her case. The larger problem for women is the social stigma she will face after divorce. Remarriage for women is possible, but if the woman is widowed early in life, her husband's family may insist that she marry one of his brothers.

### **Life Cycle**

#### **Birth**

The traditional view of life and death is strongly influenced by Islam. In general, Afghans believe that God created all human souls and decided in advance when each would be born. On the sixth day after a birth, relatives and neighbors gather for a *shab-e-shash*, during which a *mullah* (local religious cleric) whispers *Allahu akbar* (God is most great) in the child's ear. The father announces the name of the child to the guests and asks them to pray for the health of his child. Afghans commonly choose Muslim names for their children. Guests bring presents for the new baby. After a child is born, the mother recovers for 40 days (a period called *nefas*), after which she performs a ritual bath and gets new clothes. Women get 90 days of paid maternity leave; however, men do not receive paternity leave.

#### **Milestones**

For boys and girls, puberty generally marks the transition into adulthood (often between 12 and 16 years old). When young men become adults, they are expected to earn money and contribute to the family income. Girls are expected to stay within the family compound and help their mothers with household chores.

#### **Death**

Most Afghans believe that the time of death, like birth, is determined by God. Thus old age, illness, or accident are not considered the real causes of death. While people grieve the loss of family members or friends, they do not view death itself as a negative event, as most Afghans believe that a person who has lived a good life goes on to live in heaven.

The deceased are washed by family members of the same sex and wrapped in a white shroud. A *jenaze* (funeral) is held and features prayer services at a local mosque. The deceased is buried on his or her right side, facing Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Families may continue receiving people who wish to offer their condolences for three days after the burial. On the first Friday and the 40th day after the death, a *mullah* offers special prayers for the deceased at a mosque.

### **Diet**

Traditional Afghan cuisine is influenced by the foods of south and central Asia, China, and Iran. Traditional meals include many types of *palaw* (rice mixed with meat and/or vegetables), *qorma* (meat sauce), *kebab* (skewered meat), *ashak* (meat-filled dumplings), *mantu* (chive-filled dumplings), and *naan* (unleavened bread). Tomatoes, spinach, potatoes, peas, carrots, cucumbers, and eggplant are popular. Yogurt and other dairy products are dietary staples. People may snack on sugarcane, pudding, or a variety of nuts, seeds, and fruits (fresh and dried), such as apples, grapes, apricots, or oranges. *Chai* (tea), either green or black, is the most popular drink. An urban diet is usually more varied than a rural diet, but shortages of food or the money to buy it are severe at times. Islamic law forbids the consumption of alcohol and pork; however, while most Afghans don't eat pork, some may drink alcohol in private.

### **Recreation**

#### **Sports**

Many Afghans have a love for sports. Although participation tends to be limited to males (particularly in rural areas), some urban women play sports. Popular sports include soccer and volleyball. In the 1990s, Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan introduced cricket, and teams have been organized in several cities. Men and boys also play a variation of rugby in which two teams face each other and one person tries to rush over and break through the opposing team.

*Buzkashi*, Afghanistan's traditional national sport, is most commonly played in northern Afghanistan and during national celebrations. Teams of horsemen compete to see who can carry the headless carcass of a goat or calf from a circle to a spot a few hundred feet away and return it to the circle. Any player in possession of the carcass is subject to being kicked or hit in efforts to make him drop it. Mastery of the game requires superior horsemanship skills. *Pehlwani* is a form wrestling and often accompanies *buzkashi* matches; one tries to pin one's opponent to the ground without touching his legs.

#### **Leisure**

Afghan men enjoy discussing national and international news or talking and sharing jokes with friends and neighbors. Some men might smoke, chew *naswar* (chewing tobacco), or drink tea while relaxing. Women also sip tea while visiting friends and family during their leisure time.

Children's games in Afghanistan include tag, blind man's bluff, kite flying, and hopscotch. In rural areas, *achawel* is a popular game in which players compete to see who can throw a round stone the farthest. Another rural game is *gursai*, in which players hold their left foot in their right hand and hop about trying to push each other over. Girls often enjoy playing with homemade dolls, while boys play soccer or make slingshots. A game called *buzul-bazi*, similar to marbles, uses sheep knuckle bones. In winter, Afghan children enjoy having snowball fights. Some people also ski near Kabul.

### **The Arts**

Afghan carpets, copper utensils, gold and silver jewelry, and embroidery are traditional Afghan arts, but years of war and instability have largely prevented people from creating these works. Elaborate calligraphy once adorned many buildings. Many Buddhist, Hindu, and other pre-Islamic religious statues and other works of religious art were destroyed by the Taliban.

Traditional music follows regional and ethnic divisions. All groups play music based on stringed instruments, such as the *rebab* (a banjo-like, skin-covered instrument), the *tambur* (a long, multi-stringed lute), and the *duitar* (a two-stringed lute), as well as singing and drums. The *attan*, originally a Pashtun dance, is commonly performed at feasts and other celebrations.

One of the first great literary works in Dari was *Shah Nama (Book of the Kings)*, completed in AD 1010 by the poet Ferdowsi. Also respected are the *Munajat* (prayer verses) written by Khwaja Abdullah Ansari. Modern writers have focused on themes of Islam and freedom. Proverbs, poetry, and riddles are popular, and folktales are a key form of teaching and entertainment.

## Holidays

Secular holidays include *Nowruz* (the New Year, celebrated in the spring), *Mujahideen Victory Day* (28 April), and Independence Day (19 August). Islamic holidays are more prominent and are scheduled according to a lunar calendar. They include the first day of the holy month of *Ramadan*, the three-day feast (*Eid al-Fitr*) at the end of *Ramadan*, *Eid al-Adha* (Feast of the Sacrifice), *Ashura* (a Muslim fasting holiday), *Roze-Maulud* (also known as *al-Mawlid al-Nabawi*, the prophet Muhammad's birthday), and *Arafa* (a day of fasting). During most holidays, Afghans usually visit friends and family, prepare lavish meals, and, for Islamic holidays, attend special prayers.

### *Mujahideen Victory Day*

*Mujahideen Victory Day* is an official holiday for all Afghans but is primarily celebrated by the government. The day commemorates the 1992 overthrow of the Russian-backed socialist government in Afghanistan. Celebrations may include military parades and sports competitions, including *buzkashi* ("goat grabbing," Afghanistan's national sport), boxing, and karate. There may also be a competition for dancers of the *attan* (the national dance).

### *Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr*

During *Ramadan* (the ninth month of the lunar calendar), people fast from dawn to dusk; families and friends gather in the evenings, after sundown, to eat and visit. *Eid al-Fitr* is celebrated at the end of the month of fasting. Many begin the day by wearing new clothes, and men go to mosques for prayers. Afterward, people visit and entertain their friends and families. Children usually receive gifts or money called *eid*.

### *Eid al-Adha*

Several months after *Ramadan*, *Eid al-Adha* (celebrated during the twelfth month of the lunar calendar) honors the prophet Abraham for his willingness to sacrifice his son. *Eid al-Adha* is celebrated in much the same way as *Eid al-Fitr*: people visit friends and family, and gifts are exchanged. Many families slaughter a sheep on this day as a symbol of

the story of Abraham. Families who cannot afford their own animal may join other families and pool their money together to buy an animal. The meat from the sacrifice is shared with family and friends; a portion must also be reserved for the poor. In rural areas, people gather (usually segregated by gender) for a village breakfast or other festivities, often dressing in new clothes. Throughout the country, people attend special prayer services held at mosques. The rest of the day is spent preparing and enjoying meals with friends and family.

### *Day of Ashura*

*Ashura* (celebrated during the first month of the lunar calendar) commemorates the martyrdom of the prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn and his followers at the battle of Karbala. People donate meals to the poor during this holiday. Although banned by religious leaders, there are also processions where men whip themselves. While *Ashura* is commemorated in both Sunni and Shi'i Islam, it has especial significance in Shi'i Islam.

## SOCIETY

### Government

#### *Structure*

Afghanistan's president is head of state and head of government. The president is directly elected to a five-year term. The president shares some powers with a chief executive officer (CEO), a position that is similar to a prime minister. A new constitution was approved by a *Loya Jirga* (Grand Council) of locally elected and tribal officials in January 2004. The *Loya Jirga* convenes only to discuss special issues, such as constitutional amendments. The constitution provides for a strong presidency and a bicameral National Assembly, which consists of a 249-seat *Wolesi Jirga* (House of People) and a 102-seat *Meshrano Jirga* (House of Elders). *Wolesi Jirga* members are directly elected to serve five-year terms, with a number of seats reserved for women. A third of *Meshrano Jirga* members are elected indirectly by district councils and serve three-year terms, while another third are indirectly elected by provincial councils and serve four-year terms; the final third (seventeen of which must be women) are nominated by the president and serve five-year terms.

#### *Political Landscape*

Though a large number of political parties exist in Afghanistan, most lack widespread public support and only represent the interests of specific ethnic groups. Political competition is low, as groups have failed to form coalitions and platforms that draw a large number of supporters. Political alliances are largely based on ethnic ties. Tribal leadership and loyalty remain strong. In rural areas, tribal leaders are considered more important than the national government, which has limited authority outside of Kabul.

#### *Government and the People*

Though the constitution guarantees many freedoms, in practice freedoms of speech, association, religion, and press are not respected. Corruption, cronyism, and poor rule of law are major issues challenging the stability and functionality of

the country's government. Both national and provincial governments struggle to provide basic services or control areas under their jurisdiction. Elections are often blemished by voting inconsistencies and fraud. Election turnout is often low and results are limited, as the country remains insecure and unstable. All citizens age 18 and older may vote.

### Economy

Since 2014, Afghanistan's economy, which is highly dependent on foreign aid, has declined, further impoverishing the country. This is largely due to the withdrawal of nearly 100,000 foreign troops that gave a much-needed boost to the Afghan economy. Since 2003, various countries have donated billions of dollars in international aid to Afghanistan; however, poverty still affects more than half of the population. Afghans face challenges in finding employment, in addition to shortages in housing, sanitary water, electricity, and health care.

Afghanistan's economy relies on agriculture, pastoralism (livestock raising), and mining, with the bulk of the labor force engaged in these activities. Although Afghanistan has substantial mineral reserves, weak infrastructure and political instability have prevented the country from capitalizing on them. Agricultural products are mostly for domestic consumption. Exports include fruits, nuts, handwoven carpets, wool, cotton, hides and pelts, precious and semi-precious gems, and medical herbs. Afghan carpets and embroidered clothing are well-known. Major trading partners include India, Pakistan, China, and Iran.

High-profit opium and heroin production is a major, though illegal, industry, contributing roughly one-third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). For farmers, illicit poppy production is more lucrative than wheat and other food crops. This creates a shortage of locally produced grain and food crops, which necessitates additional food imports, thus compounding Afghanistan's economic problems. Opiates made from poppies grown in Afghanistan comprise the vast majority of illicit opiate sales in the world. Afghanistan's currency is the *afghani* (AFN).

### Transportation and Communications

The strategic Ring Road, Afghanistan's one major road, creates a large "U" as it runs south from Herat to Kandahar, northeast to Kabul, and then north through the Salang Tunnel (at 11,200 feet in elevation) to Kunduz, and on to Mazar-i-Sharif. Paved roads run from these major cities to the nearest border towns; for example, one runs from Kabul, through Jalalabad, to the Khyber Pass on the Pakistani border. These roads have been substantially damaged in the war, and efforts are underway to rebuild them. Off-road travel is dangerous in many areas because of the high number of land mines buried throughout the country (estimated to be around 640,000). Many rural areas are essentially inaccessible to vehicles, so people walk, ride animals, or use horse-drawn carts. Buses and minibuses provide transportation in cities and over major transit routes. Few Afghans own private cars.

Due to Afghanistan's poor literacy rate, newspaper circulation and readership is low. However, broadcast media have grown significantly since the Taliban was removed from

power, with nearly two hundred radio stations and dozens of TV stations active today. People also listen to radio broadcasts and watch television programs from neighboring countries. Many Afghans regularly listen to the news from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which has broadcasts in Dari and Pashto; the BBC has a reputation among Afghans as a reliable and relatively unbiased media source.

Content that goes against Islamic teachings or is offensive to other religions is prohibited. Although media freedom has generally improved with a wide variety of views and perspectives, journalists face growing dangers of being attacked, so many practice self-censorship. Some Afghans are active on social media and blogs and discuss social and political issues. Phone and postal services are limited but functioning. Cellular phone use is increasing; more than half of the population has cellular phones. Few Afghans have access to the internet.

### Education

#### Structure

Education in Afghanistan includes primary school and secondary school, followed by high school and university. Primary school covers classes 1–6 (ages 6–12), secondary school includes classes 7–9 (ages 13–15), and high school is comprised of classes 10–12 (ages 16–18). Most universities are four-year institutions. There is no mandatory level of education; however, most people value education and want to send their children to as much schooling as they can.

#### Access

Most schools are government supported and free to attend. However, students are responsible for providing their own materials, uniforms, and lunches; they must also pay transportation fees and, if needed, buy their own books. These costs can be prohibitive for some. Private schools have recently become available, but their high fees make them inaccessible to most of the population.

The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with international aid agencies, is working to provide education to everyone; however, rural areas suffer from a lack of buildings and other resources. Roughly half of school-age children attend school, though there are significant disparities between urban and rural settings as well as genders. In rural areas, for example, when the school is far from the home, families may refuse to let their daughters travel long distances alone. More traditional families may discourage their daughters from pursuing education or may disallow it altogether. In areas that struggle with Taliban insurgencies (particularly the south), girls are prohibited from going to school and most schools have been shut down. This affects mostly urban girls, since rural girls are rarely ever enrolled. Qualified teachers—particularly female ones—are lacking. Many scholars and teachers fled or were killed during the Soviet-Afghan War or during the civil war.

#### School Life

Schools offer courses such as religion, mathematics, biology, chemistry, and languages (Dari, Pashto, and Arabic). English is taught as well, but only at basic levels. English is the most common language of instruction at private institutions. Boys

and girls study the same curriculum, except for a girls-only class called home management. Boys and girls are segregated by gender after primary school. Children have nightly homework in each subject, which can take several hours to complete. Students are further challenged because many families require their children's assistance with a family business, working the family's agricultural land, or carrying out other domestic responsibilities, which leaves little time for study.

Teaching styles tend to be lecture-based, with an emphasis on memorization. Teachers must sometimes focus only on theory, leaving little opportunity to demonstrate scientific principles in action, due to insufficient supplies and inadequate facilities. However, most schools have basic classroom supplies, and private schools may also incorporate technology in their instruction. Tests are the common metric for determining a student's progress. Cheating is not common and is not acceptable to society; it is punished when discovered. Students are respectful to their teachers, who are referred to as *Malam* (Teacher). Some teachers assist their students outside of the classroom.

**Higher Education**

After completing class 12, students earn a baccalaureate certificate. The baccalaureate enables a student to participate in university preparation courses to take the university entrance exam (the Kankor Exam). The baccalaureate also enables a person to be hired by the government in entry-level positions. There are several major universities; most are located in Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, and Jalalabad.

**Health**

Though improvements have been made to Afghanistan's healthcare system in recent years, the general health situation remains poor. Hospitals are found only in some cities, and these lack heat, qualified staff, medicine, and equipment. Patients' families must provide their own supplies and medicine. Rural areas completely lack modern medical care. International aid groups and community healthcare workers organize awareness campaigns and provide health services but have limited means. People who can afford to do so go to India or Pakistan for medical treatment.

Children are often undernourished, and many die before they turn five years old. Maternal mortality rates also remain high. Water is not safe, and many illnesses like dysentery, malaria, tuberculosis, and pneumonia affect the population. Polio cases are high in insecure rural areas where healthcare workers cannot access patients. As a means of dealing with residual trauma from recent conflicts, many Afghans use opiates such as heroin and opium. Tobacco and marijuana use is also prevalent.

Thousands of Afghan civilians have been injured or maimed as a result of land mines or explosive remnants of war (ERWs). Some of these mines date back to the Soviet-Afghan War and the subsequent internal conflict between *mujahideen* (Islamic fighters) factions; the number of explosive devices increased considerably during the U.S.-led military campaign (which began in 2001). Land mines remain a risk in many areas and continue to cause

considerable civilian injuries and deaths.

**AT A GLANCE**

**Contact Information**

Embassy of Afghanistan, 2341 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008; phone (202) 483-6410; web site [www.embassyofafghanistan.org](http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org).

**Country and Development Data**

Capital	Kabul
Population	34,940,837 (rank=39)
Area (sq. mi.)	251,827 (rank=40)
Area (sq. km.)	652,230
Human Development Index	168 of 188 countries
Gender Inequality Index	153 of 188 countries
GDP (PPP) per capita	\$2,000
Adult Literacy	52% (male); 24% (female)
Infant Mortality	109 per 1,000 births
Life Expectancy	63 (male); 65 (female)
Currency	Afghani

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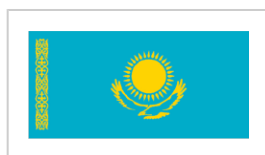
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VIEW 6 PHOTOS OF KAZAKHSTAN



TRAVEL FACTS



[Jump to topic](#)[Open All](#) [Close All](#)[Open All](#) [Close All](#)**Introduction :: KAZAKHSTAN****Background:**

Ethnic Kazakhs, a mix of Turkic and Mongol nomadic tribes with additional Persian cultural influences, migrated to the region by the 13th century. The area was conquered by Russia in the 18th century, and Kazakhstan became a Soviet Republic in 1936. Repression and starvation associated with forced agricultural collectivization led to a massive number of deaths in the 1930s. During the 1950s and 1960s, the agricultural "Virgin Lands" program led to an influx of immigrants (mostly ethnic Russians, but also other nationalities) and at the time of Kazakhstan's independence in 1991, ethnic Kazakhs were a minority. Non-Muslim ethnic minorities departed Kazakhstan in large numbers from the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s and a national program has repatriated about a million ethnic Kazakhs back to Kazakhstan. As a result of this shift, the ethnic Kazakh share of the population now exceeds two-thirds.

Kazakhstan's economy is the largest in the Central Asian states, mainly due to the country's vast natural resources. Current issues include: diversifying the economy, obtaining membership in global and regional international economic institutions, enhancing Kazakhstan's economic competitiveness, and strengthening relations with neighboring states and foreign powers.

**Geography :: KAZAKHSTAN****Location:**

Central Asia, northwest of China; a small portion west of the Ural (Zhayyq) River in easternmost Europe

**Geographic coordinates:**

48 00 N, 68 00 E

**Map references:**

Asia

**Area:**

**total:** 2,724,900 sq km

**land:** 2,699,700 sq km

**water:** 25,200 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** [10](#)

**Area - comparative:**

slightly less than four times the size of Texas

**Area comparison map:****Land boundaries:**

**total:** 13,364 km

**border countries (5):** China 1765 km, Kyrgyzstan 1212 km, Russia 7644 km, Turkmenistan 413 km, Uzbekistan 2330 km

**Coastline:**

0 km (landlocked); note - Kazakhstan borders the Aral Sea, now split into two bodies of water (1,070 km), and the Caspian Sea (1,894 km)

**Maritime claims:**

none (landlocked)



#### Climate:

continental, cold winters and hot summers, arid and semiarid



#### Terrain:

vast flat steppe extending from the Volga in the west to the Altai Mountains in the east and from the plains of western Siberia in the north to oases and deserts of Central Asia in the south



#### Elevation:

**mean elevation:** 387 m

**lowest point:** Vpadina Kaundy -132 m

**highest point:** Khan Tangiri Shyngy (Pik Khan-Tengri) 6,995 m



#### Natural resources:

major deposits of petroleum, natural gas, coal, iron ore, manganese, chrome ore, nickel, cobalt, copper, molybdenum, lead, zinc, bauxite, gold, uranium



#### Land use:

**agricultural land:** 77.4% (2011 est.)

arable land: 8.9% (2011 est.) / permanent crops: 0% (2011 est.) / permanent pasture: 68.5% (2011 est.)

**forest:** 1.2% (2011 est.)

**other:** 21.4% (2011 est.)



#### Irrigated land:

20,660 sq km (2012)



#### Population distribution:

most of the country displays a low population density, particularly the interior; population clusters appear in urban agglomerations in the far northern and southern portions of the country



#### Natural hazards:

earthquakes in the south; mudslides around Almaty



#### Environment - current issues:

radioactive or toxic chemical sites associated with former defense industries and test ranges scattered throughout the country pose health risks for humans and animals; industrial pollution is severe in some cities; because the two main rivers that flowed into the Aral Sea have been diverted for irrigation, it is drying up and leaving behind a harmful layer of chemical pesticides and natural salts; these substances are then picked up by the wind and blown into noxious dust storms; pollution in the Caspian Sea; desertification; soil pollution from overuse of agricultural chemicals and salination from poor infrastructure and wasteful irrigation practices



#### Environment - international agreements:

**party to:** Air Pollution, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands

**signed, but not ratified:** Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol



#### Geography - note:

world's largest landlocked country and one of only two landlocked countries in the world that extends into two continents (the other is Azerbaijan); Russia leases approximately 6,000 sq km of territory enclosing the Baykonur Cosmodrome; in January 2004, Kazakhstan and Russia extended the lease to 2050



### People and Society :: KAZAKHSTAN

#### Population:

18,744,548 (July 2018 est.)



country comparison to the world: [63](#)

**Nationality:**

noun: Kazakhstani(s)

adjective: Kazakhstani

**Ethnic groups:**

Kazakh (Qazaq) 68%, Russian 19.3%, Uzbek 3.2%, Ukrainian 1.5%, Uighur 1.5%, Tatar 1.1%, German 1%, other 4.4% (2019 est.)

**Languages:**

Kazakh (official, Qazaq) 83.1% (understand spoken language) and trilingual (Kazakh, Russian, English) 22.3% (2017 est.); Russian (official, used in everyday business, designated the "language of interethnic communication") 94.4% (understand spoken language) (2009 est.)

**Religions:**

Muslim 70.2%, Christian 26.2% (mainly Russian Orthodox), other 0.2%, atheist 2.8%, unspecified 0.5% (2009 est.)

**Age structure:**

**0-14 years:** 26.09% (male 2,406,397 /female 2,483,562)

**15-24 years:** 13.55% (male 1,295,882 /female 1,244,540)

**25-54 years:** 42.32% (male 3,884,454 /female 4,049,072)

**55-64 years:** 10.14% (male 831,872 /female 1,068,651)

**65 years and over:** 7.9% (male 517,471 /female 962,647) (2018 est.)

population pyramid:



**Dependency ratios:**

**total dependency ratio:** 50.4 (2015 est.)

**youth dependency ratio:** 40.3 (2015 est.)

**elderly dependency ratio:** 10.2 (2015 est.)

**potential support ratio:** 9.8 (2015 est.)

**Median age:**

**total:** 30.9 years

**male:** 29.7 years

**female:** 32.2 years (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [112](#)

**Population growth rate:**

0.98% (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [111](#)

**Birth rate:**

17.5 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [99](#)

**Death rate:**

8.2 deaths/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [84](#)

**Net migration rate:**

0.4 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [70](#)

**Population distribution:**

most of the country displays a low population density, particularly the interior; population clusters appear in urban agglomerations in the far northern and southern portions of the country

**Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 57.4% of total population (2018)

**rate of urbanization:** 1.29% annual rate of change (2015-20 est.)

**Major urban areas - population:**

1.829 million Almaty, 1.068 million NUR-SULTAN (capital), 982,000 Shimkent (2018)

**Sex ratio:**

**at birth:** 0.94 male(s)/female

**0-14 years:** 0.97 male(s)/female

**15-24 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female

**25-54 years:** 0.96 male(s)/female

**55-64 years:** 0.78 male(s)/female

**65 years and over:** 0.54 male(s)/female

**total population:** 0.91 male(s)/female (2018 est.)

**Mother's mean age at first birth:**

25 years (2014 est.)

**Maternal mortality rate:**

12 deaths/100,000 live births (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [141](#)

**Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 19 deaths/1,000 live births

**male:** 21.6 deaths/1,000 live births

**female:** 16.6 deaths/1,000 live births (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [82](#)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 71.4 years

**male:** 66.2 years

**female:** 76.3 years (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [150](#)

**Total fertility rate:**

2.22 children born/woman (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [93](#)

**Contraceptive prevalence rate:**

54.8% (2018)



**note:** percent of women aged 18-49

**Drinking water source:**



**improved:**

urban: 99.4% of population

rural: 85.6% of population

total: 92.9% of population

**unimproved:**

urban: 0.6% of population

rural: 14.4% of population

total: 7.1% of population (2015 est.)

**Current Health Expenditure:**



3.9% (2015)

**Physicians density:**



3.25 physicians/1,000 population (2014)

**Hospital bed density:**



6.7 beds/1,000 population (2013)

**Sanitation facility access:**



**improved:**

urban: 97% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 98.1% of population (2015 est.)

total: 97.5% of population (2015 est.)

**unimproved:**

urban: 3% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 1.9% of population (2015 est.)

total: 2.5% of population (2015 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**



0.2% (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [97](#)

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**



27,000 (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [74](#)

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**



<1000 (2017 est.)

