



## Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and home to Islam's two holiest shrines in Mecca and Medina. The king's official title is the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The modern Saudi state was founded in 1932 by Abd Al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman Al Saud (Ibn Saud) after a 30-year campaign to unify most of the Arabian Peninsula. One of his male descendants rules the country today, as required by the country's 1992 Basic Law. Major terrorist attacks in May and November 2003 spurred a strong ongoing campaign against domestic terrorism and extremism.

From 2005 to 2015, King Abdallah incrementally modernized the Kingdom. He introduced a series of social and economic initiatives, including expanding employment and social opportunities for women, attracting foreign investment, increasing the role of the private sector in the economy, and discouraging businesses from hiring foreign workers. Saudi Arabia saw protests during the 2011 Arab Spring among Shia Muslims in the Eastern Province, who protested primarily against the detention of political prisoners, endemic discrimination, and Bahraini and Saudi Government actions in Bahrain.

The government held its first-ever elections in 2005 and 2011, when Saudis went to the polls to elect municipal councilors. In December 2015, women were allowed to vote and stand as candidates for the first time in municipal council elections, with 21 women winning seats. King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud ascended to the throne in 2015 and placed the first next-generation prince, Muhammed Bin Naif bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, in the line of succession as Crown Prince. He designated his son, Muhammed Bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, as the Deputy Crown Prince. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia led a coalition of 10 countries in a military campaign to restore the government of Yemen, which had been ousted by Huthi forces allied with former president Ali Abdullah al-Salih. The war in Yemen has led to civilian casualties and shortages of basic supplies, which has drawn considerable international criticism. In December 2015, Deputy Crown Prince Muhammed Bin Salman announced Saudi Arabia would lead a 34-nation Islamic Coalition to fight terrorism. In January 2016, Saudi Arabia executed 47 people on charges of terrorism, including Shia Muslim cleric Nimr al-Nimr. Iranian protesters overran Saudi diplomatic facilities in Iran to protest al-NIMR's execution and the Saudi government responded by cutting off diplomatic ties with Iran.

(CIA Factbook, [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print\\_sa.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print_sa.html) )

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### Physical Geography

**Official Name:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Region:** Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, north of Yemen

**Size in Square Kilometers:** 2,149,690 sq km

**Bordering Countries:** Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, UAE, Yemen

**Climate:** Desert climate, characterized by extreme heat during the day, an abrupt drop in temperature at night, and very low annual rainfall

### Cultural Geography

**Population:** 27,752,316 (July 2015 est.)

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

**Official Language:** Arabic (official)

9. What is your country's capital? What are some of its major cities? Capital: Riyadh; Jedda, Medina, Mecca

10. How would you describe the quality of life for the average person living in your country? Above Average

### Political Geography

**Founded:** 1932

**Type of Government:** Absolute Monarchy

**Country's Leaders:**

**King:** Salman bin Abdulaziz

**Crown Prince:** Mohammad bin Nayef

**Country's Military:** 12.6% of GDP (2015)

**Allies:** USA, Pakistan

**Enemies:** Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Israel, North Korea, Russia, Bangladesh, Afghanistan

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## Economic Geography

**Gross Domestic Product: (GDP): \$653.2 billion (2015 est.)**

**Natural Resources: petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, gold, copper**

**Agriculture: wheat, barley, tomatoes, melons, dates, citrus; mutton, chickens, eggs, milk**

**Industry: crude oil production, petroleum refining, basic petrochemicals, ammonia, industrial gases, sodium hydroxide (caustic soda), cement, fertilizer, plastics, metals, commercial ship repair, commercial aircraft repair, construction**

**Currency: Saudi Riyal**

**Major Exports and Imports:**

**Exports: petroleum and petroleum products 90% (2012 est.)**

**Imports: machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, motor vehicles, textiles.)**

**Biggest Trading Partners:**

**Exports: China 13.1%, Japan 10.9%, US 9.6%, India 9.6%, South Korea 8.5% (2015)**

**Imports: China 13.9%, US 12.6%, Germany 7.1%, South Korea 6.1%, India 4.5%, Japan 4.4%, UK 4.3% (2015)**

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