

# ESWATINI

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### 1. COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Eswatini, officially the Kingdom of Eswatini and formerly named Swaziland (officially renamed in 2018), is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It is bordered by Mozambique to its northeast and South Africa to its north, west, south, and southeast. At no more than 200 kilometres (120 mi) north to south and 130 kilometres (81 mi) east to west, Eswatini is one of the smallest countries in Africa; despite this, its climate and topography are diverse, ranging from a cool and mountainous highveld to a hot and dry lowveld.

Artefacts indicating human activity dating back to the early Stone Age, around 200,000 years ago, have been found in Eswatini. Prehistoric rock art paintings dating from as far back as c. 27,000 years ago, to as recent as the 19th century, can be found in various places around the country.

The earliest known inhabitants of the region were Khoisan hunter-gatherers. They were largely replaced by the Nguni during the great Bantu migrations. These peoples originated from the Great Lakes regions of eastern and central Africa. Evidence of agriculture and iron use dates from about the 4th century. People speaking languages ancestral to the current Sotho and Nguni languages began settling no later than the 11th century.

The constitution for independent Swaziland was promulgated by Britain in November 1963 under the terms of which legislative and executive councils were established. This development was opposed by the king's Swazi National Council (Liqoqo). Despite such opposition, elections took place, and the first Legislative Council of Swaziland was constituted on 9 September 1964.

By 1964, the area of the country reserved for occupation by the Swazi had increased to 56 per cent.

Changes to the original constitution proposed by the Legislative Council were accepted by Britain and a new constitution providing for a House of Assembly and Senate was drawn up. Elections under this constitution were held in 1967. Following the 1967 elections, Swaziland was a protected state until independence was regained in 1968. Following the elections of 1973, the constitution of Swaziland was suspended by King Sobhuza II who thereafter ruled the country by decree until his death in 1982. At that point, Sobhuza II had been king of Swaziland for almost 83 years, making him the longest-reigning monarch in history. A regency followed his death, with Queen Regent Dzeliwe Shongwe as head of state until 1984 when she was removed by the Liqoqo and replaced by Queen Mother Ntfombi Tfwala. Mswati III, the son of Ntfombi, was crowned king on 25 April 1986 as King and Ngwenyama of Swaziland.

The 1990s saw a rise in student and labour protests calling on the King to introduce reforms. Thus, progress towards constitutional reforms began, culminating with the introduction of the current Swazi constitution in 2005. This happened despite objections by political activists. The current constitution does not clearly deal with the status of political parties.

The first election under the new constitution took place in 2008. Members of Parliament were elected from 55 constituencies (also known as tinkhundla). These MPs served five-year terms which ended in 2013.

In 2011, Swaziland suffered an economic crisis, due to reduced SACU receipts. This caused the government to request a loan from neighbouring South Africa. However, they did not agree with the conditions of the loan, which included political reforms.

During this period, there was increased pressure on the Swazi government to carry out more reforms. Public protests by civic organisations and trade unions became more common. Starting in 2012, improvements in SACU receipts have eased the fiscal pressure on the Swazi government. A new parliament, the second since the promulgation of the constitution, was elected on 20 September 2013. The King then reappointed Sibusiso Dlamini as Prime Minister for the third time.

On 19 April 2018, King Mswati III announced that the Kingdom of Swaziland had renamed itself the Kingdom of Eswatini, reflecting the extant Swazi name for the state eSwatini, to mark the 50th anniversary of Swazi independence. The new name, Eswatini, means "land of the Swazis" in the Swazi language and was partially intended to prevent confusion with the similarly named Switzerland.

## **2. GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY**

### **2.1. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**

Eswatini lies across a fault which runs from the Drakensberg Mountains of Lesotho, north through the Eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, and forms the Great Rift Valley of Kenya. A small, landlocked kingdom, Eswatini is bordered in the North, West and South by the Republic of South Africa and by Mozambique in the East. Eswatini has a land area of 17,364 km<sup>2</sup> (6,704 sq mi). Eswatini has four separate geographical regions. These run from North to South and are determined by altitude. Eswatini is at approximately 26°30'S, 31°30'E. Eswatini has a wide variety of landscapes, from the mountains along the Mozambican border to savannas in the east and rain forest in the northwest. Several rivers flow through the country, such as the Great Usutu River.