**Obesity - adult prevalence rate:**



21% (2016)

**country comparison to the world:** [94](#)

**Children under the age of 5 years underweight:**



2% (2015)

**country comparison to the world:** [112](#)

**Education expenditures:**

2.9% of GDP (2017)

**country comparison to the world:** [144](#)

**Literacy:**

**definition:** age 15 and over can read and write (2015 est.)

**total population:** 99.8%

**male:** 99.8%

**female:** 99.8% (2015 est.)

**School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):**

**total:** 15 years

**male:** 15 years

**female:** 16 years (2017)

**Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:**

**total:** 3.9%

**male:** 3.6%

**female:** 4.3% (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [167](#)

**Government :: KAZAKHSTAN**

**Country name:**

**conventional long form:** Republic of Kazakhstan

**conventional short form:** Kazakhstan

**local long form:** Qazaqstan Respublikasy

**local short form:** Qazaqstan

**former:** Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic

**etymology:** the name "Kazakh" derives from the Turkic word "kaz" meaning "to wander," recalling the Kazakh's nomadic lifestyle; the Persian suffix "-stan" means "place of" or "country," so the word Kazakhstan literally means "Land of the Wanderers"

**Government type:**

presidential republic

**Capital:**

**name:** Nur-Sultan

**geographic coordinates:** 51 10 N, 71 25 E

**time difference:** UTC+6 (11 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

**note 1:** Kazakhstan has two time zones

**note 2:** on 20 March 2019, Kazakhstan changed the name of its capital city from Astana to Nur-Sultan in honor of its long-serving, recently retired president, Nursultan NAZARBAYEV; this was not the first time the city had its name changed; founded in 1830 as Akmoly, it became Akmolinsk in 1832, Tselinograd in 1961, Aqmola (Aqmola) in 1992, and Astana in 1998

**Administrative divisions:**

14 provinces (oblyslar, singular - oblys) and 4 cities\* (qalalar, singular - qala); Almaty (Taldyqorgha), Almaty\*, Aqmola (Kokshetau), Aqtobe, Astana\*, Atyrau, Batys Qazaqstan [West Kazakhstan] (Oral), Bayqongyr\*, Mangghystau (Aqtau), Pavlodar, Qaraghandy, Qostanay, Qyzylorda, Shyghys Qazaqstan [East Kazakhstan] (Oskemen), Shymkent\*, Soltustik Qazaqstan [North Kazakhstan] (Petropavl), Turkistan, Zhambyl (Taraz)

**note:** administrative divisions have the same names as their administrative centers (exceptions have the administrative center name following in parentheses); in 1995, the Governments of Kazakhstan and Russia entered into an agreement whereby Russia would lease for a period of 20 years an area of 6,000 sq km enclosing the Baykonur space launch facilities and the city of Bayqongyr (Baykonur, formerly Leninsk); in 2004, a new agreement extended the lease to 2050

#### Independence:

16 December 1991 (from the Soviet Union)

#### National holiday:

Independence Day, 16 December (1991)

#### Constitution:

**history:** previous 1937, 1978 (preindependence), 1993; latest approved by referendum 30 August 1995, effective 5 September 1995

**amendments:** introduced by a referendum initiated by the president of the republic, on the recommendation of Parliament, or by the government; the president has the option of submitting draft amendments to Parliament or directly to a referendum; passage of amendments by Parliament requires four-fifths majority vote of both houses and the signature of the president; passage by referendum requires absolute majority vote by more than one-half of the voters in at least two-thirds of the oblasts, major cities, and the capital, followed by the signature of the president; amended several times, last in 2019 (2019)

#### Legal system:

civil law system influenced by Roman-Germanic law and by the theory and practice of the Russian Federation

#### International law organization participation:

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCt

#### Citizenship:

**citizenship by birth:** no

**citizenship by descent only:** at least one parent must be a citizen of Kazakhstan

**dual citizenship recognized:** no

**residency requirement for naturalization:** 5 years

#### Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

#### Executive branch:

**chief of state:** President Kassym-Jomart TOKAYEV (since 20 March 2019); note - Nursultan NAZARBAYEV, who was president since 24 April 1990 (and in power since 22 June 1989 under the Soviet period), resigned on 20 March 2019; NAZARBAYEV retained the title and powers of "First President"; TOKAYEV completed NAZARBAYEV's term, which was shortened due to the early election of 9 June 2019, and then continued as president following his election victory

**head of government:** Prime Minister Askar MAMIN (since 25 February 2019); First Deputy Prime Minister Alikhan SMAILOV (since 25 February 2019); Deputy Prime Ministers Zhenis KASSYMBEK and Gulshara ABDYKALIKOVA (since 25 February 2019)

**cabinet:** Council of Ministers appointed by the president

**elections/appointments:** president directly elected by simple majority popular vote for a 5-year term (eligible for a second consecutive term); election last held on 9 June 2019 (next to be held in 2024); prime minister and deputy prime ministers appointed by the president, approved by the Mazhilis

**election results:** Kassym-Jomart TOKAYEV elected president; percent of vote - Kassym-Jomart TOKAYEV (Nur Otan) 71%,

Amirzhan KOSANOV (Ult Tagdyry) 16.2%, Daniya YESPAYEVA (Ak Zhol) 5.1%, other 7.7%

### Legislative branch:



**description:** bicameral Parliament consists of:

Senate (49 seats; 34 members indirectly elected by majority 2-round vote by the oblast-level assemblies and 15 members appointed by decree of the president; members serve 6-year terms, with one-half of the membership renewed every 3 years)

Mazhilis (107 seats; 98 members directly elected in a single national constituency by proportional representation vote to serve 5-year terms and 9 indirectly elected by the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, a 350-member, presidentially appointed advisory body designed to represent the country's ethnic minorities)

**elections:**

Senate - last held on 28 June 2017 (next to be held in 2020)

Mazhilis - last held on 20 March 2016 (next to be held by 2021)

**election results:**

Senate - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - NA; composition - men 42, women 5, percent of women 10.6%

Mazhilis - percent of vote by party - Nur Otan 82.2%, Ak Zhol 7.2%, Communist People's Party 7.1%, other 3.5%; seats by party - Nur Otan 84, Ak Zhol 7, Communist People's Party 7; composition - men 78, women 29, percent of women 27.1%; note - total Parliament percent of women 22.1%

### Judicial branch:



**highest courts:** Supreme Court of the Republic (consists of 44 members); Constitutional Council (consists of the chairman and 6 members)

**judge selection and term of office:** Supreme Court judges proposed by the president of the republic on recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council and confirmed by the Senate; judges normally serve until age 65 but can be extended to age 70; Constitutional Council - the president of the republic, the Senate chairperson, and the Mazhilis chairperson each appoints 2 members for a 6-year term; chairman of the Constitutional Council appointed by the president for a 6-year term

**subordinate courts:** regional and local courts

### Political parties and leaders:



Ak Zhol (Bright Path) Party or Democratic Party of Kazakhstan Ak Zhol [Azat PERUASHEV]

Birlik (Unity) Party [Serik SULTANGALI]

Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan [informal leader Aikyn KONUROV]

National Social Democratic Party or NSDP [Zharmakhan TUYAKBAY]

Nur Otan (Radiant Fatherland) Democratic People's Party [Nursultan NAZARBAYEV]

People's Democratic (Patriotic) Party "Auy!" [Ali BEKTAYEV]

Ult Tagdyry (Conscience of the Nation)

### International organization participation:



ADB, CICA, CIS, CSTO, EAEU, EAPC, EBRD, ECO, EITI (compliant country), FAO, GCTU, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (NGOs), ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, MIGA, MINURSO, NAM (observer), NSG, OAS (observer), OIC, OPCW, OSCE, PFP, SCO, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UN Security Council (temporary), UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO (observer), ZC

### Diplomatic representation in the US:



**chief of mission:** Ambassador Yerzhan KAZYKHANOV (since 24 April 2017)

**chancery:** 1401 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036

**telephone:** [1] (202) 232-5488

**FAX:** [1] (202) 232-5845

**consulate(s) general:** New York

### Diplomatic representation from the US:



**chief of mission:** Ambassador William MOSER (since 27 March 2019)

**embassy:** Rakhymzhan Koshkarbayev Ave. No 3, Astana 010010

**mailing address:** use embassy street address

**telephone:** [7] (7172) 70-21-00

**FAX:** [7] (7172) 54-09-14

**consulate(s) general:** Almaty

#### Flag description:



a gold sun with 32 rays above a soaring golden steppe eagle, both centered on a sky blue background; the hoist side displays a national ornamental pattern "koshkar-muiz" (the horns of the ram) in gold; the blue color is of religious significance to the Turkic peoples of the country, and so symbolizes cultural and ethnic unity; it also represents the endless sky as well as water; the sun, a source of life and energy, exemplifies wealth and plenitude; the sun's rays are shaped like grain, which is the basis of abundance and prosperity; the eagle has appeared on the flags of Kazakh tribes for centuries and represents freedom, power, and the flight to the future

#### National symbol(s):



golden eagle; national colors: blue, yellow

#### National anthem:



**name:** "Menin Qazaqstanım" (My Kazakhstan)

**lyrics/music:** Zhumeken NAZHIMEDENOV and Nursultan NAZARBAYEV/Shamshi KALDAYAKOV

**note:** adopted 2006; President Nursultan NAZARBAYEV played a role in revising the lyrics

## Economy :: KAZAKHSTAN

### Economy - overview:



Kazakhstan's vast hydrocarbon and mineral reserves form the backbone of its economy. Geographically the largest of the former Soviet republics, excluding Russia, Kazakhstan, g possesses substantial fossil fuel reserves and other minerals and metals, such as uranium, copper, and zinc. It also has a large agricultural sector featuring livestock and grain. The government realizes that its economy suffers from an overreliance on oil and extractive industries and has made initial attempts to diversify its economy by targeting sectors like transport, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, petrochemicals and food processing for greater development and investment. It also adopted a Subsoil Code in December 2017 with the aim of increasing exploration and investment in the hydrocarbon, and particularly mining, sectors.

Kazakhstan's oil production and potential is expanding rapidly. A \$36.8 billion expansion of Kazakhstan's premiere Tengiz oil field by Chevron-led Tengizchevroil should be complete in 2022. Meanwhile, the super-giant Kashagan field finally launched production in October 2016 after years of delay and an estimated \$55 billion in development costs. Kazakhstan's total oil production in 2017 climbed 10.5%.

Kazakhstan is landlocked and depends on Russia to export its oil to Europe. It also exports oil directly to China. In 2010, Kazakhstan joined Russia and Belarus to establish a Customs Union in an effort to boost foreign investment and improve trade. The Customs Union evolved into a Single Economic Space in 2012 and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in January 2015. Supported by rising commodity prices, Kazakhstan's exports to EAEU countries increased 30.2% in 2017. Imports from EAEU countries grew by 24.1%.

The economic downturn of its EAEU partner, Russia, and the decline in global commodity prices from 2014 to 2016 contributed to an economic slowdown in Kazakhstan. In 2014, Kazakhstan devalued its currency, the tenge, and announced a stimulus package to cope with its economic challenges. In the face of further decline in the ruble, oil prices, and the regional economy, Kazakhstan announced in 2015 it would replace its currency band with a floating exchange rate, leading to a sharp fall in the value of the tenge. Since reaching a low of 391 to the dollar in January 2016, the tenge has modestly appreciated, helped by somewhat higher oil prices. While growth slowed to about 1% in both 2015 and 2016, a moderate recovery in oil prices, relatively stable inflation and foreign exchange rates, and the start of production at Kashagan helped push 2017 GDP growth to 4%.

Despite some positive institutional and legislative changes in the last several years, investors remain concerned about corruption, bureaucracy, and arbitrary law enforcement, especially at the regional and municipal levels. An additional concern is the condition of the country's banking sector, which suffers from poor asset quality and a lack of transparency. Investors also question the potentially negative effects on the economy of a contested presidential succession as Kazakhstan's first president, Nursultan NAZARBAYEV, turned 77 in 2017.



**GDP (purchasing power parity):**

\$478.6 billion (2017 est.)

\$460.3 billion (2016 est.)

\$455.3 billion (2015 est.)

**note:** data are in 2017 dollars

**country comparison to the world:** [42](#)

**GDP (official exchange rate):**

\$159.4 billion (2017 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:**

4% (2017 est.)

1.1% (2016 est.)

1.2% (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [78](#)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$26,300 (2017 est.)

\$25,700 (2016 est.)

\$25,800 (2015 est.)

**note:** data are in 2017 dollars

**country comparison to the world:** [79](#)

**Gross national saving:**

23.7% of GDP (2017 est.)

21.4% of GDP (2016 est.)

25.1% of GDP (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [71](#)

**GDP - composition, by end use:**

**household consumption:** 53.2% (2017 est.)

**government consumption:** 11.1% (2017 est.)

**investment in fixed capital:** 22.5% (2017 est.)

**investment in inventories:** 4.8% (2017 est.)

**exports of goods and services:** 35.4% (2017 est.)

**imports of goods and services:** -27.1% (2017 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

**agriculture:** 4.7% (2017 est.)

**industry:** 34.1% (2017 est.)

**services:** 61.2% (2017 est.)

**Agriculture - products:**

grain (mostly spring wheat and barley), potatoes, vegetables, melons; livestock

**Industries:**



oil, coal, iron ore, manganese, chromite, lead, zinc, copper, titanium, bauxite, gold, silver, phosphates, sulfur, uranium, iron and steel; tractors and other agricultural machinery, electric motors, construction materials

**Industrial production growth rate:**

5.8% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [45](#)

**Labor force:**

8.97 million (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [53](#)

**Labor force - by occupation:**

agriculture: 18.1%

industry: 20.4%

services: 61.6% (2017 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**

5% (2017 est.)

5% (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: [74](#)

**Population below poverty line:**

2.6% (2016 est.)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

lowest 10%: 4.2%

highest 10%: 23.3% (2016)

**Distribution of family income - Gini index:**

26.3 (2013)

31.5 (2003)

country comparison to the world: [149](#)

**Budget:**

revenues: 35.48 billion (2017 est.)

expenditures: 38.3 billion (2017 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

22.3% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [134](#)

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

-1.8% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [98](#)

**Public debt:**

20.8% of GDP (2017 est.)

19.7% of GDP (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: [187](#)

**Fiscal year:**

calendar year

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

7.4% (2017 est.)

14.6% (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [194](#)

**Central bank discount rate:**

11% (10 April 2017)

12% (9 January 2017)

**country comparison to the world:** [18](#)

**Commercial bank prime lending rate:**

14.17% (31 December 2017 est.)

15.34% (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [48](#)

**Stock of narrow money:**

\$14.99 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$13.77 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [72](#)

**Stock of broad money:**

\$14.99 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$13.77 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [73](#)

**Stock of domestic credit:**

\$54.92 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$55.1 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [64](#)

**Market value of publicly traded shares:**

\$741.7 million (31 December 2016 est.)

\$4.737 billion (31 December 2015 est.)

\$26.23 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [107](#)

**Current account balance:**

-\$5.353 billion (2017 est.)

-\$8.874 billion (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [185](#)

**Exports:**

\$49.29 billion (2017 est.)

\$37.26 billion (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [51](#)

**Exports - partners:**



Italy 17.9%, China 11.9%, Netherlands 9.8%, Russia 9.3%, Switzerland 6.4%, France 5.9% (2017)

**Exports - commodities:**

oil and oil products, natural gas, ferrous metals, chemicals, machinery, grain, wool, meat, coal

**Imports:**

\$31.85 billion (2017 est.)

\$28.07 billion (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [64](#)

**Imports - commodities:**

machinery and equipment, metal products, foodstuffs

**Imports - partners:**

Russia 38.9%, China 16.1%, Germany 5.1%, US 4.3% (2017)

**Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:**

\$30.75 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$29.53 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [50](#)

**Debt - external:**

\$167.5 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$163.6 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [40](#)

**Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:**

\$161.6 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$143.2 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [37](#)

**Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad:**

\$35.04 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$32.74 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [48](#)

**Exchange rates:**

tenge (KZT) per US dollar -

326.3 (2017 est.)

342.13 (2016 est.)

342.13 (2015 est.)

221.73 (2014 est.)

179.19 (2013 est.)

**Energy :: KAZAKHSTAN**

**Electricity access:**

electrification - total population: 100% (2016)

**Electricity - production:**

100.8 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [35](#)

**Electricity - consumption:**

94.23 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [33](#)

**Electricity - exports:**

5.1 billion kWh (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [37](#)

**Electricity - imports:**

1.318 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [64](#)

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

20.15 million kW (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [44](#)

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

86% of total installed capacity (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [66](#)

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [117](#)

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

14% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [107](#)

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

1% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [155](#)

**Crude oil - production:**

1.777 million bbl/day (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [14](#)

**Crude oil - exports:**

1.409 million bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [9](#)

**Crude oil - imports:**

1,480 bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [79](#)

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

30 billion bbl (1 January 2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [11](#)

**Refined petroleum products - production:**



290,700 bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [44](#)

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

274,000 bbl/day (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [46](#)

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

105,900 bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [41](#)

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

39,120 bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [90](#)

**Natural gas - production:**

22.41 billion cu m (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [30](#)

**Natural gas - consumption:**

15.37 billion cu m (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [43](#)

**Natural gas - exports:**

12.8 billion cu m (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [17](#)

**Natural gas - imports:**

5.748 billion cu m (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [34](#)

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

2.407 trillion cu m (1 January 2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [14](#)

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**

304.6 million Mt (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [23](#)

**Communications :: KAZAKHSTAN**

**Telephones - fixed lines:**

**total subscriptions:** 3,697,300

**subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:** 20 (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [37](#)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**

**total subscriptions:** 26.473 million

**subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:** 143 (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [48](#)

**Telephone system:**

**general assessment:** one of the most progressive telecoms sectors in Central Asia; vast 4G network; low fixed-line and fixed-broadband penetration, moderate mobile broadband penetration and high mobile penetration (2018)

**domestic:** intercity by landline and microwave radio relay; number of fixed-line connections is 20 per 100 persons; mobile-cellular usage increased rapidly and the subscriber base approaches 143 per 100 persons (2018)

**international:** country code - 7; international traffic with other former Soviet republics and China carried by landline and microwave radio relay and with other countries by satellite and by the Trans-Asia-Europe (TAE) fiber-optic cable; satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat

#### Broadcast media:

the state owns nearly all radio and TV transmission facilities and operates national TV and radio networks; there are 96 TV channels, many of which are owned by the government, and 4 state-run radio stations; some former state-owned media outlets have been privatized; households with satellite dishes have access to foreign media; a small number of commercial radio stations operate along with state-run radio stations; recent legislation requires all media outlets to register with the government and all TV providers to broadcast in digital format by 2018; broadcasts reach some 99% of the population as well as neighboring countries

#### Internet country code:

.kz

#### Internet users:

**total:** 14,100,751

**percent of population:** 76.8% (July 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [40](#)

#### Broadband - fixed subscriptions:

**total:** 2,573,500

**subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:** 14 (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [45](#)

### Transportation :: KAZAKHSTAN

#### National air transport system:

**number of registered air carriers:** 10 (2015)

**inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers:** 71 (2015)

**annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers:** 5,081,631 (2015)

**annual freight traffic on registered air carriers:** 37,669,008 mt-km (2015)

#### Civil aircraft registration country code prefix:

UP (2016)

#### Airports:

96 (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** [60](#)

#### Airports - with paved runways:

**total:** 63 (2017)

**over 3,047 m:** 10 (2017)

**2,438 to 3,047 m:** 25 (2017)

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 15 (2017)

**914 to 1,523 m:** 5 (2017)

**under 914 m:** 8 (2017)

### Airports - with unpaved runways:



**total:** 33 (2013)

**over 3,047 m:** 5 (2013)

**2,438 to 3,047 m:** 7 (2013)

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 3 (2013)

**914 to 1,523 m:** 5 (2013)

**under 914 m:** 13 (2013)

### Heliports:



3 (2013)

### Pipelines:



658 km condensate, 15,256 km gas (2017), 8,013 km oil (2017), 1,095 km refined products, 1,975 km water (2016) (2017)

### Railways:



**total:** 16,614 km (2017)

**broad gauge:** 16,614 km 1.520-m gauge (4,200 km electrified) (2017)

**country comparison to the world:** [18](#)

### Roadways:



**total:** 95,409 km (2017)

**paved:** 81,814 km (2017)

**unpaved:** 13,595 km (2017)

**country comparison to the world:** [50](#)

### Waterways:



4,000 km (on the Ertis (Irtys) River (80%) and Syr Darya (Syrdariya) River) (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** [25](#)

### Merchant marine:



**total:** 121

**by type:** general cargo 3, oil tanker 10, other 108 (2018)

**country comparison to the world:** [77](#)

### Ports and terminals:



**major seaport(s):** Caspian Sea - Aqtau (Shevchenko), Atyrau (Gur'yev)

**river port(s):** Oskemen (Ust-Kamenogorsk), Pavlodar, Semey (Semipalatinsk) (Irtys River)

## Military and Security :: KAZAKHSTAN

### Military expenditures:



0.84% of GDP (2017)

0.82% of GDP (2016)

3.45% of GDP (2015)

1.04% of GDP (2014)

1.08% of GDP (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** [129](#)



### Military branches:



Kazakhstan Armed Forces: Land Forces, Navy, Air Defense Forces (2017)

### Military service age and obligation:



18 is the legal minimum age for compulsory military service; conscript service obligation is 2 years, but Kazakhstan is transitioning to a largely contract force; military cadets in intermediate (ages 15-17) and higher (ages 17-21) education institutes are classified as military service personnel (2017)

## Transnational Issues :: KAZAKHSTAN

### Disputes - international:



in January 2019, the Kyrgyz Republic ratified the demarcation agreement of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border; the demarcation of the Kazakh-Uzbek borders is ongoing; the ongoing demarcation with Russia began in 2007; demarcation with China completed in 2002

### Refugees and internally displaced persons:



stateless persons: 7,690 (2018)

### Illicit drugs:



significant illicit cultivation of cannabis for CIS markets, as well as limited cultivation of opium poppy and ephedra (for the drug ephedrine); limited government eradication of illicit crops; transit point for Southwest Asian narcotics bound for Russia and the rest of Europe; significant consumer of opiates

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**OPEN GOV**

## Kazakhstan country profile



**A huge country the size of Western Europe, Kazakhstan has vast mineral resources and enormous economic potential.**

The varied landscape stretches from the mountainous, heavily populated regions of the east to the sparsely populated, energy-rich lowlands in the west, and from the industrialised north, with its Siberian climate and terrain, through the arid, empty steppes of the centre, to the fertile south.

Ethnically the former Soviet republic is as diverse, with the Kazakhs making up nearly two thirds of the population, ethnic Russians just under a quarter, and smaller minorities the rest. Suppressed under Soviet rule, the main religion, Islam, is undergoing a revival.

Since independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, major investment in the oil sector has brought rapid economic growth, and eased some of the stark disparities in wealth of the 1990s.

- See **more country profiles** - Profiles compiled by **BBC Monitoring**

## FACTS

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### Republic of Kazakhstan

#### Capital: Nur-Sultan

- Population 18 million (UN, 2012)
- Area 2.7 million sq km (1 million sq miles)
- Major languages Kazakh, Russian
- Major religions Islam, Christianity
- Life expectancy 68 years (men), 77 years (women) (UN)
- Currency Tenge

# LEADERS

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President: Kassym-Jomart Tokayev



Image copyright Pavel Aleksandrov/TASS via Getty Images

Caption: *Mr Tokayev has been a senior official since independence*

A long-standing colleague of independent Kazakhstan's founder, Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev took over as president when his mentor suddenly stepped down in March 2019.

Mr Tokayev was chairman of the Senate at the time, and says he will continue the policies of his predecessor and rely on his opinion in key policy matters.

He won a snap presidential election in June 2019 to consolidate his position.

The new president has served in various senior positions since independence in 1991, including prime minister and foreign minister.

Nursultan Nazarbayev's long authoritarian rule faced few challenges from weak opposition parties, and he managed a gradual transfer of power that guarantees him a future role as chairman for life of a newly-strengthened Security Council.

In addition, his daughter Dariga has succeeded Mr Tokayev as head of the Senate, raising her profile as a potential successor.

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# MEDIA

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Image copyright **AFP**

The media market is dominated by state-owned and pro-government outlets.

TV is the most popular medium. The government operates national networks.

The authorities regularly block websites and access to social media and messaging apps has been cut several times.

# TIMELINE

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Caption: Oil money is driving the development of Astana, which became Kazakhstan's new capital in 1997

**Late 15th century** - With the formation of the Kazakh khanate, the Kazakhs emerge as a distinct ethnic group, but split into three hordes.

**1731-42** - Russia establishes control.

**1936** - Kazakhstan becomes a full union republic of the USSR.

**Late 1920s-1930s** - Intensive industrialisation and forced collectivisation, which leads to the deaths of more than one million people from starvation.

**1954-62** - About two million people, mainly Russians, move to Kazakhstan during Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's campaign to develop virgin lands, lowering the proportion of ethnic Kazakhs to 30%.

**1991** - Nursultan Nazarbayev wins uncontested presidential elections; Kazakhstan declares independence from the Soviet Union.

**2019** - President Nazarbayev steps down from the presidency, but retains a powerful role as chairman of the National Security Council.



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

## BACKGROUND

### Land and Climate

Kazakhstan is a landlocked country located in Central Asia. It is the ninth largest country in the world and covers land the size of Argentina or roughly four times the size of the U.S. state of Texas. Kazakhstan's landscape features mountains in the south and east, forested hills in the north, desert and semidesert terrain in the south and west, and a vast central steppe. The Tien Shan mountain range lies on the border with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. The country's major rivers include the Ural, Irtysh, and Syr Darya; major lakes are the Balkhash and Zaysan. More important is the oil-rich Caspian Sea to the west. The Aral Sea straddles the southern border with Uzbekistan. Once a large and healthy sea, the Aral shrank by half under Soviet agricultural policies. As a result of restoration projects such as the Kok-Aral Dam, some areas of the Northern Aral Sea have begun to recover. Many national parks and nature reserves are located throughout Kazakhstan and protect the country's natural landscape and wildlife, including Siberian ibex, sturgeon, bears, wolves, and falcons and other migratory birds.

