



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a country in West Asia and the Middle East, comprising of the majority of the Arabian Peninsula. The country borders Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the U.A.E, Oman, and Yemen.

King: Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud

Capital: Riyadh

Other notable cities: Jeddah, Mecca, Medina

Gov Type: Absolute Monarchy

Population: 35.3 million

History: Ottoman Empire (16th Cent.), Former British Protectorate (1915-1932)

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is about 2,149,690 sq km in total area, which is slightly larger than one-fifth the size of the United States, and has 2,640 km of coastline.

The climate is harsh, filled with dry desert with great temperature extremes and the terrain is mostly sandy desert.

Natural resources include petroleum natural gas, iron ore, gold, and copper. Land use is divided between agricultural land (80.7%), forest (0.5%) and other uses (18.8%).

There are natural hazards such as frequent sand and dust storms. Fortunately, despite the numerous volcanic formations, there has been very little activity in the past few centuries.

Economy and Politics

MAL FACT SHEET



DEMOGRAPHICS

Noun: Saudi(s)

Adjective: Saudi or Saudi Arabian

Ethnic Groups: 90% Arab, 10% Afro-Asian

Languages: Arabic (Official)

Religions: Muslim (Official; 10-12% Shia, 85-90% Sunni), Other (Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh)

Literacy: 97.6% (Male 98.6%, Female 96%)

Saudi Arabia has a large expatriate community which consists of more than 30% of the population, however, non-Muslims are not allowed to have Saudi citizenship.

ECONOMY AND GDP

Saudi Arabia's economy is described as a high-income, oil-based Middle Eastern economy. The economy is diversifying its portfolio, there are declining per-capita incomes, a young labor force, key human capital gaps, heavy bureaucracy, increasing corruption, substantial poverty, and a low innovation economy.

Real GDP (Purchasing Power Parity): \$2.89 trillion (2026)

Real GDP Growth Rate: 3.1% (2026)

Real GDP Per Capita (PPP) : \$78,810 (2026)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate): \$1.39 trillion (2026)

Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices): 2.3% (2026)

GDP - Composition: 2.5% Agriculture (2019), 45.7% Industry (2019), 49.1% Services (2019)

Unemployment Rate: 3.5% (2026)

Youth Unemployment: 10.1% (2026)

MAIN POLITICAL CONTENTIONS

Saudi Arabia has been criticized numerous times by other countries due to the lack of political freedom under the absolute monarchy in place. Political parties are outlawed, political dissent is illegal, and activist from civil and political rights organizations have been jailed and penalized. Most recently, the Saudi government came under fire for the murder of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi, because of which the U.S. filed a lawsuit which was later dismissed. There is also controversy over religious freedoms, as the public practice of any religion other than Islam is strictly prohibited. In addition to religious freedom, Saudi Arabia has a controversial record regarding gender equality and supporting women's rights. Saudi Arabia does however have female representatives in government.

Internationally, Saudi Arabia has maintained good relations with the West, partially due to Westerns dependence on oil exports from the Kingdom, as well as due to Saudi Arabia's anti-communist stance during the Cold War. Now, the country maintains a strong relationship with China as well as the U.S., with King Abdullah as the first Saudi head of state to visit China. With Iran, however, relations are strained. These tensions have existed historically due to their different sects of Islam. Moreover, recently tensions have rose between UAE and Saudi Arabia, arising from several conflicts including Yemen, willingness to align with Islamic extremist groups, and foreign policy dealignment.

Saudi Arabia: A Timeline



