



SUMMARY

The United Arab Emirates is located on the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula bordering Saudi Arabia to the south west and Oman to the south east with the Persian Gulf on the northern coast.

Chief of State: President MUHAMMAD BIN ZAYID Al Nuhayyan

Capital: Abu Dhabi

Other notable cities: Dubai

Gov Type: federation of monarchies

Population: 10,032,213

Colonial History: In the 16th century, the Portuguese established a presence in the Arabian Gulf, including what is now the UAE. By the 19th century, Britain emerged as a dominant colonial power in the region, due to its strategic interests in safeguarding sea lanes to India. The Trucial States (now the Emirates) entered into a series of maritime truces with Britain, beginning in the early 19th century, which granted Britain exclusive control over their foreign affairs. These arrangements ensured protection but limited the sovereignty of the Emirates. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, British influence in the Trucial States increased with political agents (residents) stationed in the region. Negotiations with Britain led to the withdrawal of British forces from the Gulf region by December 1971. On December 2, 1971, the UAE formally gained independence from Britain and formed a federation of seven Emirates. (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, Fujairah, and Ras Al Khaimah)

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The United Arab Emirates is about 83,600 square kilometers in total area and has zero square kilometers of water but has 1,318 kilometers of coastline.

The climate is desert but can be cooler in eastern mountains.

The terrain is flat, barren coastal plain merging into rolling sand dunes of vast desert. There are also mountains in the east.

Natural resources include petroleum and natural gas.

The United Arab Emirates

DEMOGRAPHICS

Noun: Emirati(s)

Adjective: Emirati

Ethnic Groups: Emirati 11.6%, South Asian 59.4% (Indian 38.2%, Bangladeshi 9.5%, Pakistani 9.4%, other 2.3%), Egyptian 10.2%, Filipino 6.1%, other 12.8%
Languages: Arabic (Official), English, Hindi, Malayalam, Urdu, Pashto, Tagalog, Persian

Religion: Muslim 74.5% (official) (Sunni 63.3%, Shia 6.7%, other 4.4%), Christian 12.9%, Hindu 6.2%, Buddhist 3.2%, agnostic 1.3%, other 1.9% (2020)

Literacy: 98.1% (Male 98.8%, Female 97.2%)

Population growth is at 0.6%.

ECONOMY AND GDP

Historically, the UAE is an oil-driven economy. Now the UAE strives to diversify into trade-oriented logistics, build strong foreign investments, and grow the banking sector.
(Note: due to the conflict in Gaza, the UAE has been changing its economic linkages with Israel, which continually changes data)

Real GDP (Purchasing Power Parity): \$1.01 trillion (2026), \$707.307 billion (2022), \$655.823 billion (2021)

Real GDP Growth Rate: 3.1% (2026), 7.85% (2022), 4.35% (2021)

Real GDP Per Capita: \$79, 228 (2024)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate): \$621 billion (2026)

Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices): 1.7 % (2024), 1.7% (2023), 4.83% (2022)

GDP - Composition: agriculture: 0.9% (2017), industry: 49.8% (2017), services: 49.2% (2017)

Unemployment Rate: 2.2% (2025), 2.2% (2024), 2.2% (2023), 2.97% (2022)

Youth Unemployment: 10.7% (2021)

MAIN POLITICAL CONTENTIONS

The UAE continues to navigate a complex regional landscape marked by geopolitical rivalries and shifting alliances. It has been actively involved in regional conflicts and proxy wars, including in Yemen and Libya. In December 2025, the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) took control of the Hadramawt and Mahra governorates from the internationally recognized and Saudi-backed Presidential Leadership Council (PLC). In response, the Saudi's requested that the UAE limit its involvement in Yemen.

Domestically, the UAE is undertaking ambitious economic reforms aimed at diversifying its economy away from oil dependency. This transition involves promoting sectors such as tourism, finance, technology, and renewable energy. However, the pace and impact of these reforms pose challenges, particularly in terms of employment and social welfare.

The UAE is a federal absolute monarchy with a unique political system where each emirate retains considerable autonomy under a federal framework. While political participation is limited, the government has implemented measures to enhance governance efficiency and promote citizen engagement through initiatives like the National Agenda and Vision 2021.

The UAE has pursued an assertive foreign policy aimed at projecting influence in the broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. At times, the Emiratis used their deep pockets to project their power over the region, and at times, clashed with other regional powers to the furtherance of its own goals.

Executive Summary

United Arab Emirates: A Timeline