Kazakhstan has a dry continental climate with extreme temperature variations. Long, harsh winters prevail in the north. Temperatures can dip to  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$ ); windstorms are common. Kazakhstan's capital city, Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana), is one of the coldest capitals in the world, with winter temperatures as low as  $-58^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Southern winters are shorter and less severe, but temperatures during the hot, dry summers can reach  $104^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $40^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).

### History

#### *Early Nomads and Tribes*

The territory now known as Kazakhstan was home to nomadic peoples for centuries. Mongol tribes began migrating to the area in the 8th century AD, and in the early 13th century, central Asia was conquered by Genghis Khan's Golden Horde. Their descendants, known as the White Horde, ruled the territory until the Mongol Empire crumbled in the late 14th century. The Kazakh nation that emerged was a mixture of Turkic and Mongol peoples. Today, some Kazakhs can trace their family ancestry back to Genghis Khan.

From 1511 to 1518, Kazakhs were unified and their territory expanded under the leadership of Kassym Khan. Their language and culture gradually became distinct from those of neighboring Uzbek and Kyrgyz peoples. Following Kassym Khan's reign, the Kazakhs divided into three distinct groups, each dominating a particular geographic area but maintaining a common language and heritage. Fiercely independent, they avoided relations with outside nations.

#### *Russian Domination*

Contact with imperial Russia was minimal until the early 1700s, when Russia built forts in southern Siberia and northern Kazakhstan. When the Kazakhs were threatened by the Kalmyks, they reluctantly accepted protection from czarist Russia. In the 19th-century Great Game race for territory and influence between Britain and Russia, Russia eventually solidified its control of the area. Subsequent Kazakh uprisings, including one in 1916, were put down with force. In the wake of Russia's Bolshevik Revolution, a Kazakh autonomous government was formed and nominally held power from 1917 to 1919.

***Soviet Rule and Tension***

By 1920, communist forces had gained control. Kazakhstan officially became a Soviet Socialist Republic in 1936. Years of war, followed by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's forced collectivization campaign in the 1930s, virtually eliminated the traditional nomadic way of life; one-third of the population and most livestock perished. During World War II (the Great Patriotic War), Stalin deported hundreds of thousands of ethnic minorities from European Russia to the forced labor camps and planned cities of the Kazakh steppe.

Though the postwar period brought industrialization and improved education, tension between Russians and Kazakhs was never far beneath the surface. In 1986, after Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev replaced then Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK) leader Dinmukhamed Kunaev with an ethnic Russian unfamiliar with Kazakh language and culture, riots broke out in Almaty, which government troops violently suppressed.

***Independence and the Nazarbayev Presidency***

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan declared its independence, and Nursultan Nazarbayev, an ethnic Kazakh and then leader of the CPK, was elected its first president. During his presidency, Nazarbayev successfully consolidated power, restricting opposition political parties and frequently jailing those who criticized him. In 2007, Parliament waived the two-term limit for Nazarbayev and in 2010 granted him the title of "leader of the nation," protecting him and his family from prosecution. Nazarbayev was reelected four times, most recently in 2015, though each election was widely viewed as neither free nor fair.

In recent years, major income disparity, corruption, and autocratic rule have resulted in dissatisfaction with the government. In 2011, a labor strike was met with strong government resistance, resulting in the deaths of more than a dozen people, the worst violence in 20 years. And despite the country's vast oil reserves, Kazakhstan's economy has stalled, presenting a major challenge for the government. In 2019, after nearly three decades in power, Nazarbayev abruptly announced his resignation and handpicked his successor, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. However, Nazarbayev maintains significant political power and influence over the government.

**THE PEOPLE****Population**

Kazakhstan has one of the world's lowest population densities: 18 people per square mile (7 per square kilometer). The country's urban landscape includes ancient trade-route settlements such as Zhambyl (now Taraz) and Shymkent and Soviet-era cities such as Karagandy and Oskemen. The former capital and Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty, lies in the southeast. Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana), located in the north, is the country's capital and second-largest city.

Ethnic Kazakhs comprise about 63 percent of the population. Russians (24 percent) live mostly in northern Kazakhstan and urban areas. Other ethnic groups include

Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uighurs, Tatars, and Germans. On official documents, such as passports, people are identified by both their citizenship and ethnicity (for example, a Kazakhstani Russian). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, most Germans returned to Germany, and many Russians relocated to Russia. Similarly, many Jews emigrated to Israel. Many ethnic Kazakhs who fled during the Soviet era to escape imprisonment in gulags (labor camps) have returned to Kazakhstan.

**Language**

Kazakh became the state language in 1989, but Russian (which retains official status) is still widely spoken. Kazakh, a Turkic language, has at various times been written in Arabic, Latin, and Cyrillic scripts. In 2017, the government announced a shift from the Cyrillic to Latin alphabet over the ensuing seven years to promote integration into the global economic system. Many Russian city and street names have been changed to Kazakh names.

Radio and television stations broadcast in Kazakh and Russian. Government forms usually are formatted to include both languages, and Russian is still the primary language of interethnic and international communication. English is the most commonly studied foreign language.

**Religion**

Historically, Kazakhs have identified themselves with Islam, while people of Slavic and European descent have considered themselves Christian. Today, about 70 percent of the population is Muslim, mostly Sunni, and 26 percent is Christian, mainly Russian Orthodox. Kazakhstan is a secular state and religion does not play a significant role in the average Kazakhstani's daily life, but they do consider religious traditions, associated with events like holidays, births, and funerals, to be important. Conservative Islam, as practiced in some Islamic countries, is only observed by a small number of Kazakhs. Religious groups are required to register with the state, and religious extremism is outlawed.

**General Attitudes**

The people of Kazakhstan are generally modest and hospitable. Kazakhstanis are typically reserved in public; however, in their homes and in the company of friends, people tend to be warm and cheerful. Society has a long-standing heritage of respect for elders and generosity to all. Economic and other changes to society since independence have strained family and community life, though less today than they once did. A gap generally exists between older generations who are nostalgic for more stable days under Soviet rule and young people who view the future optimistically. Young Kazakhstanis tend to be more motivated to increase social status and acquire possessions than the older generation, who did not have much during the Soviet era. Most people value socio-political connections that may help them achieve their goals of getting a good education or job, though this way of doing things often leads to corruption.

**Personal Appearance**

Western-style clothing is worn in most areas. Traditional clothing is reserved for festivals and performances. Most people, especially women, want to look their best in public. A sloppy or disheveled appearance is considered to be in poor taste. While urban women increasingly wear jeans and slacks, rural women rarely do. Men often wear a *taqiya*, or traditional embroidered velvet cap. Older married Kazakh women wear a *kimeshek* (headscarf). In the winter, fur coats and hats are commonly worn, especially in the north.

## CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

### Greetings

Men shake hands with other men, each clasping both hands around one of the other's hands, and often slap one another on the back as a sign of friendly respect. Close friends and relatives often kiss cheeks when arriving at or leaving someone's home. Common Kazakh greetings include *Salem* (Hi) and *Salemetsis-ba?* (How do you do?). Russians use *Zdravstvuyte* (Hello) or a less formal *Privyet* (Hi).

In formal introductions, people usually use their first name, patronymic, and last name. The patronymic is based on one's father's first name and is modified with a male or female suffix. Last names come from the father's side of the family but may have a male and female variant. For example, a wife and her husband might have the last names of *Ismailova* (female) and *Ismailov* (male). Schoolchildren address their male teachers with the title *Agai*; the female form is *Apai*.

Good friends of similar age usually address one another by first name. Elderly Kazakhs sometimes use the term *Aynalayin* (darling) to call to children. Russian speakers add diminutive endings to first names to form a term of endearment: a boy named Yuri might be called *Yurka* or *Yurchik*, and a girl named Svetlana might be called *Sveta* or *Svetik*.

### Gestures

Men usually are polite and attentive to women. They open doors, help women with their coats, and offer to carry heavy bags. During dinner parties and celebrations, men often pour drinks and dish up food for their female companions; heaping portions are a sign of affection. Women and girls commonly link arms as they walk along the sidewalk. Muslim Kazakhs may cross the threshold of a home with their right foot first.

### Visiting

Visits, whether prearranged or spontaneous, are always welcomed. Many hosts prefer prearranged social calls so they can prepare adequately. Friends and neighbors who simply drop by are usually offered tea and a snack. Guests to a Kazakh home are greeted with the phrase *Torge shygyny* (Have the seat of honor), which stems from the nomadic custom of seating a guest in the warmest place—the seat farthest from the door of a *yurta* (nomadic tent). Today, visitors are directed to an honorary seat.

Offering food and drink is a way of expressing love and respect. Invited guests typically are served a meal that includes appetizers, soup, salad, a main dish, and dessert.

They often linger over tea. In warmer weather, people socialize in urban courtyards or outside their rural homes. Some events center on a *dastarkhan* (spread), a table filled with food, candy, bread, drinks, and more. Guests bring their hosts flowers, candy, or a bottle of wine or spirits. Flowers must be in odd numbers; even numbers are considered a sign of bad luck. Shoes are left at the door. Most households provide wool house slippers for visitors.

### Eating

Families eat together as schedules (and cramped kitchens) permit. Breakfast (*tangyertengi as* in Kazakh; *zavtrak* in Russian) is usually eaten around 8 a.m. A substantial midday meal (*tyski as* in Kazakh; *obyed* in Russian) is eaten around 1 or 2 p.m. Working adults bring food from home, return home for the meal, or eat at a cafeteria. Around 7 p.m., a lighter evening meal (*kyeshki as*; *uzhyn*) is served and usually is followed by tea and something sweet.

Evening meals marking special occasions such as birthdays and holidays are often quite structured, including several rounds of long, eloquent toasts. For special occasions, Kazakhs sit on the floor around a low table and may serve a boiled sheep's head. As the eldest man carves off a part of the head, he says a few words about the person for whom the part is most fitting. For instance, a child might be presented with the ear so he or she will listen to parents, while a talkative guest might receive the tongue.

Rural people usually eat at low tables, sitting on handmade mattresses (*korpeshe*) on the floor. In summer, people like to eat and drink tea in their yard on a raised wooden platform called a *tapchan*.

## LIFESTYLE

### Family

The average family in Kazakhstan has two children, but Kazakh families are usually larger than Russian families. Fathers are the primary income earners, but most mothers also work outside the home as well as perform the bulk of child care and domestic tasks. Extended family ties are highly valued. Younger generations value and respect their elders, who often live with their children or grandchildren. Grandparents and grandchildren often develop especially close bonds. Members of the extended family network support and rely on one another. Relocation within Kazakhstan is uncommon. Young adults usually attend local universities or schools, although some go abroad for more opportunities. Newlyweds often live with their parents until they can afford an apartment of their own.

### Housing

#### Urban

A typical apartment has a living room, one bedroom, a small kitchen, and a bathroom. Floors and living room walls are usually carpeted. Neighborhoods built during the Soviet era consist of apartment complexes (*mikrorayony*) that surround a common courtyard. Clothes are dried on balconies. Some urban dwellers have gardens, either at a summer cottage or on



a plot of land (called *sayazhai* in Kazakh; *dacha* in Russian) located outside the city.

### **Rural**

Rural homes are often larger than urban apartments but may lack modern conveniences. Electricity, telephone, and television access is generally good, but indoor plumbing is often not installed. Residents must collect water with buckets, usually from a pump in the yard. Most rural houses do not have a bath or shower but in the yard have a sauna (*monsha*), which is heated once a week. In villages, homes are heated with a direct gas supply. In more remote rural areas, gas is bought in containers and used only for cooking. Homes are then heated using a wood and coal oven. Most rural residents have a small garden where they grow their own vegetables; they often have structures for cattle or other livestock.

### **Dating and Marriage**

Teenagers socialize at school dances and holiday celebrations. In warm weather, they meet in their neighborhoods and nearby parks. Young adults meet at universities, on the job, and through friends. People pair off quickly; long-term relationships are more common than casual dating. Dating couples visit friends, see movies, and go on walks. People usually marry in their early twenties, or later in urban areas, and often have their first child soon thereafter. Same-sex marriage is not legal, and many traditional Kazakhstanis oppose it.

By custom, a Kazakh groom asks the bride's father for her hand in marriage. The groom's parents visit the bride's parents and bring gifts for each member of her family. During the wedding, the bride's parents give her dowry to the married couple. Rural Kazakhstani weddings often incorporate other traditional rituals and can last for three days. Urban weddings are conducted in a "wedding palace." After the brief civil ceremony, the newlyweds visit local landmarks and take photographs outside while relatives set up a festive reception banquet.

### **Life Cycle**

#### **Birth**

During the first week after the birth of a child, a party called a *shildekhana* is held for relatives and friends, usually only women. The guests bring presents of clothes and other items the family may need for the baby. On the seventh day after the birth, especially among Tartars, the name of the child (traditionally chosen by the father's family) is whispered three times into his or her ear. On the fortieth day, the family holds the ceremony of bathing the baby and cutting the baby's hair. When a child takes his or her first steps, the family asks a respected person to cut a string tied around the ankles of the child. It is important to choose the right person for this ceremony, called the *tusau kesu*, as it is believed that the child will follow in the footsteps of the person who does the cutting.

#### **Death**

When a person dies, the body remains at the home for two or three days. Relatives and friends visit to offer condolences to the family and to say good-bye to the departed. On the first or second evening, a large meal is served with help from

relatives, friends, and neighbors. In keeping with Muslim tradition, family members wash the body and wrap it in white cloth for burial. Only men attend the burial. Memorial services are held on the seventh and fortieth day after the death and on the first anniversary. Smaller commemorations are held on each subsequent anniversary.

### **Diet**

Kazakhstani cuisine is influenced by its nomadic history, and its staples include mutton and dairy products. Horse meat is considered a delicacy and is usually eaten in wintertime. Both mutton and horse meat are enjoyed on special occasions. Produce like potatoes, cabbages, onions, cucumbers, tomatoes, apples, pears, melons, and berries of all sorts are common in the diet of urban Kazakhstanis. In rural areas, Kazakhstanis eat fewer vegetables and fruits. Vegetables and fruits can be scarce in winter, especially in the north. If they are available, they may be expensive. Livestock are valued for the butter, milk, and meat they provide. Women go to great lengths to preserve vegetables and jams for the winter. Imported convenience foods are available but expensive.

A favorite Kazakh dish, *besbarmak* (five fingers), is made of dough rolled into flat, wide noodles and cooked in a broth called *sorpa*. The noodles are then covered with pieces of cooked meat and garnished with onions also cooked in a broth. The dish is named for the way in which it is traditionally eaten—with the hand. *Manti* are large steamed dumplings filled with chopped mutton or beef, onions, and pumpkin. Russian *pelmeni* are smaller, boiled dumplings. *Pierozhki* are meat- or potato-filled pastries. *Plov* is a favorite Uzbek dish of rice, carrots, onions, and mutton.

People drink hot tea year-round. Summer drinks include the Kazakh *kumis* (fermented mare's milk) and the Russian *kvass* (a fermented drink made from dried bread). Cold beverages are thought to cause sore throats and other health problems.

### **Recreation**

#### **Sports**

Sports like soccer, boxing, and hockey (in the north) are very popular. During rural festivals, Kazakhstanis enjoy participating in traditional wrestling (*kures*) and horseback competitions such as *kokpar*, in which teams try to move a goat's carcass to a central goal. Women enjoy playing sports like volleyball and basketball. Gymnastics is popular among young women.

#### **Leisure**

Leisure time for most adults, particularly women, is limited by work and family responsibilities. People relax by watching television, reading, or visiting with friends and neighbors. In good weather, people enjoy strolling in parks, hiking, and fishing. Day trips "into nature" and picnics are popular among city dwellers. People also like the sauna (*monsha* in Kazakh; *banya* in Russian). Kazakhstanis play games such as dominoes, cards, and *draughts* (a game similar to checkers). Children enjoy playing games like chess or going ice-skating in the winter. Kazakhstani boys play *asyk*, a game similar to marbles but played with dried sheep knee bones. Boys and girls usually play separately.

### Vacation

Most Kazakhstani cannot afford to take long vacations. People usually like to relax at home, visit relatives, or camp out and grill during their time off from work. Wealthy Kazakhstani can afford to visit other countries and stay in nice hotels. Most people aspire to travel to Europe or North America.

### The Arts

Kazakhs are proud that their culture has survived years of suppression, especially their musical and poetic traditions. In the popular *aitys* (singing debate), two people sing their arguments and rebuttals accompanied by music from a *dombra* (a two-stringed instrument similar to a mandolin). Rural families usually have one member skilled on the guitar or the *dombra*, and many children are musically instructed at an early age. Ballroom, modern, and traditional dance are popular. Kazakhstan's large towns and cities generally have a movie theater and a "palace of culture" for plays, dance performances, and concerts.

Weaving is an important industry in Kazakhstan. *Tekemets* (rugs) made of felt or wool are among the finest in the world and are common in Kazakh homes. Geometric designs and vibrant colors are typical features. Embroidery is used to embellish clothing and crafts.

### Holidays

Public holidays include International Women's Day (8 March), for which women and girls receive flowers and presents from loved ones; Victory Day (9 May), marking the end of World War II; and Independence Day (16 December). Holidays are also designated for professions: Miners' Day, Teachers' Day, et cetera.

New Year's Day is the most important holiday. Families and friends gather around a decorated fir tree, eat, drink champagne, dance, and light fireworks for the New Year celebration (*Zhanga Zhyl* in Kazakh; *Noviy Gohd* in Russian). Children often wear costumes and wait for Grandfather Frost (*Ayaz Ata*; *Dyed Moroz*) to deliver gifts. Christmas is celebrated by many families. Russian Orthodox families celebrate it on 7 January. Another major holiday is the traditional Kazakh New Year and spring festival, *Nauryz* (22 March). Many communities have a street festival with Kazakh food, music, and dancing to celebrate the renewal of nature. Muslims celebrate the religious holidays of *Ramazan* (also known as *Ramadan*, the holy fasting month), *Oraza ait* (also known as *Eid al-Fitr*, a three-day feast held at the end of *Ramadan*), and *Kurban ait* (also known as *Eid al-Adha*, a holiday that commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son).

## SOCIETY

### Government

Kazakhstan is a presidential republic led by a president, who serves as head of state. He effectively controls all three branches of government. The prime minister is head of government and is often given responsibility over the

economy. Kazakhstani generally view a strong president as the key to stability, though many complain that government business is unduly influenced by personal connections.

Opposition political parties and a small independent press are active, but public debate on sensitive issues remains limited. Opposition leaders often have no access to media and other forums to express their views. Parliament's upper house, the Senate, has 47 members. Senators serve six-year terms. The members of the lower house of Parliament, the 107-seat *Mazhilis*, are elected to five-year terms. The voting age is 18.

### Economy

Kazakhstan has vast natural resources, including some of the world's largest oil reserves. Oil production has steadily increased since independence. Two export pipelines feed into Russia. An oil pipeline from central Kazakhstan to western China was completed in 2005, and a second phase of this pipeline was completed in 2009. Coal mining, metallurgy, and chemical production play an important role in Kazakhstan's industrial sector, which employs 20 percent of the labor force. Roughly 18 percent of workers are employed in agriculture, with most of the focus on grain production and livestock. While foreign investment, privatization, and entrepreneurship have brought wealth to a small segment of the population, the transition from a planned economy to a market economy has been difficult for the average citizen. The 2008 global financial crisis hurt Kazakhstani banks, which have received government aid. The country also faces high inflation. The currency is the *tenge* (KZT).

Kazakhstan's economy is still closely tied to Russia's. The nations have agreed to joint oil ventures, and Russia pays more than \$100 million per year to lease an area of 3,700 square miles (6,000 square kilometers) around the Baikonur Space Center, an important rocket launch site in central Kazakhstan that employs tens of thousands of people.

### Transportation and Communications

Most families do not own cars, and those who do often use them as makeshift taxis. Many people commute by bus to get to and from work; however, those who can afford it use taxis. Buses and trolleys carry passengers within cities. Bus routes and an extensive train network link cities in Kazakhstan and extend to neighboring countries. Travel on the national airline is too expensive for most citizens.

Most towns and cities have a public telephone/telegraph station. Cellular phones are popular in cities. Most households receive television broadcasts from Almaty, Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana), and Moscow; some have access to satellite or cable connections. Urban dwellers are increasingly accessing the internet.

### Education

Children study in schools from age six or seven to sixteen or seventeen. They attend six days each week; all grades are usually in one building. Both Russian- and Kazakh-language schools exist. Private and foreign-language (especially English and Turkish) schools are growing in popularity. After ninth grade, students may transfer to a vocational or technical school or study for two more years in preparation for higher

education. Students must pass several entrance exams to enter universities. During the Soviet era, public education was free, but now the government offers a large number of scholarships to help students finance their educations. Many students also attend private universities.

**Health**

In Kazakhstan's national healthcare system, most hospitals lack modern equipment and basic medical supplies. Patients must provide their own supplies and medicine, which can be expensive and difficult to obtain. Private health care offers better service for patients who can afford it. Getting adequate health care in rural areas and in emergency situations can be especially difficult. In most areas, tap water is unsafe to drink. Heavy urban air pollution contributes to respiratory problems. Tuberculosis has infected people in many cities. In areas around Semey, a former Soviet nuclear test site, cases of birth defects and cancer still occur.

**AT A GLANCE**

**Contact Information**

Embassy of Kazakhstan, 1401 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036; phone (202) 232-5488; web site [www.kazakhembus.com](http://www.kazakhembus.com). Consulate of Kazakhstan, 535 Fifth Avenue, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10017; phone (646) 370-6331; web site [www.kazconsulny.org](http://www.kazconsulny.org).

**Country and Development Data**

Capital	Nur-Sultan
Population	18,744,548 (rank=62)
Area (sq. mi.)	1,052,089 (rank=9)
Area (sq. km.)	2,724,900
Human Development Index	60 of 188 countries
Gender Inequality Index	43 of 188 countries
GDP (PPP) per capita	\$26,300
Adult Literacy	100% (male); 100% (female)
Infant Mortality	19 per 1,000 births
Life Expectancy	69 (male); 77 (female)
Currency	Tenge



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VIEW 2 PHOTOS OF TAJIKISTAN



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## Introduction :: TAJIKISTAN

### Background:



The Tajik people came under Russian imperial rule in the 1860s and 1870s, but Russia's hold on Central Asia weakened following the Revolution of 1917. At that time, bands of indigenous guerrillas (called "basmachi") fiercely contested Bolshevik control of the area, which was not fully reestablished until 1925. Tajikistan was first created as an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan in 1924, but in 1929 the USSR designated Tajikistan a separate republic and transferred to it much of present-day Sughd province. Ethnic Uzbeks form a substantial minority in Tajikistan, and ethnic Tajiks an even larger minority in Uzbekistan. Tajikistan became independent in 1991 following the breakup of the Soviet Union, and experienced a civil war between political, regional, and religious factions from 1992 to 1997.

Though the country holds general elections for both the presidency (once every seven years) and parliament (once every five years), observers note an electoral system rife with irregularities and abuse, with results that are neither free nor fair. President Emomali RAHMON, who came to power in 1994 during the civil war, used an attack planned by a disaffected deputy defense minister in 2015 to ban the last major opposition political party in Tajikistan. In December 2015, RAHMON further strengthened his position by having himself declared "Founder of Peace and National Unity, Leader of the Nation," with limitless terms and lifelong immunity through constitutional amendments ratified in a referendum. The referendum also lowered the minimum age required to run for president from 35 to 30, which would make RAHMON's son Rustam EMOMALI, the current mayor of the capital city of Dushanbe, eligible to run for president in 2020.

The country remains the poorest in the former Soviet sphere. Tajikistan became a member of the WTO in March 2013. However, its economy continues to face major challenges, including dependence on remittances from Tajik migrant laborers working in Russia and Kazakhstan, pervasive corruption, and the opiate trade and other destabilizing violence emanating from neighboring Afghanistan. Tajikistan has endured several domestic security incidents since 2010, including armed conflict between government forces and local strongmen in the Rasht Valley and between government forces and criminal groups in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. Tajikistan suffered its first ISIS-claimed attack in 2018, when assailants attacked a group of Western bicyclists with vehicles and knives, killing four.

## Geography :: TAJIKISTAN

### Location:



Central Asia, west of China, south of Kyrgyzstan

### Geographic coordinates:



39 00 N, 71 00 E

### Map references:



Asia

### Area:



**total:** 144,100 sq km

**land:** 141,510 sq km

**water:** 2,590 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** [97](#)

### Area - comparative:



slightly smaller than Wisconsin

### Land boundaries:



**total:** 4,130 km

**border countries (4):** Afghanistan 1357 km, China 477 km, Kyrgyzstan 984 km, Uzbekistan 1312 km

**Coastline:**

0 km (landlocked)

**Maritime claims:**

none (landlocked)

**Climate:**

mid-latitude continental, hot summers, mild winters; semiarid to polar in Pamir Mountains

**Terrain:**

mountainous region dominated by the Trans-Alay Range in the north and the Pamirs in the southeast; western Fergana Valley in north, Kofarnihon and Vakhsh Valleys in southwest

**Elevation:**

**mean elevation:** 3,186 m

**lowest point:** Syr Darya (Sirdaryo) 300 m

**highest point:** Qullai Ismoili Somoni 7,495 m

**Natural resources:**

hydropower, some petroleum, uranium, mercury, brown coal, lead, zinc, antimony, tungsten, silver, gold

**Land use:**

**agricultural land:** 34.7% (2011 est.)

arable land: 6.1% (2011 est.) / permanent crops: 0.9% (2011 est.) / permanent pasture: 27.7% (2011 est.)

**forest:** 2.9% (2011 est.)

**other:** 62.4% (2011 est.)

**Irrigated land:**

7,420 sq km (2012)

**Population distribution:**

the country's population is concentrated at lower elevations, with perhaps as much as 90% of the people living in valleys; overall density increases from east to west

**Natural hazards:**

earthquakes; floods

**Environment - current issues:**

areas of high air pollution from motor vehicles and industry; water pollution from agricultural runoff and disposal of untreated industrial waste and sewage; poor management of water resources; soil erosion; increasing levels of soil salinity

**Environment - international agreements:**

**party to:** Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands

**signed, but not ratified:** none of the selected agreements

**Geography - note:**

landlocked; highest point, Qullai Ismoili Somoni (formerly Communism Peak), was the tallest mountain in the former USSR

**People and Society :: TAJIKISTAN**

**Population:**

8,604,882 (July 2018 est.)



country comparison to the world: [97](#)

### Nationality:

noun: Tajikistani(s)

adjective: Tajikistani

### Ethnic groups:

Tajik 84.3% (includes Pamiri and Yagnobi), Uzbek 13.8%, other 2% (includes Kyrgyz, Russian, Turkmen, Tatar, Arab) (2014 est.)

### Languages:

Tajik (official) 84.4%, Uzbek 11.9%, Kyrgyz .8%, Russian .5%, other 2.4% (2010 est.)

note: Russian widely used in government and business

### Religions:

Muslim 98% (Sunni 95%, Shia 3%) other 2% (2014 est.)

### Age structure:

0-14 years: 32.05% (male 1,404,403 /female 1,353,704)

15-24 years: 18.35% (male 801,172 /female 777,524)

25-54 years: 40.34% (male 1,721,081 /female 1,749,819)

55-64 years: 5.85% (male 231,820 /female 271,946)

65 years and over: 3.41% (male 121,405 /female 172,008) (2018 est.)

population pyramid:



### Dependency ratios:

total dependency ratio: 62.5 (2015 est.)

youth dependency ratio: 57.1 (2015 est.)

elderly dependency ratio: 5.4 (2015 est.)

potential support ratio: 18.5 (2015 est.)

### Median age:

total: 24.8 years

male: 24.2 years

female: 25.4 years (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [160](#)

### Population growth rate:

1.58% (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [65](#)

### Birth rate:

22.8 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [64](#)

### Death rate:

5.9 deaths/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [169](#)

**Net migration rate:**

-1.1 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [145](#)

**Population distribution:**

the country's population is concentrated at lower elevations, with perhaps as much as 90% of the people living in valleys; overall density increases from east to west

**Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 27.1% of total population (2018)

**rate of urbanization:** 2.62% annual rate of change (2015-20 est.)

**Major urban areas - population:**

873,000 DUSHANBE (capital) (2018)

**Sex ratio:**

**at birth:** 1.05 male(s)/female

**0-14 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female

**15-24 years:** 1.03 male(s)/female

**25-54 years:** 0.98 male(s)/female

**55-64 years:** 0.85 male(s)/female

**65 years and over:** 0.71 male(s)/female

**total population:** 0.99 male(s)/female (2018 est.)

**Mother's mean age at first birth:**

22 years (2017 est.)

**note:** median age at first birth among women 25-29

**Maternal mortality rate:**

32 deaths/100,000 live births (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [111](#)

**Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 30.8 deaths/1,000 live births

**male:** 34.8 deaths/1,000 live births

**female:** 26.5 deaths/1,000 live births (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [59](#)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 68.4 years

**male:** 65.2 years

**female:** 71.7 years (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [168](#)

**Total fertility rate:**

2.59 children born/woman (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [73](#)

**Contraceptive prevalence rate:**



29.3% (2017)

**Drinking water source:**



**improved:**

urban: 93.1% of population

rural: 66.7% of population

total: 73.8% of population

**unimproved:**

urban: 6.9% of population

rural: 33.3% of population

total: 26.2% of population (2015 est.)

**Current Health Expenditure:**



6.9% (2015)

**Physicians density:**



1.7 physicians/1,000 population (2014)

**Hospital bed density:**



4.8 beds/1,000 population (2013)

**Sanitation facility access:**



**improved:**

urban: 93.8% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 95.5% of population (2015 est.)

total: 95% of population (2015 est.)

**unimproved:**

urban: 6.2% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 4.5% of population (2015 est.)

total: 5% of population (2015 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**



0.3% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 88

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**



15,000 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 88

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**



<1000 (2017 est.)

**Major infectious diseases:**



**degree of risk:** high (2016)

**food or waterborne diseases:** bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever (2016)

**vectorborne diseases:** malaria (2016)

**Obesity - adult prevalence rate:**



14.2% (2016)

**country comparison to the world:** [128](#)

**Children under the age of 5 years underweight:**



7.6% (2017)

**country comparison to the world:** [71](#)

**Education expenditures:**



5.2% of GDP (2015)

**country comparison to the world:** [60](#)

**Literacy:**



**definition:** age 15 and over can read and write (2015 est.)

**total population:** 99.8%

**male:** 99.8%

**female:** 99.7% (2015 est.)

**School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):**



**total:** 11 years

**male:** 12 years

**female:** 11 years (2013)

**Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:**



**total:** 16.7%

**male:** 19.2%

**female:** 13.7% (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [82](#)

**Government ::** TAJIKISTAN

**Country name:**



**conventional long form:** Republic of Tajikistan

**conventional short form:** Tajikistan

**local long form:** Jumhurii Tojikiston

**local short form:** Tojikiston

**former:** Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic

**etymology:** the Persian suffix "-stan" means "place of" or "country," so the word Tajikistan literally means "Land of the Tajik [people]"

**Government type:**



presidential republic

**Capital:**



**name:** Dushanbe

**geographic coordinates:** 38 33 N, 68 46 E

**time difference:** UTC+5 (10 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

**Administrative divisions:**



2 provinces (viloyatho, singular - viloyat), 1 autonomous province\* (viloyati mukhtor), 1 capital region\*\* (viloyati poytakht),

and 1 area referred to as Districts Under Republic Administration\*\*\*; Dushanbe\*\*, Khatlon (Qurghonteppa), Kuhistoni Badakhshon [Gorno-Badakhshan]\* (Khorugh), Nohiyahoi Tobei Jumhuri\*\*\*, Sughd (Khujand)

**note:** the administrative center name follows in parentheses

#### **Independence:**

9 September 1991 (from the Soviet Union)

#### **National holiday:**

Independence Day (or National Day), 9 September (1991)

#### **Constitution:**

**history:** several previous; latest adopted 6 November 1994

**amendments:** proposed by the president of the republic or by at least one-third of the total membership of both houses of the Supreme Assembly; adoption of any amendment requires a referendum, which includes approval by the president or approval by at least two-thirds of the Assembly of Representatives membership; passage in a referendum requires participation of an absolute majority of eligible voters and an absolute majority of votes; note – constitutional articles including Tajikistan's form of government, its territory, and its democratic nature cannot be amended; amended several times, last in 2016 (2017)

#### **Legal system:**

civil law system

#### **International law organization participation:**

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; accepts ICCT jurisdiction

#### **Citizenship:**

**citizenship by birth:** no

**citizenship by descent only:** at least one parent must be a citizen of Tajikistan

**dual citizenship recognized:** no

**residency requirement for naturalization:** 5 years or 3 years of continuous residence prior to application

#### **Suffrage:**

18 years of age; universal

#### **Executive branch:**

**chief of state:** President Emomali RAHMOM (since 6 November 1994; head of state and Supreme Assembly chairman since 19 November 1992)

**head of government:** Prime Minister Qohir RASULZODA (since 23 November 2013)

**cabinet:** Council of Ministers appointed by the president, approved by the Supreme Assembly

**elections/appointments:** president directly elected by simple majority popular vote for a 7-year term for a maximum of two terms; however, as the "Leader of the Nation" President RAHMOM can run an unlimited number of times; election last held on 6 November 2013 (next to be held in November 2020); prime minister appointed by the president

**election results:** Emomali RAHMOM reelected president; percent of vote - Emomali RAHMOM (PDPT) 83.9%, Ismoil TALBAKOV (CPT) 5%, other 11.1%

#### **Legislative branch:**

**description:** bicameral Supreme Assembly or Majlisi Oli consists of:

National Assembly or Majlisi Milli (34 seats; 25 members indirectly elected by local representative assemblies or majlisi, 8 appointed by the president, and 1 reserved for each living former president; members serve 5-year terms)

Assembly of Representatives or Majlisi Namoyandagon (63 seats; 41 members directly elected in single-seat constituencies by 2-round absolute majority vote and 22 directly elected in a single nationwide constituency by proportional representation vote; members serve 5-year terms)

**elections:**

National Assembly - last held on 1 March 2015 (next to be held in 2020)

Assembly of Representatives - last held on 1 March 2015 (next to be held in 2020)

**election results:**

National Assembly - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - NA; composition - men 28, women 6, percent of women 17.6%

Assembly of Representatives - percent of vote by party - PDPT 65.4%, APT 11.7%, PERT 7.5%, SPT 5.5%, CPT 2.2%, DPT 1.7%, other 6%; seats by party - PDPT 51, APT 5, PERT 3, CPT 2, SPT 1, DPT 1; composition - men 50, women 13, percent of women 20.6%; note - total Supreme Assembly percent of women 19.6%

**Judicial branch:**



**highest courts:**

highest courts: Supreme Court (consists of the chairman, deputy chairmen, and 34 judges organized into civil, family, criminal, administrative offense, and military chambers); Constitutional Court (consists of the court chairman, deputy chairman, and 5 judges); High Economic Court (consists of 16 judicial positions)

**judge selection and term of office:** Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, and High Economic Court judges nominated by the president and approved by the National Assembly; judges of all 3 courts appointed for 10-year renewable terms with no term limits, but the last appointment must occur before the age of 65

**subordinate courts:** regional and district courts; Dushanbe City Court; viloyat (province level) courts; Court of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region

**Political parties and leaders:**



Agrarian Party of Tajikistan or APT [Rustam LATIFZODA]  
Communist Party of Tajikistan or CPT [Miroj ABDULLOEV]  
Democratic Party of Tajikistan or DPT [Saidjafar USMONZODA]  
Party of Economic Reform of Tajikistan or PERT [Olimjon BOBOEV]  
People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan or PDPT [Emomali RAHMON]  
Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan or SDPT [Rahmatullo ZOIROV]  
Socialist Party of Tajikistan or SPT [Abduhalim GHAFFOROV]

**International organization participation:**



ADB, CICA, CIS, CSTO, EAEC, EAPC, EBRD, ECO, EITI (candidate country), FAO, G-77, GCTU, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (NGOs), ICCT, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent), ITSO, ITU, MIGA, NAM (observer), OIC, OPCW, OSCE, PFP, SCO, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**



**chief of mission:** Ambassador Farhod SALIM (since 21 May 2014)

**chancery:** 1005 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037

**telephone:** [1] (202) 223-6090

**FAX:** [1] (202) 223-6091

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**



**chief of mission:** Ambassador John Mark POMMERSHEIM (since 15 March 2019)

**embassy:** 109-A Ismoili Somoni Avenue, Dushanbe 734019

**mailing address:** 7090 Dushanbe Place, Dulles, VA 20189

**telephone:** [992] (37) 229-20-00

**FAX:** [992] (37) 229-20-50

**Flag description:**



three horizontal stripes of red (top), a wider stripe of white, and green; a gold crown surmounted by seven gold, five-pointed stars is located in the center of the white stripe; red represents the sun, victory, and the unity of the nation, white stands for purity, cotton, and mountain snows, while green is the color of Islam and the bounty of nature; the crown symbolizes the Tajik people; the seven stars signify the Tajik magic number "seven" - a symbol of perfection and the

embodiment of happiness

#### National symbol(s):

crown surmounted by an arc of seven, five-pointed stars; snow leopard; national colors: red, white, green

#### National anthem:

**name:** "Surudi milli" (National Anthem)

**lyrics/music:** Gulnazar KELDI/Sulaimon YUDAKOV

**note:** adopted 1991; after the fall of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan kept the music of the anthem from its time as a Soviet republic but adopted new lyrics

## Economy :: TAJIKISTAN

### Economy - overview:

Tajikistan is a poor, mountainous country with an economy dominated by minerals extraction, metals processing, agriculture, and reliance on remittances from citizens working abroad. Mineral resources include silver, gold, uranium, antimony, tungsten, and coal. Industry consists mainly of small obsolete factories in food processing and light industry, substantial hydropower facilities, and a large aluminum plant - currently operating well below its capacity. The 1992-97 civil war severely damaged an already weak economic infrastructure and caused a sharp decline in industrial and agricultural production. Today, Tajikistan is the poorest among the former Soviet republics. Because less than 7% of the land area is arable and cotton is the predominant crop, Tajikistan imports approximately 70% of its food.

Since the end of the civil war, the country has pursued half-hearted reforms and privatizations in the economic sphere, but its poor business climate remains a hindrance to attracting foreign investment. Some experts estimate the value of narcotics transiting Tajikistan is equivalent to 30%-50% of GDP.

Because of a lack of employment opportunities in Tajikistan, more than one million Tajik citizens work abroad - roughly 90% in Russia - supporting families back home through remittances that in 2017 were equivalent to nearly 35% of GDP. Tajikistan's large remittances from migrant workers in Russia exposes it to monetary shocks. Tajikistan often delays devaluation of its currency for fear of inflationary pressures on food and other consumables. Recent slowdowns in the Russian and Chinese economies, low commodity prices, and currency fluctuations have hampered economic growth. The dollar value of remittances from Russia to Tajikistan dropped by almost 65% in 2015, and the government spent almost \$500 million in 2016 to bail out the country's still troubled banking sector.

Tajikistan's growing public debt – currently about 50% of GDP – could result in financial difficulties. Remittances from Russia increased in 2017, however, bolstering the economy somewhat. China owns about 50% of Tajikistan's outstanding debt. Tajikistan has borrowed heavily to finance investment in the country's vast hydropower potential. In 2016, Tajikistan contracted with the Italian firm Salini Impregilo to build the Roghun dam over a 13-year period for \$3.9 billion. A 2017 Eurobond has largely funded Roghun's first phase, after which sales from Roghun's output are expected to fund the rest of its construction. The government has not ruled out issuing another Eurobond to generate auxiliary funding for its second phase.

### GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$28.43 billion (2017 est.)

\$26.55 billion (2016 est.)

\$24.83 billion (2015 est.)

**note:** data are in 2017 dollars

**country comparison to the world:** [135](#)

### GDP (official exchange rate):

\$7.144 billion (2017 est.)

### GDP - real growth rate:

7.1% (2017 est.)

6.9% (2016 est.)

6% (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [19](#)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$3,200 (2017 est.)

\$3,000 (2016 est.)

\$2,900 (2015 est.)

**note:** data are in 2017 dollars

**country comparison to the world:** [192](#)

**Gross national saving:**

24.4% of GDP (2017 est.)

15.4% of GDP (2016 est.)

11.8% of GDP (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [66](#)

**GDP - composition, by end use:**

**household consumption:** 98.4% (2017 est.)

**government consumption:** 13.3% (2017 est.)

**investment in fixed capital:** 11.7% (2017 est.)

**investment in inventories:** 2.5% (2017 est.)

**exports of goods and services:** 10.7% (2017 est.)

**imports of goods and services:** -36.6% (2017 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

**agriculture:** 28.6% (2017 est.)

**industry:** 25.5% (2017 est.)

**services:** 45.9% (2017 est.)

**Agriculture - products:**

cotton, grain, fruits, grapes, vegetables; cattle, sheep, goats

**Industries:**

aluminum, cement, coal, gold, silver, antimony, textile, vegetable oil

**Industrial production growth rate:**

1% (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [159](#)

**Labor force:**

2.295 million (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [118](#)

**Labor force - by occupation:**

**agriculture:** 43%

**industry:** 10.6%

**services:** 46.4% (2016 est.)



**Unemployment rate:**

2.4% (2016 est.)

2.5% (2015 est.)

**note:** official rate; actual unemployment is much higher

**country comparison to the world:** [25](#)

**Population below poverty line:**

31.5% (2016 est.)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

**lowest 10%:** NA (2009 est.)

**highest 10%:** NA (2009 est.)

**Distribution of family income - Gini index:**

32.6 (2006)

34.7 (1998)

**country comparison to the world:** [116](#)

**Budget:**

**revenues:** 2.269 billion (2017 est.)

**expenditures:** 2.374 billion (2017 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

31.8% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [71](#)

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

-1.5% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [90](#)

**Public debt:**

50.4% of GDP (2017 est.)

42% of GDP (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [101](#)

**Fiscal year:**

calendar year

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

7.3% (2017 est.)

5.9% (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [193](#)

**Central bank discount rate:**

16% (20 March 2017)

6.5% (31 December 2012)

**country comparison to the world:** [12](#)

**Commercial bank prime lending rate:**

30% (31 December 2017 est.)



24.24% (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [5](#)

**Stock of narrow money:**

\$1.389 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$1.108 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [145](#)

**Stock of broad money:**

\$1.389 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$1.108 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [153](#)

**Stock of domestic credit:**

\$1.06 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$1.711 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [168](#)

**Market value of publicly traded shares:**

NA

**Current account balance:**

-\$35 million (2017 est.)

-\$362 million (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [78](#)

**Exports:**

\$873.1 million (2017 est.)

\$691.1 million (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [166](#)

**Exports - partners:**

Turkey 27.5%, China 17.7%, Russia 13.4%, Switzerland 12.5%, Algeria 8.2%, Iran 7.1% (2017)

**Exports - commodities:**

aluminum, electricity, cotton, fruits, vegetable oil, textiles

**Imports:**

\$2.39 billion (2017 est.)

\$2.554 billion (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [160](#)

**Imports - commodities:**

petroleum products, aluminum oxide, machinery and equipment, foodstuffs

**Imports - partners:**

Russia 38%, Kazakhstan 19%, China 8.7%, Iran 4.4% (2017)

**Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:**

\$1.292 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$652.8 million (31 December 2016 est.)





**country comparison to the world:** [127](#)

**Debt - external:**

\$5.75 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$5.495 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [130](#)

**Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:**

\$2.272 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [118](#)

**Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad:**

\$16.3 billion (31 December 2009)

**country comparison to the world:** [60](#)

**Exchange rates:**

Tajikistani somoni (TJS) per US dollar -

8.764 (2017 est.)

7.8358 (2016 est.)

7.8358 (2015 est.)

6.1631 (2014 est.)

4.9348 (2013 est.)

**Energy :: TAJIKISTAN**

**Electricity access:**

**electrification - total population:** 100% (2016)

**Electricity - production:**

17.03 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [85](#)

**Electricity - consumption:**

12.96 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [85](#)

**Electricity - exports:**

1.4 billion kWh NA (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [52](#)

**Electricity - imports:**

103 million kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [98](#)

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

5.508 million kW (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [78](#)

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

6% of total installed capacity (2016 est.)



country comparison to the world: [201](#)

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [191](#)

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

94% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [6](#)

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

0% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [208](#)

**Crude oil - production:**

180 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [97](#)

**Crude oil - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [204](#)

**Crude oil - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [201](#)

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

12 million bbl (1 January 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [89](#)

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

172 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [108](#)

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

24,000 bbl/day (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: [130](#)

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [206](#)

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

22,460 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [114](#)

**Natural gas - production:**

19.82 million cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [89](#)

**Natural gas - consumption:**

19.82 million cu m (2017 est.)



**country comparison to the world:** [114](#)

**Natural gas - exports:**

0 cu m (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [197](#)

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [197](#)

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

5.663 billion cu m (1 January 2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [91](#)

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**

6.329 million Mt (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [126](#)

**Communications :: TAJIKISTAN**

**Telephones - fixed lines:**

**total subscriptions:** 468,000

**subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:** 6 (July 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [99](#)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**

**total subscriptions:** 9.4 million

**subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:** 111 (July 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [87](#)

**Telephone system:**

**general assessment:** foreign investment in the telephone system has resulted in major improvements; conversion of the existing fixed network from analogue to digital was completed in 2012; the country has endeavored to launch 4G/LTE services with mixed results; 7 major cities have 4G coverage; 5 major operators in the market; low broadband penetration (2018)

**domestic:** fixed line availability has not changed significantly since 1998, while mobile cellular subscribership, aided by competition among multiple operators, has expanded rapidly; coverage now extends to all major cities and towns; fixed-line 6 per 100 and mobile-cellular 111 per 100 (2018)

**international:** country code - 992; linked by cable and microwave radio relay to other CIS republics and by leased connections to the Moscow international gateway switch; Dushanbe linked by Intelsat to international gateway switch in Ankara (Turkey); satellite earth stations - 3 (2 Intelsat and 1 Orbita); established a single gateway for Internet traffic in December 2015, which is expected to limit the connectivity of nonstate-owned telecom, Internet, and mobile companies

**Broadcast media:**

state-run TV broadcasters transmit nationally on 9 TV and 10 radio stations, and regionally on 4 stations; 31 independent TV and 20 radio stations broadcast locally and regionally; many households are able to receive Russian and other foreign stations via cable and satellite (2016)

**Internet country code:**

.tj

**Internet users:**

**total:** 1,705,345

**percent of population:** 20.5% (July 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [117](#)

**Broadband - fixed subscriptions:**

**total:** 6,000

**subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:** less than 1 (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [174](#)

**Transportation :: TAJIKISTAN**

**National air transport system:**

**number of registered air carriers:** 2 (2015)

**inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers:** 10 (2015)

**annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers:** 802,470 (2015)

**annual freight traffic on registered air carriers:** 105,376 mt-km (2015)

**Civil aircraft registration country code prefix:**

EY (2016)

**Airports:**

24 (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** [132](#)

**Airports - with paved runways:**

**total:** 17 (2013)

**over 3,047 m:** 2 (2013)

**2,438 to 3,047 m:** 4 (2013)

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 5 (2013)

**914 to 1,523 m:** 3 (2013)

**under 914 m:** 3 (2013)

**Airports - with unpaved runways:**

**total:** 7 (2013)

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 1 (2013)

**914 to 1,523 m:** 1 (2013)

**under 914 m:** 5 (2013)

**Pipelines:**

549 km gas, 38 km oil (2013)

**Railways:**

**total:** 680 km (2014)

**broad gauge:** 680 km 1.520-m gauge (2014)

**country comparison to the world:** [102](#)

**Roadways:**

**total:** 30,000 km (2018)

**country comparison to the world:** [96](#)

### Waterways:

200 km (along Vakhsh River) (2011)

country comparison to the world: [98](#)

## Military and Security :: TAJIKISTAN

### Military expenditures:

1.19% of GDP (2017)

1.25% of GDP (2016)

1.22% of GDP (2015)

1.13% of GDP (2014)

1% of GDP (2012)

country comparison to the world: [102](#)

### Military branches:

Ground Forces, Air and Air Defense Forces, Mobile Forces (2013)

### Military service age and obligation:

18-27 years of age for compulsory or voluntary military service; 2-year conscript service obligation; males required to undergo compulsory military training between ages 16 and 55; males can enroll in military schools from at least age 15 (2012)

## Transnational Issues :: TAJIKISTAN

### Disputes - international:

in 2006, China and Tajikistan pledged to commence demarcation of the revised boundary agreed to in the delimitation of 2002; talks continue with Uzbekistan to delimit border and remove minefields; disputes in Isfara Valley delay delimitation with Kyrgyzstan

### Refugees and internally displaced persons:

stateless persons: 4,616 (2018)

### Illicit drugs:

Tajikistan sits on one of the world's highest volume illicit drug trafficking routes, between Afghan opiate production to the south and the illicit drug markets of Russia and Eastern Europe to the north; limited illicit cultivation of opium poppy for domestic consumption; significant consumer of opiates

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## Tajikistan country profile



**Battered by a five-year civil war at the onset of its independence, Tajikistan has struggled with poverty and instability in the two decades since it became its own state.**

The country remains strongly dependent on Russia, both for its economy and to help counter security problems. In particular, Tajikistan depends on Moscow to help fight drug smuggling from neighbouring Afghanistan and an emerging radical Islam movement.

Tajikistan is also expanding its ties with China: Beijing has extended credits and has helped to build roads, tunnels and power infrastructure. Chinese firms are investing in oil and gas exploration and in gold mining.

- Read more **country profiles** - Profiles by **BBC Monitoring**

## FACTS

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### Republic of Tajikistan

#### Capital: Dushanbe

- Population 9 million
- Area 143,100 sq km (55,251 sq miles)
- Major languages Tajik, Uzbek, Russian
- Major religion Islam
- Life expectancy 68 years (men), 74 years (women)
- Currency Tajik somoni

UN, World Bank

# LEADER

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President: Emomali Rahmon



Image copyright Getty Images

Emomali Rahmon, a former cotton farm boss, was elected to president in 1994. He was re-elected in 1999 for a seven-year term - and won a third term in 2006, in an election international observers decried as neither free nor fair. He secured a fourth term in 2013.

Rahmon played a vital role in Tajikistan's civil war, helping the pro-Communist effort to remove Islamist rebels from Dushanbe in the early 1990s.

After years of civil war and violence, some stability returned to Tajikistan. The president has a firm grip on power, but the country remains poor and underdeveloped.

# MEDIA



# ҶУМҲУРИЯТ

Нашрияи расмии Ҷумҳурии Тоҷикистон



САҶИФАН АСЛИ

ХАБАРҶО

ҲУҶҶАТҶО

14:26:33

## СИЁСАТ



Image copyright [Jumhuriyat](#) Image caption [Jumhuriyat](#) is a government-owned paper

The media environment has become less free in recent years, with the authorities obstructing critical reporting.

Websites and social media have been routinely blocked. Opposition websites operate from abroad.

Television is the most popular medium. The state broadcaster is the main player in the sector.

- [Read full media profile](#)

## TIMELINE

### Some key dates in Tajikistan's history:

**13th century** - Genghis Khan conquers Tajikistan and the rest of Central Asia, which becomes part of the Mongol Empire.

**1860-1900** - Tajikistan is divided, with the north coming under Tsarist Russian rule while the south is annexed by the Emirate of Bukhara.

**1921** - Northern Tajikistan becomes part of the Bolshevik-designated Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), which also included Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, part of northern Turkmenistan and southern Kazakhstan. In 1929, Tajik ASSR becomes a Soviet Socialist Republic, separate from Uzbekistan.

**1991** - Supreme Soviet declares Tajikistan independent from the Soviet Union; Rahmon Nabiyev, a Communist leader, wins Tajikistan's first direct presidential election with 57% of the vote. But in 1992 anti-government demonstrations in the country escalate into a civil war that lasts for five years.

Image copyright [Getty Images](#) Image caption The Trans-Caspian Railway, connecting the Caspian Sea to what is now Uzbekistan, was built in the 19th century, during the Russian Empire's expansion into Central Asia





Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

## BACKGROUND

### Land and Climate

The Republic of Tajikistan (Tojikiston) is slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Wisconsin and larger than Greece. Most of the land is mountainous and crossed by jagged peaks, the highest of which (Ismoil Somoni Peak) rises to 24,590 feet (7,495 meters). Minerals and hydroelectric power, Tajikistan's most abundant natural resources, are found in the Tien Shan and Pamir mountains, the highest ranges in central Asia. In 2013, Pamir National Park—6.5 million acres of sparsely populated land that is home to several endangered species—became a UNESCO World Heritage site. Among the animals found in the cold, desolate land of the Pamirs are the world's largest bears, cattle (the yak), and sheep (the Marco Polo).

Tajikistan's climate varies considerably according to altitude. In northern lowlands, the average temperature in January is 30°F (-1°C) and in July is 81°F (27°C). Temperature variation in southern lowlands is extreme, with summers as hot as 120°F (50°C). Mountain winter temperatures are often as low as -50°F (-45°C). Rainfall is moderate in the valleys. Heavy snow closes mountain passes five months of the year.

### History

#### *Early Inhabitants*

Tajik history dates as far back as 2100 BC, when the Amu Darya and Syr Darya river systems gave rise to an advanced civilization. The ancestors of modern Tajiks include these

peoples as well as the east Iranians who inhabited the Persian Empire's tributary states of Bactria and Sogdiana in the sixth and seventh centuries BC. In 329 BC, Alexander the Great founded Alexander-the-Farthest, the present-day city of Khojand. Arab invaders came in the seventh century AD. During the ensuing centuries, this area was part of a much larger territory later referred to as Turkestan, an affluent center of world trade. Caravans loaded with silk and spices from China and India followed the Silk Road on their way to Europe and Asia Minor. The trade route brought with it many conquerors, including Mongol leader Genghis Khan.

The Tajiks developed an advanced and diverse culture, which often adopted the knowledge of these invaders. The magnificent ruins at Bukhara and Samarkand (both now in Uzbekistan) are products of Tajik culture, and Tajiks have made important contributions to Persian literature for more than nine hundred years. The Chinese taught the Tajiks to dig wells and use iron; the Romans introduced glassmaking. Also, many domesticated plants, such as the pea and wheat, have their origin in the area of Tajikistan.

#### *Foreign Domination and Independence*

In the 15th century, feuding tribes, economic decay, and the discovery of a seaway trade route led to a collapse of trade along the Silk Road. Tajiks were dominated by neighboring Afghans from the mid-1700s until the 1860s, when Russia gained control. The entire region became subject to the Great Game between competing British and Russian empires. Russia attempted to absorb the Tajik region after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and a resistance war raged between 1918 and 1926. The rebellion was defeated by the superior Russian troops, and Tajikistan became a Soviet republic in

1929.

The Soviets proceeded to collectivize agriculture and accelerate industrialization to link the economy to other republics. Contact with other nations was severely restricted. However, anti-Soviet sentiment was never far from the surface, and in the late 1970s, Tajik protests became more vocal and even violent. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Tajikistan declared independence and became a founding member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

#### *Civil War and Rahmon's Rule*

In 1992, a clan-based power struggle erupted into civil war. Tens of thousands died, and about one million people were displaced by fighting between factions of the Soviet-era power elite and an opposing coalition of Islamists and liberals. The secular government and the mostly Islamic opposition reached a peace agreement in 1997, under which President Emomali Rahmon remained head of state.

Rahmon was reelected in 1999 with 96 percent of the vote. In June 2003, voters approved a referendum that amended the constitution to allow Rahmon to run for two additional seven-year terms at the conclusion of his term in 2006. Although 93 percent of voters were reported to have approved the amendment, the opposition claimed that the measure was hidden among dozens of other amendments in the referendum and that voters were largely unaware of the extension provision. Tajikistan's three main opposition parties boycotted the 2006 presidential election. Rahmon won in 2006 and again in 2013. Both elections were criticized for their lack of competition due to boycotts and reported cases of voting fraud and harassment.

#### *Challenges*

In April 2008, Tajikistan was asked to repay a US\$47 million loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after the IMF learned that the country had applied for the loan with falsified data. In an effort to solve some of its financial problems, Tajikistan agreed to allow the U.S. military to transport non-military supplies across its territory to U.S. troops in Afghanistan. However, it continues to struggle to pay for basic necessities, such as fuel from neighboring Uzbekistan. Other challenges facing Tajik citizens include corruption, authoritarian rule, widespread labor migration, poverty, and the growth of radical Islam.

#### *Recent Events and Trends*

- **Referendum:** In May 2016, Tajikistan held a referendum on proposed amendments to the Tajik constitution. Major amendments passed included removing the term limit for President Rahmon, lowering the age of presidential candidates to 30 years, and banning political parties based on religion. Many Tajikistanis criticized the amendments as maneuvering by President Rahmon to hold on to power. Turnout for the referendum was reported by the Tajikistani government to be nearly 95 percent, but analysts reported the turnout to be as low as 20 percent.

- **Praises for the president:** In November 2017, Tajikistan marked President Rahmon's 25th year in power with public concerts and readings of the president's books over the radio. The media is required to refer to the leader by his full title: the Founder of Peace and National Unity, Leader of the

Nation, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon. President Rahmon has established a strong cult of personality.

- **ISIS terror attack:** In July 2018, four people were killed when a car intentionally drove into a group of cycling tourists. The Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the attack, which is the group's first in Tajikistan. A large number of Tajiks are believed to have joined ISIS to carry out terrorist attacks outside the country.

## THE PEOPLE

### Population

Some 84 percent of Tajikistan's population is ethnic Tajik, and 14 percent is Uzbek. Russians once formed more than 8 percent of the population, but most returned to Russia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Small groups of Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and other nationalities also live in Tajikistan.

The majority of the population lives in rural areas. Uzbeks are more commonly found in the southwest and west, while Russians live in larger towns and the capital of Dushanbe. Ethnic Pamiris live on the world's highest inhabited plateau, a 14,000-foot (4,267-meter) table in the Pamir Mountains, characterized by barren peaks, deep valleys, and a lack of vegetation. The Pamiris are divided into smaller groups according to their spoken dialects, including the Shugnani, Wakhi, Darwazi, and Yazgulami.

### Language

In 1989, *Tojiki* (Tajik) replaced Russian as the official language. Tajik belongs to the southwest Iranian group of languages and is closely related to Farsi, or Persian. The government has encouraged its use by printing all formal documents in the language and requiring its use in business settings. In everyday conversation, the use of Tajik is becoming more prevalent. Also common is "street Tajik," an informal way of speaking that combines Tajik, Russian, and Uzbek words and phrases. Each region has its own dialect and accent. Although there are variations in sounds and vocabulary, these dialects are mutually intelligible. In the eastern Badakhshoni Kuhi Autonomous Region, people speak Pamiri, which belongs to the eastern Iranian language group. Uzbek, too, is spoken by many people.

Traditionally, these languages were written in Arabic script, but Cyrillic script has been used since 1940. Although some Tajiks would like to see a return to the Arabic script, it remains too costly for the young country to change its textbooks. Russian is still taught in many schools, especially in those that are considered to offer the highest quality educations, and is the standard language of instruction at the university level. Many urban dwellers are more comfortable with it than with Tajik. Russian is the primary language of communication between ethnic groups.

### Religion

Most Tajiks and ethnic Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims. The Pamiris are mostly members of the Isma'ili sect (the second

largest branch of Shi'i Islam), led by an *imam* (Islamic leader) called Aga Khan, whose foundation helps to combat poverty and illiteracy in the region. Russian Orthodox and other Christian churches are also represented, and there is a small Jewish community.

Islam in Tajikistan features elements of Sufi mysticism and shamanism. Because Tajikistan was a stronghold of Islamic resistance to communist rule, the Soviets isolated Tajiks from extensive contact with Iran and Afghanistan. In more recent years, many Tajiks again joined Islamic opposition movements, although they were motivated more by politics than by religious devotion. The government has since cracked down on such groups.

The flow of community life, especially in rural areas, centers on the village mosque. Daily prayers, local celebrations, festivals, and feasts involve the mosque. The *mullo* (cleric) is a leader in the village and is supported by villagers. People take great pride in having a nice mosque. Since independence, more emphasis has been placed on the study of the *Qur'an* (Muslim holy book) and of Persian, the celebration of religious holidays, and the use of the Arabic script.

### General Attitudes

Tajiks are known for their hospitality and are generally kind, gentle, and generous with their friends. Tajiks tend to feel a kinship with extended family and others from the same town or region but often fear or despise those from other areas. Accordingly, Tajiks consider themselves enemies to fear but friends to cherish.

Characteristics much admired in Tajikistan include being willing to share, helping others, and caring for those who are alone. Although Tajiks are generally reserved, most welcome a social gathering or party, especially for special events such as weddings and birthdays. Family is of utmost importance and worth any sacrifice; the greatest fear of most Tajiks is being alone. Personal aspirations differ: some people may seek a good education abroad, while others desire their own plot of farmland.

Tajiks tend to be a patient, hardworking people. Many Tajik citizens work in Russia, where they often labor in trying conditions and endure significant hardships. Attitudes toward Russia are ambivalent. Though the country is seen as a source of economic opportunity, it is also a place where Tajiks are often discriminated against.

### Personal Appearance

Young people, women working in the public and non-profit sectors, and most urban men wear Western-style clothing to school and work. Others wear traditional clothing. Traditionally, adults do not wear shorts. Revealing clothing is considered offensive. Schoolchildren are required to wear uniforms.

Women commonly wear colorful traditional Tajik dresses (*curta*) with long, contrasting-colored pants (*aezor*) underneath; many wear scarves on their heads. Rural women dress more conservatively; they wear a *faranji* (Islamic head covering), sometimes using it to veil their faces when men approach. Typically, women wear earrings and necklaces.

Some men still wear four-cornered or round hats (called a *toqi* or *tupi*), which are regionally distinctive in color and design. Village men, especially elders, wear a long coat called a *joma* or *chapan*, which is kept closed with a bandana-type tie (*meeyonband* or *chorsi*) around the waist. They may also wear a man's *curta*, which is shorter than the woman's *curta* and a solid color.

## CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

### Greetings

Men commonly greet each other by shaking hands, whereas women may embrace instead. Tajiks may also place the right hand over the heart before, during, or after a handshake. Friends who have not seen each other for some time may embrace and kiss each other three times on alternating cheeks. Urban men and women may greet each other with a handshake, but rural men usually do not touch women in public, greeting verbally instead.

The standard greeting is the Arabic *Assalaam 'alaikum* (Peace be upon you); the reply is *Wa 'alaikum assalaam* (And upon you, peace). Close friends might simply exchange *Salom* (Tajik for "Peace"). A common Tajik greeting is *Chee khel shoomo?* (How are you?); the Uzbek equivalent is *Yakhshi me seez?* Russian speakers often greet friends by asking *Kak dela?* (How are things?). Upon parting, Tajiks say *Khayr* (Good-bye) or *To didana* (See you later).

When addressing elders and those in high positions, one uses titles and given names or surnames. Friends use nicknames and given names. Very important persons visiting a rural village may receive a formal greeting that includes the offering of bread and salt, followed by speeches.

### Gestures

In rural homes, people usually sit on the floor cross-legged or with legs tucked under and to the side. It is considered improper to point the bottom of one's shoe or foot at another person. Pointing directly at someone or beckoning with one finger is considered rude; one uses the entire hand instead. Respect is shown by looking down while listening to someone speak. People usually pass items with the right hand; the left hand is placed on the heart or supports the right arm.

### Visiting

Socializing in the home or at a large hall during weddings, memorials, or birthdays is an important aspect of Tajik society. Meals for these occasions can last for hours and involve several courses; dancing often follows.

The traditional house includes a special room set aside for entertaining; on some occasions only men gather here, while for other occasions men and women socialize together. It is customary to remove shoes before entering and to sit on *kurpacha* (thick cushions) spread on the floor. Men sit cross-legged. Women sit with both legs tucked under and to the side. Hosts usually offer tea to their guests, as well as fruit and nuts. Whether it is mealtime or not, food is usually cooked for visitors. The most common days for visiting are Saturday and Sunday, although anytime will do. Relatives

commonly visit one another; daughters visit their mothers especially frequently.

### Eating

Most Tajiks eat with their fingers at traditional meals and in rural areas, although utensils are more common in cities. Three meals are customary in cities, while some rural people eat only breakfast and supper. Breakfast (*nonishta*) usually includes a cup of tea (*choi*). Families eat together on the floor, with the food placed on a low table (*khon-tahta*) or on a cloth (*dastarkhan*). At traditional meals, food is served in communal dishes shared by those sitting close by. At some special occasions, food is served on platters and guests prepare their own plates. Bread, either leavened or unleavened (*non*), is served at all meals.

Guests are expected to eat at least a little; it is considered polite to eat as much as possible. Although most Tajiks are Muslim, alcohol (usually vodka) is served for special occasions. It is common for everyone around the table to take turns making toasts. After all meals, one holds the hands cupped at chest level while a prayer is said. Upon conclusion of the prayer, one runs the hands down the sides of the face and wipes them together. Many people in Tajikistan fast during *Ramazon* (*Ramadan*) and break the daily dawn-to-dusk fast with an evening meal.

## LIFESTYLE

### Family

#### Structure

The *oilai kalon* (extended family) is the center of Tajik society. Tajiks know the general kin ties of everyone else in a rural village and use this information as a behavioral guide. Because one shares character and reputation with one's relatives, one is also bound to share material goods. The extended family structure is therefore essential in the face of the weak Tajik economy, with every able individual contributing to the survival of the whole. Family members share children's clothing and food and often work in a shared business together.

In rural areas, couples typically have between three and five children, and households usually contain several generations living together in a *havli* (compound). Extended family members may also live in neighboring houses. Urban families are smaller, with two to three children, and most often live in nuclear units in apartments. Russian families tend to be smallest of all, with one to two children on average. Among ethnic Tajiks, bearing children—especially a son—is considered one of the most important things a woman can do.

#### Parents and Children

Young people are often told that their parents' duty is to marry them off, while their duty is to bury their parents. In other words, parents are expected to care for their children until marriage. Except for the few who can afford to move out on their own, single adult children typically live with their parents until they marry. After that point, the obligation shifts to children, who are expected to take care of their parents financially and, if needed, physically until the end of their

lives.

After he is married, the oldest son in a family typically lives with his parents until his youngest brother (if he has one) is married and moves in with them in his place. The youngest son in particular (or the youngest daughter and her husband) has a special obligation to care for his parents and inherits their home and land when they die. If a woman is an only child, she may live with her parents after marriage instead of with her husband's family. Sometimes special arrangements between families allow for a woman and her husband to live with her parents under other circumstances as well. However, most families abide by the saying that "a daughter is born for another's family, and sooner or later she has to leave."

The elderly receive respect from their children and often help care for their grandchildren and teach them how to behave in culturally required ways. They pass along traditional knowledge such as housekeeping methods, social traditions, musical skills, and the like.

#### Gender Roles

Poverty and high unemployment are changing traditional family roles, as teenage boys and men are forced to travel to urban areas or abroad (mainly to Russia) to find work. As a result, though fathers continue in their role as breadwinner, mothers often take on additional responsibilities around the house and in raising the children. Extended family members may also partially fill an absent father's role. In homes where fathers are present, mothers are the main disciplinarians, although fathers take action in the case of severe punishment. In rural areas, all family decisions are finalized by the elders, whose advice is considered binding. These decisions include who and when to marry, whether to move, and whether to purchase property, land, and animals.

In large rural families, work is divided by gender and age, with all members of the family expected to contribute as soon as they are physically able. Women and girls cook, wash, garden, care for children, help work in the fields, produce cheese and other milk products, and process foods to store for winter. Men and boys work in the fields, take care of the family livestock, and perform other physically demanding tasks. Urban families have more evenly divided chores.

Women in rural areas do not work outside the home, unless it is for a family business such as a small shop. Urban women have more freedom to decide whether to work outside the home and in what capacity. In cities, women may be found in business and politics, though few hold leadership positions. Though women enjoy equality under the law, their rights are often not enforced in practice. They face a range of problems, including domestic violence and a lack of access to education. Poverty has also been a factor in increasing levels of Islamic conservatism, resulting in more restrictive roles for women in some cases. For example, women may be expected to refrain from working outside of the home, to dress so that most of their bodies are covered, and to avoid communicating with men they are not related to.

### Housing

#### Rural

In rural areas, an extended family typically lives in a

mud-brick structure of several rooms. A high mud wall provides security and keeps animals and gardens secure. Within such compounds (*havli*), it is common to find three or four houses, led by the senior male. These compounds are also found in cities, but the structures are built of brick covered with cement.

### **Urban**

Since the privatization of housing, most new construction has focused on high-end apartments, but the majority of urban Tajiks still live in what are now decaying Soviet-era apartment blocks made of prefabricated concrete. Apartments usually consist of one to three rooms plus a toilet, separate bath, and small kitchen. The type of furnishings depends on the income of the family, but the living room usually has a wood-and-glass cupboard to display photos, souvenirs, and family mementos as well as cutlery and glasses. Tajiks typically sleep on *kurpachas* (narrow mats filled with cotton or other stuffing) that are laid on the floor but may be rolled up for easy storage. Tajik families often have enough *kurpachas* to accommodate guests as well.

### **Utilities**

Urban homes usually have one electrical outlet and one main light source per room, while rural homes must share power with several households. Running water exists in some urban dwellings, but even then, water from the tap must be filtered and boiled before being safe for household use. A lack of water pressure often leaves residents of upper floors with little or no water, so many families use a large plastic trash can to store a water supply. Some urban apartments lack running water all together, so residents must haul water from a communal tap in front of the building and may do their laundry and dishwashing at the tap itself. Many rural families dig their own wells. Heating infrastructure is lacking even in urban areas, so many apartment dwellers resort to burning firewood and coal to keep warm.

## **Dating and Marriage**

### **Dating**

It is not customary for members of the opposite gender to show affection in public, and in rural areas there is no opportunity for dating. Urban teenagers socialize at school. They also go for walks and attend movies and other events in mixed groups or as couples. Much dating is done in secret and does not lead to marriage, as parents have usually already chosen their children's marriage partner.

### **Engagement**

*Hozgori* is a ritual that is part dating, part matchmaking. A betrothed couple often meets for the first time on the day of the *hozgori*. They spend some time together and are asked by their parents if they like each other. If they do, they spend a second day together and the young man gives the young woman an engagement ring.

An engagement is followed by the ritual sending of the *tukkuz* (bride-price) by the groom's family. The *tukkuz* includes chests of fabric, headscarves, linens, perfumes, toiletries, and jewelry. Also sent is food, including flour, bread, rice, fruit, and (if the groom's family is wealthy) a cow or a sheep.

### **Marriage in Society**

Marriage is central to Tajik culture and most people expect to marry; those who remain single may be socially ostracized, especially women. Most marriages are arranged. Some are done so quietly, several years in advance by the families involved. The legal age of marriage for women is 18. However, in rural areas, girls as young as 17 may marry with the approval of a court. Men typically marry between ages 22 and 26. Urban couples may put off marriage a bit longer. Among Russians, who tend to put greater emphasis on female education and independence, the age of marriage is typically later for women.

Allowed by Islam but illegal under secular law, polygamous marriages are often entered into because they relieve economic strain on the girls' families. Teenage girls sometimes agree to become a second or third wife. Common-law marriages do not exist, and cohabitation without marriage is very rare. Same-sex marriage is illegal.

### **Weddings**

June through September is considered the wedding season. Families often compete to provide the best and most food for as large a wedding celebration as possible. The groom's family is responsible for planning and paying for the wedding, while the bride's family is expected to provide a dowry, which includes linens, handmade mattresses, some furniture, and several traditional dresses.

The wedding takes place over three days. The first portion involves a ritual called *nikoh*. The day begins with the groom and a *mullo* (cleric) arriving at the bride's house accompanied by friends and people playing traditional instruments, such as drums and the *karnay* (a wind instrument). The bride waits for the groom dressed in colorful traditional clothing or, in urban areas, a Western-style white wedding dress. The main wedding rite is a religious ceremony performed by a *mullo* and witnessed by the community; it involves reading from the *Qur'an* (Muslim holy book) and the groom agreeing to take his bride as a wife. The bride and groom are seated in separate rooms during this ceremony.

At the bride's house, a ritual called the *chimilik* then takes place, which is named after the curtain central to the tradition. First the bride, surrounded by close relatives and an *oyamullo* (a woman who reads verses from the *Qur'an* or poetry or sings songs wishing happiness to the couple), slowly makes her way to the curtain, which is drawn across a corner of the room. During this procession, a piece of *non* (traditional bread) is held above her head. The groom follows with a similar procession and joins the bride behind the curtain. There the groom gives the bride a present (often gold jewelry), and the couple eats two of ten boiled eggs provided. The groom gathers the eggshells into a small cloth bag, emerges from the curtain, and throws the bag over his shoulder into a group of his single friends. Tradition has it that the friend who catches the bag will be married next. Another tradition involves the couple's joint eating of honey to symbolize the sweetness of their future life.

The next day, the couple registers the marriage with the civic authorities and visits historical sites with the wedding party. The day ends with a wedding dinner consisting of abundant food and dancing. In some regions, especially rural ones, couples spend their first married night in silence (no

touching or speaking), with relatives listening from the next room. The wedding is consummated on the second night instead.

On the third day of the wedding is the *bii seshanbe* ceremony, in which a bride's relatives come to visit her and present gifts of clothing for her husband's relatives. For 40 days following a wedding, the newly married couple receives guests at their home, where the bride welcomes them with a bow. She wears a different beautiful outfit, prepared as part of her dowry, each of these 40 days.

#### **Divorce**

Divorce is practically unheard of in rural areas, where few women could survive without the financial support of a husband. Divorce carries enormous social stigma in rural areas. Though divorce is fairly common in urban areas, women face social condemnation there too. Most women find it very difficult to remarry, as they are typically blamed for the failure of the union and, as they are no longer virgins, may be seen as unsuitable for marriage. Because most marriages are arranged, divorce can reflect negatively on the couple's families as well, who may try to intervene in order to prevent it.

### **Life Cycle**

#### **Birth**

Some traditional superstitions surround pregnancy. According to one, if a pregnant woman dreams of jewelry, gold, or *non* (traditional bread), she will give birth to a girl. Another holds that if a woman becomes more beautiful during pregnancy, she will have a boy, and if she becomes less so, she will have a girl.

When an infant is born to a Muslim family, those close to the parents gather for a celebration at which a *mullo* (religious leader) formally welcomes the child into the community. Guests also join in a meal, for which a sheep is slaughtered if the baby is a boy, and they bring gifts, which tend to be more lavish for boy babies than for girls. Russians generally have the baby baptized within a few days after birth.

The father and his family typically give the baby a name. Usually, they choose a relative's name or a name synonymous in meaning to that of a grandparent's. For example, if a grandfather's name is Jamshed (meaning "the great"), his grandson may be named Jasur (another word for "the great"). It is also common to name children after figures from the Islamic religious tradition.

Employed women are entitled to 140 days of maternity leave, 70 before they give birth and 70 after, at full pay. Mothers recover for a period of 40 days after giving birth, and only close relatives and friends are allowed to visit her and the baby. A woman's mother showers her with gifts throughout this recovery period, the most significant being a *gohvora* (a traditional cradle where the baby sleeps for the first year of life). The day that the baby is first placed in the *gohvora* is considered a holiday, and the extended family gathers in the baby's maternal grandparents' house to celebrate. The mother's family also plans a large celebration called a *tuybaron* for the baby's first birthday. If the baby is a boy, his father's family plans the party, called a *sartuyon*.

#### **Milestones**

At the age of four or five, Tajik boys are circumcised, and the family invites close friends and relatives to celebrate this initiation into manhood. Some parents wait until the boys are as old as fourteen in order to have time to save for the celebration. Socially, Tajik and Uzbek females are considered adults when they start menstruating; sexual maturity is the measure of adulthood for males. Eighteen is the legal age of adulthood.

#### **Death**

According to Muslim tradition, when someone dies, close relatives wash the body. The home of the deceased is then visited by relatives and friends before the body is taken to a mosque, where a *mullo* reads a burial service. Finally, the body is wrapped in white cloth and buried (without a coffin) in a cemetery. Only men may be present for the funeral procession and burial, and the body is buried within 24 hours of death.

On the third, eighth, and fortieth days after death, families of the deceased hold an open house (*hudo'i*) for visitors. These events are costly, as the families provide food to anyone who wishes to honor the dead. People eat and pray together while recalling the deceased's life. Visitors donate money to help offset the expenses, and the *mullo* says prayers for the deceased on behalf of those who have visited. These events are typically attended by the entire community.

#### **Diet**

The Tajik diet is comprised of vegetables (potatoes, cucumbers, carrots, peppers, and squash), fruits (especially grapes, melons, tomatoes, and apples), and meats (beef, mutton, and chicken) together with *non*. *Non* is a type of flat bread typically prepared in a clay oven (*tandor*). A favorite dish is *palav* (rice mixed with meat and carrots). Skewered meat (*shashlik*) is popular, as are pasta dishes (*mantu*) filled with various meats or squash.

Many people eat yogurt and other dairy products. Puddings and pies are common urban desserts. A traditional Tajik sweet dish is *halvo* (a paste of sugar and oil). Nuts and dried fruits (raisins, apricots) are served as snacks. Meals are followed by black or green tea. Tajikistan's urban residents enjoy a more varied diet than people in rural areas.

### **Recreation**

#### **Sports**

The most popular sport in Tajikistan is soccer. Other favorite sports include basketball, volleyball, and, in urban areas, tennis. Soccer and basketball are the main sports children play at school. Various martial arts and wrestling (*gushtingiri*) are also popular, including traditional Tajik wrestling, which male adults and children often take part in during large social events and traditional celebrations. Boxing has long been a popular sport and was state supported during Soviet times. Interest in the sport increased after Tajik Mavzuna Chorieva won the bronze medal at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games.

Men play *buzkashi* to celebrate the birth or circumcision of a son. In this rough polo-type game, teams of horsemen try to carry a goat carcass from one spot, through a set of poles, and back again. Players not in possession of the animal struggle to get it away from the man who has it; great horsemanship is

required. From the beginning of fall till the middle of winter, children may play a game called *lyangabozi*, where players compete to see who can kick a *lyanga* (a small piece of fleece weighted with a piece of lead) the most times in a row, using kicking methods that vary in style and complication.

### Leisure

Tajiks do not usually have much leisure time, though urban residents enjoy more than their rural counterparts. Urban Tajiks may watch television or go to movies. They also enjoy cultural events such as concerts featuring traditional and popular music and performances at the several theaters in Dushanbe. Young people enjoy eating at fast-food restaurants and spending time in city parks. In urban areas, they also frequent nightclubs and bars. As men grow older, they tend to spend more time involved in community discussions in mosques and teahouses.

Weddings, birthdays, and other such celebrations provide the main opportunities for leisure in rural areas. Radio broadcasts are also popular. Favorite summer activities include swimming in rivers and man-made lakes and having picnics around Dushanbe. Rural youth may travel to nearby cities to spend free time as well. Children often play with handmade toys made from ropes, pieces of fabric, and the like. Customarily, Tajiks sang while they worked, with different musical traditions existing for certain kinds of work (for example, agricultural, everyday chores, etc.), though this is no longer a common practice.

Tajiks, especially those living in rural areas, rarely take vacations. Instead, time off work is spent catching up on household tasks.

### The Arts

While Tajiks enjoy local arts, they also consider regional and Islamic arts a part of their heritage. Operas and concerts are performed in Dushanbe. In rural areas, the singing of *epos* (historical or legendary poems) was once a common pastime. A rich oral literature has allowed Tajik poems and stories to be passed down for generations. Many Tajiks enjoy dancing; special occasions include either a live band or music from CDs. Crafts such as jewelry, embroidery, ornamental paintings, pottery, and wood carvings flourished particularly before communist rule. These arts declined for decades but are now experiencing a robust revival.

### Holidays

National public holidays in Tajikistan include New Year's Day (1 January), Tajik National Army Day (23 February), International Women's Day (8 March), Victory Day (9 May, for World War II), Independence Day (9 September), and Constitution Day (6 November). *Id-i-Navruz* (Islamic New Year), *Id-i-Ramazon* (feast at the end of *Ramazon*, also known as *Eid al-Fitr*), and *Id-i-Qurbon* (Feast of the Sacrifice, also known as *Eid al-Adha*, honoring Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son) are national holidays whose dates are determined by the lunar calendar.

Most holiday celebrations involve fairs featuring food, music, and sports competitions. Decorations are usually kept to a minimum, but having a freshly cleaned house is considered important for special days. People often visit one

another dressed in traditional holiday clothing and share special meals of *oush* (a rice, carrot, and meat dish) and *shurbo* (a meat, potato, carrot, and pea soup).

### New Year's

New Year's is the largest holiday that is celebrated by all ethnicities in Tajikistan. Though in recent years some Tajiks have debated whether it should be a national holiday in a Muslim-majority country, New Year's remains an important symbol of the secular nature of the Tajik state.

On this holiday, people may hang garlands and decorate fir trees; a large tree topped with a crown to symbolize the Tajik people is displayed in the main square of Dushanbe. In the past, people would celebrate in the city center on the night of 31 December, taking pictures with costumed *Bodoi Barf* (Father Frost) figures and watching an official fireworks show. However, in 2015, the Tajik government took steps to move away from Russian and other non-Tajik cultural influences, banning fir trees, fireworks, and other festivities in public schools and universities. *Bodoi Barf* was banned from appearing on state television in 2013. However, Tajiks are free to celebrate the holiday as they wish in their own homes and may put up fir trees and light their own fireworks. Around midnight, gifts are exchanged and children open presents (usually toys) discretely left under the New Year's tree by *Bodoi Barf* earlier in the evening.

### Men's and Women's Days

Officially, Tajik National Army Day (known in other former republics of the Soviet Union as Defender of the Fatherland Day) celebrates the military forces of Tajikistan and features state-organized parades. In practice, however, it is a day for honoring men. On this day, men are congratulated and given gifts, though the holiday is celebrated in urban areas more than in rural ones. On International Women's Day, men give flowers and other presents to women they are close to, and those in urban areas may join for celebrations.

### Id-i-Navruz

*Id-i-Navruz* (also called *Nowruz*), which corresponds with the spring equinox, has roots in an ancient Zoroastrian agricultural festival, though most Tajiks today associate it with the Islamic New Year. There is an emphasis on prayer and cleanliness of thought and deed on this day, and celebrations feature a large meal. Much attention is given to the preparations of the dining table for this day. Apart from the dishes constituting the meal, seven dishes starting with the *s* or *sh* sound are laid on the table. Seven is considered a sacred number and also refers to the number of days in the week and the number of stars in the crown of the Tajik nation, in addition to other things.

The indispensable dish on this holiday is *sumunak*. To prepare the wheat used to make *sumanak*, the grain is placed in the bottom of a shallow dish of water about a week before the holiday so that it has time to sprout. The belief goes that the longer the sprouts, the better the harvest will be in the new year. The *sumanak* is then prepared by pounding the sprouts, combining them with flour and water, and cooking the mixture for 10 to 12 hours (while stirring it constantly).

### Id-i-Ramazon

*Id-i-Ramazon*, also known as *Eid al-Fitr*, is the most important Muslim holiday in Tajikistan. It occurs at the end

of *Ramazon* (also known as *Ramadan*), the month when God revealed the *Qu'ran* (Muslim holy book) to the prophet Muhammad and during which Muslims fast from sunrise to sundown. People get work off this day and visit relatives and friends, whom they greet with the words *Eid muborak* (Blessed holiday). Special prayers are said on this day, and some people donate food to the poor. Children go caroling from house to house.

## SOCIETY

### Government

#### Structure

The president serves as head of state for a seven-year term and holds the most executive authority. The prime minister is head of government and is responsible for the economy and infrastructure. Legislative power is vested in the bicameral Supreme Assembly (*Majlisi Oli*), which is divided into the National Assembly (*Majlisi Milli*) and the Assembly of Representatives (*Majlisi Namoyandogon*). The National Assembly has 34 members (25 selected by local leaders, 8 appointed by the president, and 1 reserved for the former president). The Assembly of Representatives has 63 elected members. Tajikistan is divided into five administrative regions, the largest of which (containing half the territory but less than 3 percent of the population) is the Autonomous Region of Badakhshoni Kuhi. Local leaders are appointed by the central government. The judicial branch is subject to outside influence.

#### Political Landscape

President Rahmon and his ruling People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT) have held virtually all political power since 1992. A former communist, President Rahmon espouses secularism, as does his party, though Muslim symbolism has been used to appeal to the largely Muslim Tajik population. Opposition parties have very little power and may face government persecution. In 2016, amendments to the constitution removed term limits for President Rahmon, lowered the age of presidential candidates to 30 years, and banned political parties—including the main opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT)—based on religion.

Traditional political activism is rare because, though the right to assembly is formally protected, in practice these actions lead to police brutality and government persecution of protesters. A high level of corruption at the local level often prevents citizen concerns communicated in formal channels from being passed on to decision makers. Instead, activists are increasingly turning to social media as a means of communication with the government. International organizations and non-profits play an important role in creating an agenda for reforms. Many Tajik political dissidents work from Russia.

#### Government and the People

The government fails to provide for even the most basic needs of its population, especially those living in rural areas. A lack of adequate infrastructure, including access to electricity, running water, and heat, is a serious problem. Health care,

though technically free to the public, is prohibitively expensive and, even for those who can afford it, inadequate. The government has also neglected the education and public transportation sectors. The government often offers small plots of land to rural state employees, such as teachers and doctors, in an effort to retain their services and compensate for the poor state of public housing.

Instead, the government focuses its resources on national and domestic security. The government derives most of its considerable popular support from the peace it maintains in light of the relatively recent civil war. It also places significant emphasis on the maintenance and regulation of religious, traditional, and patriotic practices. For example, state employees and students of all levels are expected to fully participate in all national celebrations, regularly sing the national anthem, and demonstrate familiarity with the meanings of Tajik national symbols. In addition, police ensure that family celebrations comply with governmentally approved formats that aim to curb the amount of money Tajik citizens spend on these types of events; for example, weddings may have no more than three hundred guests and last no longer than three hours.

Many Tajiks see the government as inefficient and corrupt at all levels. Society is rife with bribery, and even criminals may be able to pay their way out of jail. Tajik citizens try to limit their interactions with government bodies as much as possible; for example, some businesses are organized informally, without official licenses or tax identification numbers. People also bypass Tajik media sources, which are heavily controlled and censored by the government, in favor of more independent sources online.

Though all Tajiks can vote beginning at age 18, most citizens see elections as little more than a formality, as they are widely considered unfair and ruling candidates lack real opposition. One family member often casts a vote for the entire family. Freedom of religion is severely limited, as the secular government attempts to curb growing religiosity, especially among its Muslim citizens.

### Economy

The poorest of the former Soviet republics, Tajikistan is also one of the most rural; 43 percent of its people work in agriculture. Minerals (gold, iron, lead, mercury, bauxite, tin) and hydroelectric power from the mountains, together with cotton, silk, fruits, and vegetables, form the foundation of the economy. Unfortunately, the economy has suffered from civil war and the loss of Soviet-era trade and supply links. Tajikistan is highly dependent on imported goods and remittances from citizens working abroad, mainly in Russia. However, Tajikistan remains vulnerable to economic cycles that affect the amount of remittances from abroad.

Political instability made it nearly impossible to implement serious market reform after independence, although the government has worked to privatize small state businesses. The government has sought increased economic cooperation and trade with its major trading partner, Russia. The drug trade disrupts growth as it becomes more violent, attracts more labor, and addicts more young people. In 2000, the government changed the currency from the Tajik *ruble* to



the *somoni* (TJS).

### Transportation and Communications

Rural transportation needs are met primarily by walking or by riding tractors, horses, or donkeys. Automobiles account for the majority of passenger and freight transportation. Buses run between major towns, and some areas are connected by train. Urban residents use electric trolleys and buses and sometimes taxis and minibuses. A small government airline flies to otherwise inaccessible areas.

Nearly everyone in Tajikistan, including rural residents, has a cellular phone. Most people have televisions and radios. Several state-run television stations operate in Tajikistan. Radio stations are both state-run and privately owned. Programs are broadcast in Russian, Tajik, and Uzbek. Newspapers also print in these languages. The press is subject to heavy government restrictions and censorship. Only a small fraction of the population uses the internet. Many of those users turn to the internet for their news, though dozens of news websites opposed to the government are blocked to Tajik citizens, as are some social media sites. In recent years, access to the internet at home (rather than at internet cafés) has increased. Smartphones often provide some Tajiks with connection to the internet.

### Education

#### Structure

Education is mandatory from age seven to seventeen, but this requirement is difficult to enforce in rural areas. Primary education begins with first grade (at age seven) and ends with fourth grade. The secondary level begins with fifth grade. Students may choose to end their secondary education after ninth grade or extend it to eleventh grade. Those who only complete the basic level of secondary education (until ninth grade) may go on to vocational schools. Some institutes and universities offer preparatory schools for graduates of the basic level as well. Otherwise, graduation from the full secondary level is required for entrance to institutions of higher education.

Most schools in Tajikistan are public, though private ones (which are generally of higher quality than public ones) do exist. The state supports a limited number of religious Islamic schools, or *madrasahs*. Some students are homeschooled by *mullos* (clerics).

#### Access

Primary and secondary education is generally affordable and accessible for urban residents, though even public schools require a small monthly fee and some money toward textbooks. Rural access is limited by a lack of teachers and facilities. Some Tajiks form co-op groups, in which members contribute their own money to support teachers and repair school buildings. Rural education rates are further hampered by the fact that many children are kept home to work in order help their families survive in the face of poverty. Education for girls is especially undervalued, as it is seen as irrelevant to the traditional roles of housekeeping and child rearing.

#### School Life

Classes tend to be lecture based and rely on textbooks; students are often assigned to write individual papers.

Technological resources are extremely limited, and facilities are poor—many even lack heating. The subjects of math, literature, history, and languages (especially English and Russian) are emphasized. The curriculum is demanding, and secondary students are assigned several hours of homework a day; however, few spend that much time doing it. Cheating is common and considered expected behavior at school. Bribing teachers for higher grades is also a common practice.

Parents tend to be quite involved in their children's educations, with many attending monthly meetings to discuss academic performance and other matters. Students show teachers, as they do all those of older generations, respect, addressing them with the title *muallim* (teacher) or with the formal form of "you." Teachers and students have little to no interaction with each other outside the classroom. With the assistance of teachers, students organize several social events (dances, sporting events, humor competitions, and the like), which tend to be held toward the beginning and end of the school year.

#### Higher Education

Several private and public universities and institutes, as well as various technical and vocational schools, provide post-secondary education. Two of Tajikistan's major public universities include Tajik National University and the Tajik State Medical University, both located in Dushanbe. Students are admitted on the basis of their academic history and mandatory entrance exams, though bribery may also play a role. Many cannot afford to attend, however, and full scholarships, distributed on the basis of grades and test scores, are limited.

Young people often sacrifice for their education, leaving their close-knit families in villages to travel to cities to study and work. Though women are allowed to study at institutions of higher education, few of them do as a result of cultural expectations.

### Health

In 2003, a constitutional amendment eliminated the right to free health care for all citizens. Dispensaries staffed by paramedics and midwives are located in almost all rural villages, and hospitals or clinics are located in each district capital. However, traveling to a clinic or hospital can be difficult for rural residents, which prevents many from getting medical care. Most Tajiks travel to Dushanbe for serious health problems. Even there, the quality of healthcare services is very low. Trained medical personnel and supplies are seriously lacking, especially those related to diagnostic services. As a result, the emphasis is on treatment and hospitalization rather than prevention. International organizations are working with the Tajik government on educational initiatives and development projects to improve public health care. A private healthcare industry is growing, but prices are affordable for very few.

Due to poor prenatal care, poor sanitation, poverty, and the emigration of medical specialists, Tajikistan faces extremely high infant and maternal mortality rates. Many rural children suffer from iodine deficiencies due to inadequate diets. Tuberculosis endangers many, especially in rural areas. In remote areas, people often turn to traditional healing practices

(using herbal remedies and the like).

## AT A GLANCE

### Contact Information

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### Country and Development Data

Capital	Dushanbe
Population	8,604,882 (rank=96)
Area (sq. mi.)	55,251 (rank=94)
Area (sq. km.)	143,100
Human Development Index	127 of 188 countries
Gender Inequality Index	69 of 188 countries
GDP (PPP) per capita	\$3,200
Adult Literacy	100% (male); 100% (female)
Infant Mortality	31 per 1,000 births
Life Expectancy	68 (male); 74 (female)
Currency	Somoni

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# THE WORLD FACTBOOK

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[VIEW 2 PHOTOS OF UZBEKISTAN](#)



[Jump to topic](#)[Open All](#) [Close All](#)[Open All](#) [Close All](#)**Introduction :: UZBEKISTAN****Background:**

Uzbekistan is the geographic and population center of Central Asia. The country has a diverse economy and a relatively young population. Russia conquered and united the disparate territories of present-day Uzbekistan in the late 19th century. Stiff resistance to the Red Army after the Bolshevik Revolution was eventually suppressed and a socialist republic established in 1924. During the Soviet era, intensive production of "white gold" (cotton) and grain led to the overuse of agrochemicals and the depletion of water supplies, leaving the land degraded and the Aral Sea and certain rivers half-dry. Independent since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, the country has diversified agricultural production while developing its mineral and petroleum export capacity and increasing its manufacturing base, although cotton remains a major part of its economy. Uzbekistan's first president, Islam KARIMOV, led Uzbekistan for 25 years until his death in September 2016. His successor, former Prime Minister Shavkat MIRZIYOYEV, has improved relations with Uzbekistan's neighbors and introduced wide-ranging economic, judicial, and social reforms.

**Geography :: UZBEKISTAN****Location:**

Central Asia, north of Turkmenistan, south of Kazakhstan

**Geographic coordinates:**

41 00 N, 64 00 E

**Map references:**

Asia

**Area:**

**total:** 447,400 sq km

**land:** 425,400 sq km

**water:** 22,000 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** [58](#)

**Area - comparative:**

about four times the size of Virginia; slightly larger than California

**Area comparison map:****Land boundaries:**

**total:** 6,893 km

**border countries (5):** Afghanistan 144 km, Kazakhstan 2330 km, Kyrgyzstan 1314 km, Tajikistan 1312 km, Turkmenistan 1793 km

**Coastline:**

0 km (doubly landlocked); note - Uzbekistan includes the southern portion of the Aral Sea with a 420 km shoreline

**Maritime claims:**

none (doubly landlocked)

**Climate:**

mostly mid-latitude desert, long, hot summers, mild winters; semiarid grassland in east

**Terrain:**

mostly flat-to-rolling sandy desert with dunes; broad, flat intensely irrigated river valleys along course of Amu Darya, Syr Darya (Sirdaryo), and Zarafshon; Fergana Valley in east surrounded by mountainous Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; shrinking Aral Sea in west

**Elevation:**

**lowest point:** Sariqamish Kuli -12 m

**highest point:** Adelunga Toghi 4,301 m

**Natural resources:**

natural gas, petroleum, coal, gold, uranium, silver, copper, lead and zinc, tungsten, molybdenum

**Land use:**

**agricultural land:** 62.6% (2011 est.)

arable land: 10.1% (2011 est.) / permanent crops: 0.8% (2011 est.) / permanent pasture: 51.7% (2011 est.)

**forest:** 7.7% (2011 est.)

**other:** 29.7% (2011 est.)

**Irrigated land:**

42,150 sq km (2012)

**Population distribution:**

most of the population is concentrated in the fertile Fergana Valley in the easternmost arm of the country; the south has significant clusters of people, while the central and western deserts are sparsely populated

**Natural hazards:**

earthquakes; floods; landslides or mudslides; avalanches; droughts

**Environment - current issues:**

shrinkage of the Aral Sea has resulted in growing concentrations of chemical pesticides and natural salts; these substances are then blown from the increasingly exposed lake bed and contribute to desertification and respiratory health problems; water pollution from industrial wastes and the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides is the cause of many human health disorders; increasing soil salination; soil contamination from buried nuclear processing and agricultural chemicals, including DDT

**Environment - international agreements:**

**party to:** Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands

**signed, but not ratified:** none of the selected agreements

**Geography - note:**

along with Liechtenstein, one of the only two doubly landlocked countries in the world

**People and Society :: UZBEKISTAN****Population:**

30,023,709 (July 2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [46](#)

**Nationality:**

**noun:** Uzbekistani

**adjective:** Uzbekistani

**Ethnic groups:**

Uzbek 83.8%, Tajik 4.8%, Kazakh 2.5, Russian 2.3%, Karakalpak 2.2%, Tatar 1.5%, other 4.4% (2017 est.)

#### Languages:

Uzbek (official) 74.3%, Russian 14.2%, Tajik 4.4%, other 7.1%

**note:** in the autonomous Karakalpakstan Republic, both the Karakalpak language and Uzbek have official status

#### Religions:

Muslim 88% (mostly Sunni), Eastern Orthodox 9%, other 3%

#### Age structure:

**0-14 years:** 23.61% (male 3,631,957 /female 3,457,274)

**15-24 years:** 17.85% (male 2,735,083 /female 2,623,511)

**25-54 years:** 44.95% (male 6,714,567 /female 6,781,485)

**55-64 years:** 8.15% (male 1,156,462 /female 1,289,703)

**65 years and over:** 5.44% (male 698,610 /female 935,057) (2018 est.)

population pyramid:



#### Dependency ratios:

**total dependency ratio:** 47.7 (2015 est.)

**youth dependency ratio:** 41.4 (2015 est.)

**elderly dependency ratio:** 6.2 (2015 est.)

**potential support ratio:** 16 (2015 est.)

#### Median age:

**total:** 29.1 years

**male:** 28.5 years

**female:** 29.7 years (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [128](#)

#### Population growth rate:

0.91% (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [119](#)

#### Birth rate:

16.6 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [108](#)

#### Death rate:

5.4 deaths/1,000 population (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [183](#)

#### Net migration rate:

-2.1 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [165](#)

#### Population distribution:

most of the population is concentrated in the fertile Fergana Valley in the easternmost arm of the country; the south has

significant clusters of people, while the central and western deserts are sparsely populated

**Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 50.5% of total population (2018)

**rate of urbanization:** 1.28% annual rate of change (2015-20 est.)

**Major urban areas - population:**

2.464 million TASHKENT (capital) (2018)

**Sex ratio:**

**at birth:** 1.06 male(s)/female

**0-14 years:** 1.05 male(s)/female

**15-24 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female

**25-54 years:** 0.99 male(s)/female

**55-64 years:** 0.9 male(s)/female

**65 years and over:** 0.75 male(s)/female

**total population:** 0.99 male(s)/female (2018 est.)

**Mother's mean age at first birth:**

23.4 years (2014 est.)

**Maternal mortality rate:**

36 deaths/100,000 live births (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 109

**Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 17.4 deaths/1,000 live births

**male:** 20.7 deaths/1,000 live births

**female:** 14 deaths/1,000 live births (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 90

**Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 74.3 years

**male:** 71.2 years

**female:** 77.5 years (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 126

**Total fertility rate:**

1.75 children born/woman (2018 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 161

**Drinking water source:**

**improved:**

urban: 98.5% of population

rural: 80.9% of population

total: 87.3% of population

**unimproved:**



urban: 1.5% of population

rural: 19.1% of population

total: 12.7% of population (2012 est.)

**Current Health Expenditure:**

6.2% (2015)

**Physicians density:**

2.37 physicians/1,000 population (2014)

**Hospital bed density:**

4 beds/1,000 population (2013)

**Sanitation facility access:**

**improved:**

urban: 100% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 100% of population (2015 est.)

total: 100% of population (2015 est.)

**unimproved:**

urban: 0% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 0% of population (2015 est.)

total: 0% of population (2015 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**

0.3% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 89

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**

52,000 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 59

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**

1,900 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 54

**Obesity - adult prevalence rate:**

16.6% (2016)

country comparison to the world: 123

**Education expenditures:**

6.4% of GDP (2017)

country comparison to the world: 26

**Literacy:**

**definition:** age 15 and over can read and write (2016 est.)

**total population:** 100%

**male:** 100%

**female:** 100% (2016 est.)

**School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):**





**total:** 12 years

**male:** 12 years

**female:** 12 years (2017)

**Government :: UZBEKISTAN**

**Country name:**



**conventional long form:** Republic of Uzbekistan

**conventional short form:** Uzbekistan

**local long form:** O'zbekiston Respublikasi

**local short form:** O'zbekiston

**former:** Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic

**etymology:** a combination of the Turkic words "uz" (self) and "bek" (master) with the Persian suffix "-stan" (country) to give the meaning "Land of the Free"

**Government type:**



presidential republic; highly authoritarian

**Capital:**



**name:** Tashkent (Toshkent)

**geographic coordinates:** 41 19 N, 69 15 E

**time difference:** UTC+5 (10 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

**Administrative divisions:**



12 provinces (viloyatlar, singular - viloyat), 1 autonomous republic\* (avtonom respublikasi), and 1 city\*\* (shahar); Andijon Viloyati, Buxoro Viloyati [Bukhara Province], Farg'ona Viloyati [Fergana Province], Jizzax Viloyati, Namangan Viloyati, Navoiy Viloyati, Qashqadaryo Viloyati (Qarshi), Qoraqalpog'iston Respublikasi [Karakalpakstan Republic]\* (Nukus), Samarqand Viloyati [Samarkand Province], Sirdaryo Viloyati (Guliston), Surxondaryo Viloyati (Termiz), Toshkent Shahri [Tashkent City]\*\*, Toshkent Viloyati [Tashkent Province], Xorazm Viloyati (Urganch)

**note:** administrative divisions have the same names as their administrative centers (exceptions have the administrative center name following in parentheses)

**Independence:**



1 September 1991 (from the Soviet Union)

**National holiday:**



Independence Day, 1 September (1991)

**Constitution:**



**history:** several previous; latest adopted 8 December 1992

**amendments:** proposed by the Supreme Assembly or by referendum; passage requires two-thirds majority vote of both houses of the Assembly or passage in a referendum; amended several times, last in 2017 (2018)

**Legal system:**



civil law system

**International law organization participation:**



has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICt

**Citizenship:**



**citizenship by birth:** no

**citizenship by descent only:** at least one parent must be a citizen of Uzbekistan

**dual citizenship recognized:** no

**residency requirement for naturalization:** 5 years

#### Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

#### Executive branch:

**chief of state:** President Shavkat MIRZIYOYEV (interim president from 8 September 2016; formally elected president on 4 December 2016 to succeed longtime President Islom KARIMOV, who died on 2 September 2016)

**head of government:** Prime Minister Abdulla ARIPOV (since 14 December 2016); First Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Transport Achilbay RAMATOV (since 15 December 2016)

**cabinet:** Cabinet of Ministers appointed by the president with most requiring approval of the Senate chamber of the Supreme Assembly (Oliy Majlis)

**elections/appointments:** president directly elected by absolute majority popular vote in 2 rounds if needed for a 5-year term (eligible for a second term; previously a 5-year term, extended by a 2002 constitutional amendment to 7 years, and reverted to 5 years in 2011); election last held on 4 December 2016 (next to be held in 2021); prime minister nominated by majority party in legislature since 2011, but appointed along with the ministers and deputy ministers by the president

**election results:** Shavkat MIRZIYOYEV elected president in first round; percent of vote - Shavkat MIRZIYOYEV (LDPU) 88.6%, Hotamjon KETMONOV (NDP) 3.7%, Narimon UMAROV (Adolat) 3.5%, Sarvar OTAMURODOV (Milliy Tiklanish/National Revival) 2.4%, other 1.8%

#### Legislative branch:

**description:** bicameral Supreme Assembly or Oliy Majlis consists of: Senate (100 seats; 84 members indirectly elected by regional governing councils and 16 appointed by the president; members serve 5-year terms)

Legislative Chamber or Qonunchilik Palatasi (150 seats; members directly elected in single-seat constituencies by absolute majority vote with a second round, if needed; members serve 5-year terms)

#### elections:

Senate - last held 13-14 January 2015 (next to be held in 2020)

Legislative Chamber - last held on 21 December 2014 and 4 January 2015 (next to be held in December 2019)

#### election results:

Senate - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - NA; composition - men 83, women 17, percent of women 17%

Legislative Chamber - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - LDPU 52, National Revival Democratic Party 36, NDP 27, Adolat 20, Ecological Movement 15; composition - men 126, women 24, percent of women 16%; note - total Supreme Assembly percent of women 16.4%

**note:** all parties in the Supreme Assembly support President Shavkat MIRZIYOYEV

#### Judicial branch:

**highest courts:** Supreme Court (consists of 67 judges organized into administrative, civil, criminal, and economic sections); Constitutional Court (consists of 7 judges)

**judge selection and term of office:** judges of the highest courts nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate of the Oliy Majlis; judges appointed for initial 5-year term and can be reappointed for subsequent 10-year and lifetime terms

**subordinate courts:** regional, district, city, and town courts

#### Political parties and leaders:

Ecological Party of Uzbekistan (O'zbekiston Ekologik Partivasi) [Boriy ALIKHANOV]

Justice (Adolat) Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan [Narimon UMAROV]

Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (O'zbekiston Liberal-Demokratik Partiyasi) or LDPU [Aktam HAITOV]

National Revival Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (O'zbekiston Milliy Tiklanish Demokratik Partiyasi) [Sarvar OTAMURATOV]

People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (Xalq Demokratik Partiyas) or NDP [Hotamjon KETMONOV] (formerly Communist

Party)

#### International organization participation:



ADB, CICA, CIS, EAPC, EBRD, ECO, FAO, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (national committees), ICt, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, Interpol, IOC, ISO, ITSO, ITU, MIGA, NAM, OIC, OPCW, OSCE, PFP, SCO, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO (observer)

#### Diplomatic representation in the US:



**chief of mission:** Ambassador Javlon VAHOBOV (since 29 November 2017)

**chancery:** 1746 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036

**telephone:** [1] (202) 887-5300

**FAX:** [1] (202) 293-6804

**consulate(s) general:** New York

#### Diplomatic representation from the US:



**chief of mission:** Ambassador Daniel ROSENBLUM (since 24 May 2019)

**embassy:** 3 Moyqo'rq'on, 5th Block, Yunusobod District, Tashkent 100093

**mailing address:** use embassy street address

**telephone:** [998] (71) 120-5450

**FAX:** [998] (71) 120-6335

#### Flag description:



three equal horizontal bands of blue (top), white, and green separated by red fimbriations with a vertical, white crescent moon (closed side to the hoist) and 12 white, five-pointed stars shifted to the hoist on the top band; blue is the color of the Turkic peoples and of the sky, white signifies peace and the striving for purity in thoughts and deeds, while green represents nature and is the color of Islam; the red stripes are the vital force of all living organisms that links good and pure ideas with the eternal sky and with deeds on earth; the crescent represents Islam and the 12 stars the months and constellations of the Uzbek calendar

#### National symbol(s):



khumo (mythical bird); national colors: blue, white, red, green

#### National anthem:



**name:** "O'zbekiston Respublikasining Davlat Madhiyasi" (National Anthem of the Republic of Uzbekistan)

**lyrics/music:** Abdulla ARIPOV/Mutal BURHANOV

**note:** adopted 1992; after the fall of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan kept the music of the anthem from its time as a Soviet Republic but adopted new lyrics

## Economy :: UZBEKISTAN

#### Economy - overview:



Uzbekistan is a doubly landlocked country in which 51% of the population lives in urban settlements; the agriculture-rich Fergana Valley, in which Uzbekistan's eastern borders are situated, has been counted among the most densely populated parts of Central Asia. Since its independence in September 1991, the government has largely maintained its Soviet-style command economy with subsidies and tight controls on production, prices, and access to foreign currency. Despite ongoing efforts to diversify crops, Uzbek agriculture remains largely centered on cotton; Uzbekistan is the world's fifth-largest cotton exporter and seventh-largest producer. Uzbekistan's growth has been driven primarily by state-led investments, and export of natural gas, gold, and cotton provides a significant share of foreign exchange earnings.

Recently, lower global commodity prices and economic slowdowns in neighboring Russia and China have hurt Uzbekistan's trade and investment and worsened its foreign currency shortage. Aware of the need to improve the investment climate, the government is taking incremental steps to reform the business sector and address impediments to foreign investment in the

country. Since the death of first President Islam KARIMOV and election of President Shavkat MIRZIYOYEV, emphasis on such initiatives and government efforts to improve the private sector have increased. In the past, Uzbek authorities accused US and other foreign companies operating in Uzbekistan of violating Uzbek laws and have frozen and seized their assets.

As a part of its economic reform efforts, the Uzbek Government is looking to expand opportunities for small and medium enterprises and prioritizes increasing foreign direct investment. In September 2017, the government devalued the official currency rate by almost 50% and announced the loosening of currency restrictions to eliminate the currency black market, increase access to hard currency, and boost investment.

#### **GDP (purchasing power parity):**



\$223 billion (2017 est.)

\$211.8 billion (2016 est.)

\$196.5 billion (2015 est.)

**note:** data are in 2017 dollars

**country comparison to the world:** [63](#)

#### **GDP (official exchange rate):**



\$48.83 billion (2017 est.)

#### **GDP - real growth rate:**



5.3% (2017 est.)

7.8% (2016 est.)

7.9% (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [44](#)

#### **GDP - per capita (PPP):**



\$6,900 (2017 est.)

\$6,700 (2016 est.)

\$6,300 (2015 est.)

**note:** data are in 2017 dollars

**country comparison to the world:** [158](#)

#### **Gross national saving:**



32.7% of GDP (2017 est.)

25.4% of GDP (2016 est.)

27.6% of GDP (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [24](#)

#### **GDP - composition, by end use:**



**household consumption:** 59.5% (2017 est.)

**government consumption:** 16.3% (2017 est.)

**investment in fixed capital:** 25.3% (2017 est.)

**investment in inventories:** 3% (2017 est.)

**exports of goods and services:** 19% (2017 est.)

**imports of goods and services:** -20% (2017 est.)

#### **GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**



**agriculture:** 17.9% (2017 est.)

**industry:** 33.7% (2017 est.)

**services:** 48.5% (2017 est.)

**Agriculture - products:**

cotton, vegetables, fruits, grain; livestock

**Industries:**

textiles, food processing, machine building, metallurgy, mining, hydrocarbon extraction, chemicals

**Industrial production growth rate:**

4.5% (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [67](#)

**Labor force:**

18.12 million (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [32](#)

**Labor force - by occupation:**

**agriculture:** 25.9%

**industry:** 13.2%

**services:** 60.9% (2012 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**

5% (2017 est.)

5.1% (2016 est.)

**note:** official data; another 20% are underemployed

**country comparison to the world:** [75](#)

**Population below poverty line:**

14% (2016 est.)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

**lowest 10%:** 2.8%

**highest 10%:** 29.6% (2003)

**Distribution of family income - Gini index:**

36.8 (2003)

44.7 (1998)

**country comparison to the world:** [85](#)

**Budget:**

**revenues:** 15.22 billion (2017 est.)

**expenditures:** 15.08 billion (2017 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

31.2% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [74](#)

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

0.3% (of GDP) (2017 est.)



**country comparison to the world:** [42](#)

**Public debt:**

24.3% of GDP (2017 est.)

10.5% of GDP (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [178](#)

**Fiscal year:**

calendar year

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

12.5% (2017 est.)

8% (2016 est.)

**note:** official data; based on independent analysis of consumer prices, inflation reached 22% in 2012

**country comparison to the world:** [208](#)

**Central bank discount rate:**

9% (2016)

9% (2015)

**country comparison to the world:** [36](#)

**Commercial bank prime lending rate:**

16% (31 December 2016 est.)

11.2% (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [31](#)

**Stock of narrow money:**

\$4.173 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$7.729 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [110](#)

**Stock of broad money:**

\$4.173 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$7.729 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [115](#)

**Stock of domestic credit:**

\$5.558 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$11.63 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [128](#)

**Market value of publicly traded shares:**

\$NA (31 December 2012)

\$715.3 million (31 December 2006)

**country comparison to the world:** [108](#)

**Current account balance:**

\$1.713 billion (2017 est.)

\$384 million (2016 est.)



**country comparison to the world:** [43](#)

**Exports:**

\$11.48 billion (2017 est.)

\$11.2 billion (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [85](#)

**Exports - partners:**

Switzerland 38.7%, China 15.5%, Russia 10.7%, Turkey 8.6%, Kazakhstan 7.7%, Afghanistan 4.7% (2017)

**Exports - commodities:**

energy products, cotton, gold, mineral fertilizers, ferrous and nonferrous metals, textiles, foodstuffs, machinery, automobiles

**Imports:**

\$11.42 billion (2017 est.)

\$10.92 billion (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [95](#)

**Imports - commodities:**

machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, ferrous and nonferrous metals

**Imports - partners:**

China 23.7%, Russia 22.5%, Kazakhstan 10.7%, South Korea 9.8%, Turkey 5.8%, Germany 5.6% (2017)

**Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:**

\$16 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$14 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [65](#)

**Debt - external:**

\$16.9 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$16.76 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [101](#)

**Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:**

NA

**Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad:**

NA

**Exchange rates:**

Uzbekistani soum (UZS) per US dollar -

3,906.1 (2017 est.)

2,966.6 (2016 est.)

2,966.6 (2015 est.)

2,569.6 (2014 est.)

2,311.4 (2013 est.)

**Energy :: UZBEKISTAN**

**Electricity access:**

**electrification - total population:** 100% (2016)

**Electricity - production:**

55.55 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [52](#)

**Electricity - consumption:**

49.07 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [50](#)

**Electricity - exports:**

13 billion kWh (2014 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [15](#)

**Electricity - imports:**

10.84 billion kWh (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [23](#)

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

12.96 million kW (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [54](#)

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

86% of total installed capacity (2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [69](#)

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [206](#)

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

14% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [109](#)

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

0% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [212](#)

**Crude oil - production:**

46,070 bbl/day (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [54](#)

**Crude oil - exports:**

27,000 bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [46](#)

**Crude oil - imports:**

420 bbl/day (2015 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [81](#)

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

594 million bbl (1 January 2018 est.)





country comparison to the world: [44](#)

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

61,740 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [78](#)

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

60,000 bbl/day (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: [95](#)

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

3,977 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [95](#)

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: [215](#)

**Natural gas - production:**

52.1 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [15](#)

**Natural gas - consumption:**

43.07 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [22](#)

**Natural gas - exports:**

9.401 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [22](#)

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [207](#)

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

1.841 trillion cu m (1 January 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: [18](#)

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**

95.58 million Mt (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [46](#)

**Communications :: UZBEKISTAN**

**Telephones - fixed lines:**

total subscriptions: 3,444,330

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 12 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: [41](#)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**

total subscriptions: 24,265,460

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 82 (2017 est.)



**country comparison to the world:** [51](#)

### Telephone system:



**general assessment:** digital exchanges in large cities and in rural areas; increased investment in infrastructure and growing subscriber base; fixed-line is underdeveloped due to preeminence of mobile market; growth in broadband penetration in the future; Wi-Fi hotspot in the city of Tashkent in the future (2018)

**domestic:** fixed-line 12 per 100 person and mobile-cellular 82 per 100; the state-owned telecommunications company, Uzbek Telecom, owner of the fixed-line telecommunications system, has used loans from the Japanese government and the China Development Bank to upgrade fixed-line services including conversion to digital exchanges; mobile-cellular services are provided by 2 private and 3 state-owned operators with a total subscriber base of 22.8 million as of January 2018 (2018)

**international:** country code - 998; linked by fiber-optic cable or microwave radio relay with CIS member states and to other countries by leased connection via the Moscow international gateway switch; the country also has a link to the Trans-Asia-Europe (TAE) fiber-optic cable; Uzbekistan has supported the national fiber-optic backbone project of Afghanistan since 2008

### Broadcast media:



the government controls media; 17 state-owned broadcasters - 13 TV and 4 radio - provide service to virtually the entire country; about 20 privately owned TV stations, overseen by local officials, broadcast to local markets; privately owned TV stations are required to lease transmitters from the government-owned Republic TV and Radio Industry Corporation; in 2019, the Uzbek Agency for Press and Information was reorganized into the Agency of Information and Mass Communications and became part of the Uzbek Presidential Administration with recent appointment of the Uzbek President's elder daughter as its deputy director (2019)

### Internet country code:



.uz

### Internet users:



**total:** 13,791,083

**percent of population:** 46.8% (July 2016 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [42](#)

### Broadband - fixed subscriptions:



**total:** 3,320,210

**subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:** 11 (2017 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** [36](#)

## Transportation :: UZBEKISTAN

### National air transport system:



**number of registered air carriers:** 2 (2015)

**inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers:** 29 (2015)

**annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers:** 2,486,673 (2015)

**annual freight traffic on registered air carriers:** 114,334,520 mt-km (2015)

### Civil aircraft registration country code prefix:



UK (2016)

### Airports:



53 (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** [89](#)

### Airports - with paved runways:



**total:** 33 (2013)

**over 3,047 m:** 6 (2013)

**2,438 to 3,047 m:** 13 (2013)

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 6 (2013)

**914 to 1,523 m:** 4 (2013)

**under 914 m:** 4 (2013)

**Airports - with unpaved runways:**



**total:** 20 (2013)

**2,438 to 3,047 m:** 2 (2013)

**under 914 m:** 18 (2013)

**Pipelines:**



13,700 km gas, 944 km oil (2016)

**Railways:**



**total:** 4,642 km (2018)

**broad gauge:** 4,642 km 1.520-m gauge (1,684 km electrified) (2018)

**country comparison to the world:** [42](#)

**Roadways:**



**total:** 86,496 km (2000)

**paved:** 75,511 km (2000)

**unpaved:** 10,985 km (2000)

**country comparison to the world:** [56](#)

**Waterways:**



1,100 km (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** [62](#)

**Ports and terminals:**



**river port(s):** Termiz (Amu Darya)

**Military and Security :: UZBEKISTAN**

**Military branches:**



Armed Forces: Army, Air and Air Defense Forces, National Guard (2019)

**Military service age and obligation:**



18 years of age for compulsory military service; 1-month or 1-year conscript service obligation for males; moving toward a professional military, but conscription in some form will continue; the military cannot accommodate everyone who wishes to enlist, and competition for entrance into the military is similar to the competition for admission to universities; note - widely considered to have one of the strongest militaries in Central Asia, although it is untested (2019)

**Transnational Issues :: UZBEKISTAN**

**Disputes - international:**



prolonged drought and cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan created water-sharing difficulties for Amu Darya river states; field demarcation of the boundaries with Kazakhstan commenced in 2004; border delimitation of 130 km of border with Kyrgyzstan is hampered by serious disputes around enclaves and other areas

**Refugees and internally displaced persons:**



**stateless persons:** 79,942 (2018)

### Trafficking in persons:



**current situation:** Uzbekistan is a source country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and women and children subjected to sex trafficking; government-compelled forced labor of adults remained endemic during the 2014 cotton harvest; despite a decree banning the use of persons under 18, children were mobilized to harvest cotton by local officials in some districts; in some regions, local officials forced teachers, students, private business employees, and others to work in construction, agriculture, and cleaning parks; Uzbekistani women and children are victims of sex trafficking domestically and in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Asia; Uzbekistani men and, to a lesser extent, women are subjected to forced labor in Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine in the construction, oil, agriculture, retail, and food sectors

**tier rating:** Tier 2 Watch List – Uzbekistan does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so; law enforcement efforts in 2014 were mixed; the government made efforts to combat sex and transnational labor trafficking, but government-compelled forced labor of adults in the cotton harvest went unaddressed, and the decree prohibiting forced child labor was not applied universally; official complicity in human trafficking in the cotton harvest remained prevalent; authorities made efforts to identify and protect sex and transnational labor victims, although a systematic process is still lacking; minimal efforts were made to assist victims of forced labor in the cotton harvest, as the government does not openly acknowledge the existence of this forced labor; the ILO did not have permission or funding to monitor the 2014 harvest, but the government authorized the UN's International Labour Organization to conduct a survey on recruitment practices and working conditions in agriculture, particularly the cotton sector, and to monitor the 2015-17 cotton harvests for child and forced labor in project areas (2015)

### Illicit drugs:



transit country for Afghan narcotics bound for Russian and, to a lesser extent, Western European markets; limited illicit cultivation of cannabis and small amounts of opium poppy for domestic consumption; poppy cultivation almost wiped out by government crop eradication program; transit point for heroin precursor chemicals bound for Afghanistan

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## Uzbekistan country profile



The land that is now Uzbekistan was once at the heart of the ancient Silk Road trade route connecting China with the Middle East and Rome.

The country spent most of the past 200 years as part of the Russian Empire, and then of the Soviet Union, before emerging as an independent state when Soviet rule ended in 1991.

Under authoritarian President Islam Karimov, who ruled from 1989 until his death in 2016, Uzbekistan was reliant on exports of cotton, gas and gold to maintain its rigid, state-controlled economy. President Karimov's successor, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has made efforts to break Uzbekistan out of its international isolation and economic stagnation, but has yet to initiate any serious political liberalisation.

- Read more **country profiles** - Profiles by **BBC Monitoring**

## FACTS

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### Republic of Uzbekistan

**Capital:** Tashkent

**Population** 32 million

**Area** 447,400 sq km (172,700 sq miles)

**Major languages** Uzbek, Russian, Tajik

**Major religion** Islam

**Life expectancy** 68 years (men), 74 years (women)

**Currency** Uzbek som

UN, World Bank

# LEADER

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**President: Shavkat Mirziyoyev**



Image copyright [Getty Images](#)

Shavkat Mirziyoyev served President Islam Karimov loyally as prime minister from 2003 to 2016, when he moved smoothly into the presidency via a deal between senior government power-brokers.

He moved swiftly to restore relations with neighbouring countries in Central Asia, as well as Russia, China and the United States, and sought to boost foreign investment in the moribund, state-run economy.

President Mirziyoyev has been more cautious on the political reform front, but had managed to out-manoeuvre and replace all senior Karimov-era officials by early 2018, in particular the powerful security chief Rustam Inoyatov.

# MEDIA



01	SO'NGI Y...
02	XXI ASR AX 2015-06-10
03	DAVLATCH 2014-12-26
04	MUAMMOL 2015-01-26
	SOG'LOM A...

Image copyright Huriyat Image caption Uzbek media operate under tight restrictions

Uzbekistan is one of Central Asia's biggest media markets. TV is the most popular medium. The government broadcaster operates the main national networks.

Most media outlets are linked directly or indirectly to the state.

Around 50% of the population is online. The authorities have steadily tightened their grip on the internet, says Reporters Without Borders.

## TIMELINE

### Some key dates in Uzbekistan's history:

**1st century BC** - Central Asia, including present-day Uzbekistan, forms an important part of the overland trade routes known as the Great Silk Road linking China with the Middle East and imperial Rome.

**13th-14th centuries** - Central Asia conquered by Genghis Khan and becomes part of Mongol empire.

**18th-20th centuries** - Russians take over vast areas of Central Asia, and Bolsheviks retain control of the region. **1989** - Islam Karimov becomes leader of Uzbek Communist Party, and remains in power beyond independence in 1991.

**2001** - Uzbekistan allows US to use its air bases for action in Afghanistan.

**2005** - Troops open fire on demonstrators in city of Andijan, killing hundreds of people. Western condemnation and sanctions prompt government to move towards Russian and Chinese orbits.

**2016** - Islam Karimov dies in office. Successor Shavkat Mirziyoyev eases relations with neighbours, and promotes economic liberalisation.

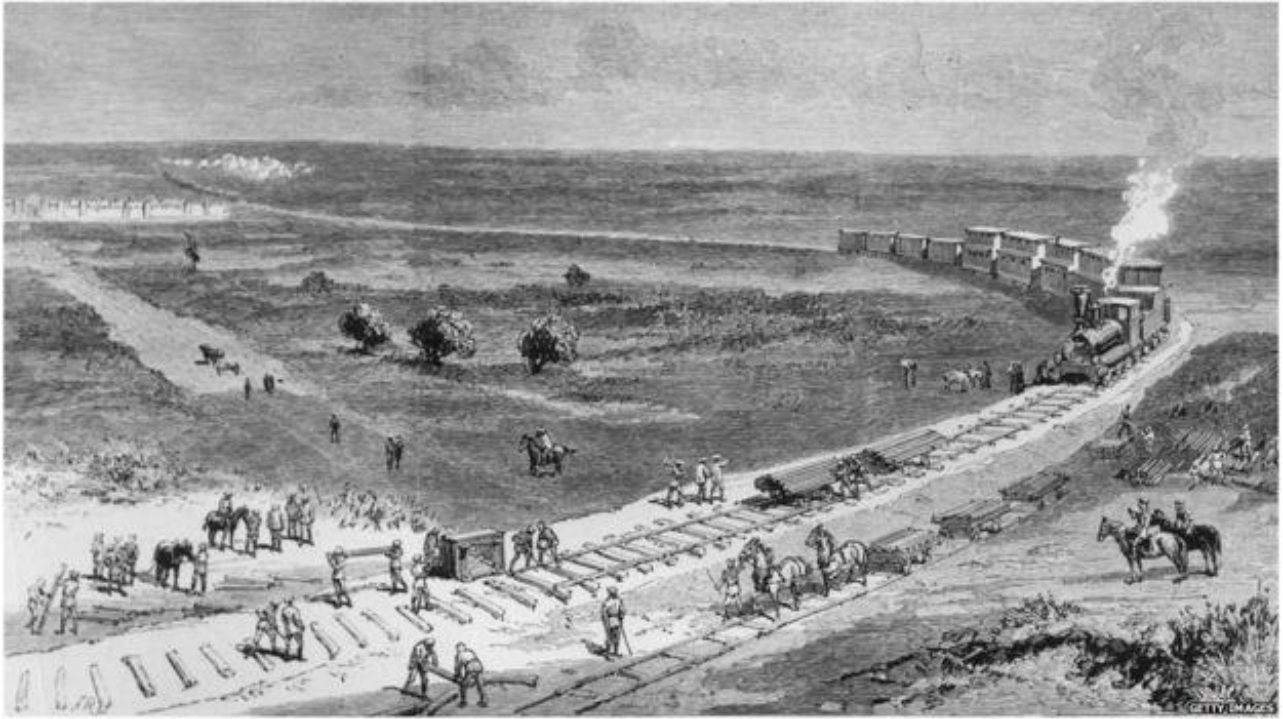


Image copyright [Getty Images](#) Image caption The Trans-Caspian Railway, connecting the Caspian Sea to what is now Uzbekistan, was built in the 19th century, during the Russian Empire's expansion into Central Asia





Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

## BACKGROUND

### Land and Climate

Located in central Asia, Uzbekistan covers an area slightly larger than Morocco or the U.S. state of California. Mountains dominate the east. The Karakum and Kyzyl Kum deserts are rich in gold, natural gas, and oil. The fertile Fergana Valley, located between the Tien Shan and Alay mountains, is a favorite herding destination and is home to endangered species such as the bighorn sheep and the snow leopard.

In its drive to produce cotton, the Soviet Union diverted the Aral Sea's primary-source rivers (Amu Darya and Syr Darya) for irrigation. This and other practices severely damaged Uzbekistan's environment. Water and soil are polluted by pesticides and herbicides; soil salinity levels are too high; a once healthy fishing industry has been destroyed; and the Aral Sea has been reduced to a dead sea, unable to support the fish, animals, or humans it once did. Today, the Aral Sea covers only about 10 percent of its pre-Soviet area.

Uzbekistan's continental climate is marked by long, hot summers from May to September and short, cold winters. Summer temperatures often reach above 100°F (40°C), and winter temperatures dip below 20°F (-6°C).

### History

#### *Early Nomads and Conquerors*

The earliest known inhabitants of what is now Uzbekistan were Iranian nomads. In the sixth century BC, the region now known as Uzbekistan fell under Persian rule and was divided

into the states of Bactria, Soghdiana, and Khorezm. In the late fourth century BC, Alexander the Great conquered Soghdiana and introduced Hellenic culture. He made Samarkand his capital. It, along with Bukhara and Khiva, became important cities on the Silk Road trade route between China and Europe.

In AD 712, Arabian armies introduced Islam and Arabic. A century later, conquering Persian Samanids turned Bukhara into a center of Islamic culture. The rich Silk Road cities were well known to outsiders, and in 1212, Mongol warrior Genghis Khan invaded and plundered them. The trade route recovered, and Tamerlane (Timur the Great) came to power in Samarkand in 1370. From his many successful military campaigns, he brought home spoils of war and gifted artisans to embellish his capital. His grandson Ulugbek ruled in peace and prosperity from 1409 to 1449 and made many significant contributions to astronomy.

#### *Khanates and the Great Game*

With the discovery of ocean routes, Silk Road cities declined in importance. By the 19th century, they were divided between the Khan of Khiva, the Emir of Bukhara, and the Khan of Kokand. These independent states soon took on a value they did not seek—strategic value to the Great Powers of Britain and Russia. Britain desired to create markets for its goods and establish a buffer zone between India and potential Russian invaders. Imperial Russia, on the other hand, sought to expand its influence, borders, and markets. Britain and Russia's struggle to control central Asia became known as the Great Game.

#### *Soviet Rule*

Russia finally prevailed, following its treaties with troops and settlers. Not long after the 1917 Russian Revolution, the new

Soviet regime divided central Asia (previously called Turkestan) into five separate republics, drawing borders that cut through tribes, hunting and herding areas, and agricultural lands. Uzbekistan became a Soviet republic in 1925.

A resistance movement (called Basmachi) that was formed in the Fergana Valley was crushed in 1926. The collectivization campaign of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin forced nomads and others onto collective cotton farms. Traditional farming practices and grazing patterns were ignored and most camels, yaks, and sheep died. Uzbekistan was designated a supplier of cotton, natural gas, gold, and other minerals. During World War II, Stalin sent many groups (including Meskhetian Turks from the Georgian republic) to Uzbekistan as punishment for alleged conspiracy with the Germans.

In the 1980s, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's political and economic reforms rekindled both a sense of cultural identity and ethnic tensions. Uzbeks in the Fergana Valley killed more than one hundred Meskhetian Turks in 1989. This attack and other riots prompted Gorbachev to replace the Tashkent Communist Party leader with Islam Karimov, who was officially elected president in 1990.

#### *Independence and Karimov Rule*

With the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, Uzbekistan declared its independence. A referendum in 1995 extended Karimov's first term until 2000, when he won reelection unopposed. Karimov's government ruled with a heavy hand to combat dissent, but violent opposition to his regime escalated when a wave of bombings shook Tashkent in March 2004 and security forces clashed with government opponents in Andijon in May 2005. The government subsequently imprisoned or expelled many activists.

President Karimov won presidential elections that many claimed were fraudulent in 2007 and again in 2015. When Karimov died in office in September 2016, elections that December brought Shavkat Mirziyoyev—Karimov's prime minister—to power as president.

#### *Recent Events and Trends*

- **Security service shakeup:** In January 2018, President Mirziyoyev dismissed General Rustam Inoyatov as chief of the National Security Service, an intelligence service that controls many aspects of Uzbek life. Inoyatov had served as security chief for 23 years and was one of Uzbekistan's most powerful figures. His dismissal is generally seen as part of a series of reforms Mirziyoyev has undertaken since his 2016 election.
- **Political prisoners freed:** In March 2018, journalist Yusuf Ruzimuradov was freed after serving 19 years in prison on sedition charges. The previous year saw the release of political activist Rustam Usmanov, who also served 19 years in prison. Since coming to power, President Mirziyoyev has approved the release of at least 20 political prisoners as part of an effort by the new administration to appear less authoritarian.
- **Deputy Prime Minister dismissed:** In October 2018, Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Zoyir Mirzayev was dismissed over a scandal involving the public humiliation of a group of farmers. Mirzayev forced the farmers to stand in an irrigation ditch for half an hour for failing to water the wheat fields on

time. That same day, six other farmers were made to carry large rocks around as punishment for the poor state of the fields on their farm. The state owns much of the farmland in Uzbekistan and frequently manages agricultural production. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev quickly dismissed Mirzayev, citing zero tolerance for forced labor.

## THE PEOPLE

### Population

Uzbeks comprise the bulk (80 percent) of the population, though Russians (6 percent), Tajiks (5 percent), Kazakhs (3 percent), Karakalpaks (3 percent), Tatars (2 percent), a small number of Koreans, and others also live in Uzbekistan. Tashkent, the capital, is home to slightly less than 10 percent of the population. Other large cities include Samarkand, Bukhara, Namangan, and Andijon. While Uzbekistan's overall urban population is growing slower than the rural population, many cities are growing at high rates.

### Language

Uzbek is the native language of most of the population. It is a Turkic language that is similar to other central Asian languages such as Kazakh and Turkmen. Arabic, Farsi, and Russian have all influenced the Uzbek language. Tajik, a language related to Farsi, is spoken around Bukhara and Samarkand. About 14 percent of all people speak Russian as a native language. It is particularly common in Tashkent. Russian was the official language before 1990 and is still the language of business, government, and cross-border communication. Increasingly, local governments, businesses, and state institutions of higher education are requiring the use of Uzbek. In the 1920s, Uzbek traded its Arabic script for the Latin alphabet. In the 1930s, the Soviets universally implemented a Cyrillic script. Though older Uzbeks continue to use the Cyrillic alphabet, the younger generation mainly uses the Latin one, which is universally used in Uzbek schools.

### Religion

The majority (88 percent) of Uzbekistanis are Muslims (mostly Sunni). Russians generally are Eastern Orthodox Christians. During the Soviet era, many mosques and Muslim schools were closed and torn down. Though people ceased to worship publicly, their faith was preserved through private traditional ceremonies such as weddings and funerals.

Upon gaining independence, Uzbekistan lifted most restrictions on public worship. Islam slowly began gaining strength. In the decade after independence, thousands of mosques were built. While many Uzbekistani Muslims are not active worshipers, others are embracing various (even competing) Islamic sects. People in the Fergana Valley tend to be more religious than in the rest of the country. The government, which is secular, is generally wary of Islamic fundamentalism and has moved to control the growth of Islam's influence. For example, Muslim women are often discouraged from wearing the Islamic headscarf in public places, and Islamic books not approved by the government

are forbidden.

### General Attitudes

Central Asians historically have been and continue to be wary of strangers. However, tradition dictates that guests in the home be treated with utmost respect and that they be given the best a family has to offer. Even unexpected visitors are greeted warmly with *Hush Kelibsiz* (Welcome). The importance of hospitality is captured in the Uzbek phrase *Mehmon otangdan ulug*, which means "A guest is greater than your father."

Uzbekistanis are usually caring and open with their friends. The distinction between different kinds of friends is carefully made in syntax. The word for "friend" (*dost* in Uzbek; *droog* in Russian) indicates a very close relationship. Most Uzbekistanis have only three or four close friends, for whom they will do anything. For example, family and friends often help each other secure jobs or promotions. Most Uzbekistanis also have a large network of acquaintances.

In Uzbekistan, ethnicity is important to one's identity. If a person's great-great-grandparents were born in Tatarstan (in present-day Russia), even though the person has never been outside of Uzbekistan, he or she is, first and foremost, Tatar. Each ethnic group associates other ethnicities with different characteristics, both good and bad. Patriotism is evident in the pride Uzbekistanis show for their history, traditions, holidays, and national dishes.

### Personal Appearance

In urban areas, Uzbekistani men and women typically wear a mix of Western-style and traditional clothing. Russian men and women tend to be less conservative and more Western in their choice of clothing and hairstyles.

Men usually wear Western-style suits in formal situations. Casual wear for young men consists of slacks, jeans, or jogging suits. Older men may wear *chaponlar* (long, open, quilted robes), and many men wear a *do'ppi* (squarish skullcap with a traditional design that identifies the wearer's home region). Younger men may wear traditional robes and a skullcap during the winter or for special occasions.

Uzbek women tend to wear long cotton dresses or skirts that cover their knees. In some regions, they often wear colorful headscarves, especially if they are married. Muslim women cover their hair with the Islamic headscarf. Traditional dresses, often worn on special occasions, are made of *atlas* (colorful patterned silk) and worn over baggy pants. For holidays, women also wear small caps embroidered with sequins and gold thread. Women prefer long hair; they usually wear it up but might arrange it into several small braids on holidays.

## CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

### Greetings

Uzbekistanis generally greet each other with a series of questions about the other's well-being and family. Men shake hands with great vigor, and women sometimes hug or kiss both cheeks two or three times. Men often place their left

hand over their heart during a handshake to express sincerity. Men usually do not make physical contact with women.

A formal greeting, spoken especially by a person of lower status or age to a higher person, is *Assalaam 'alaikum* (May peace be unto you). The proper response is *Wa 'alaikum assalaam* (And peace be upon you). Informally, greeters may exchange the shorter *Salaam* (Peace). *Yakshimisiz?* (Are you well?) and *Kandaisiz?* (How are you?) are other common Uzbek greetings. Russians are more likely to greet one another with *Zdravstvuyte* (polite form of "Hi") and a handshake.

Uzbeks address strangers using familial labels, though the specific terms used vary by region. If the stranger is close to someone's own age, they may be addressed with the term *aka* (big brother) or *opa* (big sister). *Ota* (grandfather) and *ona* (grandmother) are used for the elderly. Friends and acquaintances add these terms after the first name of the person they are addressing. Russians usually address each other by first name. In formal situations, they add a patronymic (father's first name with the suffix *-ovich* for a son or *-ovna* for a daughter). Many Uzbekistanis who used this form of address during the Soviet era are dropping the suffixes but retaining their father's first name as a middle name. So, Anver Salievovich becomes *Anver Saliev*. The youth simply use first names.

### Gestures

Men and women tend to avoid public displays of affection. As a gesture of friendship, women often hook arms or hold hands in public, and men may drape their arms around each other's shoulders. Showing or pointing the sole of the foot is considered impolite. It is considered unclean to eat or drink with the left hand.

### Visiting

Visiting is essential to Uzbeks' social life. Friends may drop in any time of day. Upon entering a home, guests remove their shoes and might be provided with house slippers. Invited guests may arrive with a gift of bread, sweets, or drinks. Flowers are usually given on special occasions such as birthday or anniversary parties. Gifts are given in even numbers, as odd numbers are considered bad luck. *Choi* (tea, usually green) is always served to guests along with some sort of snack—including *non* (flat bread), fruits, and nuts.

*Choi* is extremely important. The host brings the teapot to the table and pours one cup. He ceremonially pours it back and repeats this process two more times. These three rounds signify *loi* (mud), *moi* (butter), and *choi*. The host then serves tea to guests, pouring it into small cups with the right hand and gently supporting the right elbow with the left hand. In the Tashkent region, it is considered rude to pour a full cup of tea, as this means the host wishes the guest to leave.

Visitors arriving at mealtime are invited to stay and eat. Tea usually is served before and after the meal. Long, elaborate toasts wishing health, long life, success, and happiness to all usually accompany the drinking of liquor.

### Eating

Meals are usually a family affair. Most businesses and

government offices close from noon to 1 p.m. so people can go home for the main meal. Uzbekistanis serve dishes on common platters set in the middle of a low table or on a *dasturkhon* (cloth spread on the floor). Individuals sit on patterned *korpacha* (mats) and lean against pillows. They eat with spoons or sometimes, when eating *palov* (a rice dish) for example, with the right hand. Russian and some urban Uzbek homes have Western-style tables. Tradition dictates that hosts repeatedly encourage guests to eat more, urging them to *Oling, oling* (Take, take). Compliments on the food are expected. *Non* (traditional Uzbek bread) is served at most meals and should be broken with both hands. Placing *non* face down on the table is believed to bring bad luck.

Previously scarce, restaurants are growing in popularity. Many still choose to eat at the more traditional outdoor *choihona* (tearoom or café). In villages, men are usually the only ones to eat and drink at these cafés. Customers remove their shoes and sit on a *suru* (raised platform with a table in the center and mats for sitting).

## LIFESTYLE

### Family

Uzbek families tend to be larger than Russian families, and several generations may share a household. Extended family members often live in the same town. Men are considered the head of the family, but women (usually grandmothers) make daily household decisions. Children are often raised by their grandparents. Children live at home until married, at which time the newlyweds move in with the groom's parents. Urban families may help a couple buy an apartment. The youngest married son is responsible for taking care of aging parents. His wife is the family's least senior member and, as such, does most of the housework.

In urban areas, both wife and husband typically work outside the home. Rural women may work on cotton farms. Uzbekistani women face many challenges, including domestic violence and cultural expectations that limit their rights in marriage, divorce, and education.

### Housing

Traditional rural, walled family compounds surround a common courtyard. Different buildings, animal pens, and sheds line the inside of the wall. Children do not usually have their own rooms, and the whole family often sleeps on mats in the same room. In the summer, everyone sleeps and eats on *surular* (platforms) in the courtyard. Urban families tend to live in Soviet-built "micro-regions" (concrete apartment complexes) that have their own shops and sometimes a small food bazaar. Some urban dwellers own a small cottage, or *dacha*, in the country, where they can relax and tend a garden. Most Uzbekistanis own their homes or apartments unless they are living away from their hometowns, in which case they may rent. People save for many years to buy land and build their own homes.

## Dating and Marriage

### Dating and Courtship

Uzbekistanis traditionally do not approve of casual dating, and families arrange marriages. Russians date and choose their spouses. Young people usually meet at school, at work, or through mutual friends. Though some youth might date in secret, normally if a young man is interested in someone, he will let his parents know, and they will arrange a meeting with the girl and her family. If the couple does not know each other, parents will allow the young man and woman to meet a few times, while chaperoned, before they decide to marry. The class, ethnicity, location, and reputation of a girl and her family are considered important when choosing a spouse. If any of these factors differ greatly between the two families, one or both sets of parents are unlikely to approve of the marriage. Parents begin collecting dowry items for the marriage while daughters are still young. Most Uzbekistanis marry in their early to mid-twenties. Sexual relations between same-sex partners are illegal. LGBT people have no protections against discrimination.

### Weddings

Couples must register their marriage at a government office and sign a marriage license, usually with just a few family members and friends present. Some couples may also have a religious wedding, presided over by a *mullah* (Muslim religious leader).

On the wedding day, the groom goes to the bride's home to perform some traditional wedding rituals, like praying with a *mullah*. After that, the bride's family and friends send the couple off with well wishes, happy cries, and traditional singing. The couple then drives around and takes wedding pictures. Urban couples place flowers at various monuments in the city. At rural weddings, the couple may perform a traditional dance around a fire. The bride and groom wear elaborate *chaponlar* (long, open, quilted robes) and traditional square hats during the wedding ceremony and often change into Western clothes (a suit and white dress) for their wedding party.

Uzbek wedding parties are large and expensive affairs held in the family courtyard, in a restaurant, or in a rented wedding hall. Guests dance to live music, eat, give speeches, make toasts, and eat and dance some more. Wealthy families hire popular singers to perform at weddings. In some cases, guests "pay" dancing guests for their "performances," and the dancers pass this money on to the new couple. New brides are kept inside the groom's family compound for about 40 days after the wedding, usually wearing traditional Uzbek attire.

### Divorce

Divorced women have more stigmas attached to them than divorced men do. Children of divorced parents usually live with their mother, and the father pays alimony. Divorced men can remarry with ease and often have large weddings, while divorced women have fewer options. If women do remarry, the ceremony is very simple and private.

## Life Cycle

### Birth

Births are celebrated life events. Parents usually prefer a boy over a girl, because a son is considered necessary for

continuing the family line. Within seven days of a birth, a *mullah* (Muslim religious leader) visits to read a prayer for the baby. To protect the newborn from the "evil eye," he or she is not allowed to be seen by anyone outside the immediate family for 40 days. If the baby is a family's first child, the maternal grandparents bring clothes, a cot, a stroller, and other gifts. Because a *beshtik* (traditional cradle) is among the presents, the *to'y* (celebration) of the baby's arrival is called the *beshtik-to'y*.

A boy's circumcision usually takes place sometime between infancy and age three. At a party in the boy's honor, a sheep is slaughtered, and the boy is dressed in robes adorned with gold embroidery. He is placed on a horse, and guests give him money or place it in a bag on the saddle. To save expenses, many families have the circumcision coincide with the *beshtik-to'y*.

### **Death**

Following a death, relatives and close friends gather at the home of the deceased, where the women say their good-byes. The body is then buried in a cemetery by male relatives and friends; women do not attend. Close relatives of the deceased wear traditional attire to the funeral. For 40 days, women cover their heads with scarves and avoid wearing jewelry and brightly colored clothes. Family members also avoid entertainment during this period of mourning. Mourners gather on the third, seventh, twentieth, and fortieth days after the burial to hear a *mullah* read a prayer. Food is prepared for visitors on each of these occasions. On each Thursday during the 40-day period, male relatives read from the *Qu'ran* (Muslim holy book) together.

### **Diet**

The most important elements in the Uzbekistani diet are rice, potatoes, and meat (usually mutton but also beef and chicken). Common spices include black pepper, cumin, mint, and red chilies. *Palov*, the national dish, generally is made with rice, meat, and carrots. Another popular dish is *shashlik* (grilled skewered meat), which is traditionally prepared by men. *Manti* are dumplings with meat or vegetables. *Chalop*, a refreshing cold yogurt soup, is often eaten during the summer, when bazaars are full of vegetables (eggplant, squash, cucumbers) and fruits (berries, melons, quinces, apples, pears, plums, apricots, peaches, grapes, tomatoes). Nearly all families preserve fruits and vegetables for the winter. Many grow their own produce in gardens or on plots of land outside town.

### **Recreation**

#### **Sports**

Soccer is the most popular sport, and almost every town has a stadium. Wrestling, boxing, tennis, volleyball, and karate are also common. Boys enjoy basketball and tend to idolize U.S. basketball stars. Girls and boys play sports in school, but Uzbekistani women do not traditionally participate in organized sports. On special occasions, men play traditional *kup-kari*, a polo-like sport in which participants on horseback attempt to carry a sheep carcass to a central goal without having it taken away by their competitors.

#### **Leisure**

Uzbekistanis like to watch television. Most people prefer Uzbek, Turkish, Latin American, and Korean soap operas and U.S. action movies. Uzbek, Turkic, Indian, and Western pop music are popular. Both young and old Uzbekistanis like playing chess and checkers. Young people enjoy going to a movie, eating ice cream at an outdoor café, and then walking along the streets in the evenings. About once a month, friends meet for a *gap*, a chance to catch up socially. A person may attend separate *gaps* with each of their social circles, such as work colleagues and school friends.

#### **Vacation**

Wealthy Uzbekistanis may travel to places like Russia or Turkey, but not many Uzbekistanis can afford to travel abroad. For vacation, most people visit relatives in different cities or villages, picnic in the mountains, or sightsee at popular historical cities like Tashkent, Bukhara, or Samarkand.

### **The Arts**

Bright colors and symbolic shapes adorn much of Uzbek folk arts and crafts. Embroidery, especially with gold thread, is quite popular and often decorates household goods, linens, and clothing. Other crafts include wood carvings, pottery, and wall hangings. Traditional musical instruments include the *doira* (drum-like tambourine) and the *rubab* (two-string guitar). Many children learn to play instruments, sing, or dance at an early age. Instrumental ensembles usually accompany vocalists, who improvise on folk themes. Each region has its own traditional dances that depict aspects of daily life, such as picking cotton. Many ancient structures are characteristic of medieval Islamic architecture. The government encourages the preservation of historic buildings through a restoration initiative.

### **Holidays**

The largest national holiday is *Navruz* (New Year) in the spring; the town square or park in each community comes alive with speeches, bands, food, and booths from schools and workplaces. Traditional foods like *sumalak*, a thick porridge made from sprouted wheat, are prepared all day. People continue to celebrate New Year's Eve (31 December) in the Russian tradition, with parties and sometimes a decorated tree. Eastern Orthodox Christians observe Christmas on 7 January. Muslim holidays are set according to the lunar calendar. Among them is a day of feasting at the end of *Ramazan*, the holy month of fasting, and *Qurban Khait* (Day of Sacrifice), which honors Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. Uzbekistanis observe International Women's Day (8 March) by giving women and girls presents and flowers. Independence Day is 1 September.

## **SOCIETY**

### **Government**

#### **Structure**

Uzbekistan is a republic with a strong authoritarian president. The president, who is elected to a five-year term, is head of state and appoints the prime minister, who is head of

government. The bicameral parliament (*Oliy Majlis*, or Supreme Assembly) consists of a Senate (the upper house) and a Legislative Chamber (the lower house). In the 100-seat Senate, 84 members are elected by regional councils and 16 are appointed by the president. Members of the 150-seat Legislative Chamber (*Qonunchilik Palatasi*) are mostly elected by popular vote (15 seats are reserved for the new Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan). All Supreme Assembly members serve five-year terms. Women hold 16 percent of the seats in the parliament's lower house and 17 percent of Senate seats.

### **Political Landscape**

The Supreme Assembly is dominated by the center-right Liberal Democratic Party. Only pro-government parties are allowed to field candidates for parliamentary elections. Opposition parties are illegal, and many opposition groups are forced to operate in exile. Corruption is found throughout all levels of government. The government has faced international criticism for its media censorship, human-rights violations, and harassment of opposition groups. However, reforms under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev have led to some improvements.

### **Government and the People**

Despite recent reforms, the government remains repressive and is still considered a consolidated authoritarian regime. The legislature and judiciary have limited power and essentially serve as instruments of the executive branch. Though guaranteed by the constitution, freedoms of press, assembly, and speech are still restricted in practice. Journalists, protestors, and civil society groups that speak out against the government are sometimes targets of harassment, beatings, and arrests. International monitors have characterized previous elections as unfair and uncompetitive. The voting age is 18.

### **Economy**

Uzbekistan is one of the world's largest producers of cotton and gold. The country also has substantial uranium deposits. Uzbekistan's main exports are cotton, gold, and natural gas. Manufacturing focuses on textiles; food processing; fertilizers; and machinery for irrigation, farming, and textiles. Other industries are not well developed.

After independence, Uzbekistan tried to support inefficient state enterprises and shield consumers from the shocks of rapid economic reform. These policies eventually led to severe inflation and economic crisis. Since the election of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, steps have been taken to expand opportunities for small and medium businesses and to reduce barriers to foreign investment. Other economic reforms include modernizing the agriculture sector and strengthening the independence of the Central Bank. Despite these reforms, state interference in the economy remains the rule. Remittances sent from migrant laborers working abroad, mainly in Russia, are an important revenue source. The currency is the *soum* (UZS).

### **Transportation and Communications**

Most of the people in Uzbekistan travel by bus. Larger cities have minibuses, trolleys, and streetcars, and Tashkent has a subway. Many families own a car, although gasoline is expensive and sometimes difficult to obtain. Since public transportation tends to be overcrowded, all private cars are potential taxis; passengers usually barter for the fee. Official taxis are also available. Most Uzbekistanis can afford the cost of travel by train but usually not by air.

Telephone lines often do not extend to rural areas. However, inexpensive cellular phones are growing in popularity in these areas and throughout the country. Internet usage is becoming more common, with many people going online with their cellular phones. Yet few people own personal computers, and internet connections are usually slow, with wireless technology uncommon. The most popular news sources include newspapers and television programs. Though coverage of social problems such as corruption has increased, the media continues to be controlled and censored by the government.

### **Education**

Eleven years of primary and secondary education are compulsory. All children begin school at age six or seven, although some attend kindergarten at five. Students attend primary school for four years, followed by two cycles of secondary school. Lower secondary, or secondary general education, consists of grades 5 through 9. Following that, students may attend two to three years of upper education at either general or technical vocational schools.

Common school subjects include math, history, Uzbek, science, art, religion, and *odobnoma* (etiquette class). Most teachers are women and not well paid. Teachers (instead of parents) are believed to carry the primary responsibility for a child's education. Uzbekistan has both Uzbek and Russian schools, but Russian students are required to learn Uzbek. Students must pass entrance exams for universities and technical schools. Students who get low or average scores on the entrance exam pay tuition each semester, but students with high scores attend university for free.

### **Health**

Citizens of Uzbekistan are entitled to free public health care, and each town has at least one hospital and different specialty clinics. However, most facilities lack modern equipment and medicine, so patients must provide their own medicine and supplies. Many prefer to treat themselves at home rather than risk catching diseases in hospitals or being treated by undertrained doctors. Those who can afford it seek higher-quality medical care at private hospitals or may travel abroad. Some Uzbekistanis consult traditional healers.

## **AT A GLANCE**

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### **Contact Information**

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**Country and Development Data**

Capital	Tashkent
Population	30,023,709 (rank=46)
Area (sq. mi.)	172,742 (rank=56)
Area (sq. km.)	447,400
Human Development Index	107 of 188 countries
Gender Inequality Index	59 of 188 countries
GDP (PPP) per capita	\$6,900
Adult Literacy	100% (male); 100% (female)
Infant Mortality	17 per 1,000 births
Life Expectancy	69 (male); 74 (female)
Currency	Uzbekistan Sum

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