#### **Location**

Southern Africa, between Mozambique and South Africa

#### **Geographic coordinates**

26 30 S, 31 30 E

#### **Map references**

Africa

#### **Area**

Total: 17,364 sq km

Land: 17,204 sq km

Water: 160 sq km

Country comparison to the world: 163

### **Area - comparative**

Slightly smaller than New Jersey

### **Land boundaries**

Total: 546 km

Border countries (2): Mozambique 108 km; South Africa 438 km

### **Coastline**

0 km (landlocked)

### **Maritime claims**

None (landlocked)

### **Climate**

Varies from tropical to near temperate

### **Terrain**

Mostly mountains and hills; some moderately sloping plains

### **Elevation**

Highest point: Emlembe 1,862 m

Lowest point: Great Usutu River 21 m

Mean elevation: 305 m

### **Natural resources**

Asbestos, coal, clay, cassiterite, hydropower, forests, small gold and diamond deposits, quarry stone, and talc.

### **Land use**

Agricultural land: 68.3% (2018 est.)

Arable land: 9.8% (2018 est.)

Permanent crops: 0.8% (2018 est.)

Permanent pasture: 57.7% (2018 est.)

Forest: 31.7% (2018 est.)

Other: 0% (2018 est.)

### **Irrigated land**

500 sq km (2012)

### **Population distribution**

Because of its mountainous terrain, the population distribution is uneven throughout the country, concentrating primarily in valleys and plains as shown in this population distribution map.

### **Natural hazards**

Drought



## 2.2. DEMOGRAPHIC ENVIRONMENT

Eswatini, a small, predominantly rural, landlocked country surrounded by South Africa and Mozambique, suffers from severe poverty and the world's highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate. A weak and deteriorating economy, high unemployment, rapid population growth, and an uneven distribution of resources all combine to worsen already persistent poverty and food insecurity, especially in rural areas. Erratic weather (frequent droughts and intermittent heavy rains and flooding), overuse of small plots, the overgrazing of cattle, and outdated agricultural practices reduce crop yields and further degrade the environment, exacerbating Eswatini's poverty and subsistence problems. Eswatini's extremely high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate – more than 28% of adults have the disease – compounds these issues. Agricultural production has declined due to HIV/AIDS, as the illness causes households to lose manpower and to sell livestock and other assets to pay for medicine and funerals.

Swazis, mainly men from the country's rural south, have been migrating to South Africa to work in coal, and later gold, mines since the late 19th century. Although the number of miners abroad has never been high in absolute terms because of Eswatini's small population, the outflow has had important social and economic repercussions. The peak of mining employment in South Africa occurred during the 1980s. Cross-border movement has accelerated since the 1990s, as increasing unemployment has pushed more Swazis to look for work in South Africa (creating a "brain drain" in the health and educational sectors); southern Swazi men have continued to pursue mining, although the industry has downsized. Women now make up an increasing share of migrants and dominate cross-border trading in handicrafts, using the proceeds to purchase goods back in Eswatini. Much of today's migration, however, is not work-related but focuses on visits to family and friends, tourism, and shopping.

### **Age structure**

0-14 years: 33.63% (male 185,640/female 185,808)

15-24 years: 18.71% (male 98,029/female 108,654)

25-54 years: 39.46% (male 202,536/female 233,275)

55-64 years: 4.36% (male 20,529/female 27,672)

65 years and over: 3.83% (2020 est.) (male 15,833/female 26,503)

### **Dependency ratios**

Total dependency ratio: 70.8

Youth dependency ratio: 64

Elderly dependency ratio: 6.9

Potential support ratio: 14.6 (2020 est.)

### **Median age**

Total: 23.7 years

Male: 22.5 years

Female: 24.7 years (2020 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 174

Population growth rate

0.75% (2022 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 123

### **Birth rate**

23.35 births/1,000 population (2022 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 49

### **Death rate**

9.71 deaths/1,000 population (2022 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 40

### **Net migration rate**

-6.16 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2022 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 210

### **Population distribution**

Because of its mountainous terrain, the population distribution is uneven throughout the country, concentrating primarily in valleys and plains as shown in this population distribution map

### **Urbanization**

Urban population: 24.6% of total population (2022)

Rate of urbanization: 2.42% annual rate of change (2020-25 est.)

Total population growth rate v. urban population growth rate, 2000-2030

### **Major urban areas - population**

68,000 MBABANE (capital) (2018)

### **Sex ratio**

at birth: 1.03 male(s)/female

0-14 years: 1 male(s)/female

15-24 years: 0.91 male(s)/female

25-54 years: 0.87 male(s)/female

55-64 years: 0.73 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.48 male(s)/female

Total population: 0.9 male(s)/female (2022 est.)

### **Maternal mortality ratio**

437 deaths/100,000 live births (2017 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 25

### **Infant mortality rate**

Total: 39.63 deaths/1,000 live births

Male: 43.89 deaths/1,000 live births

Female: 35.25 deaths/1,000 live births (2022 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 33

### **Life expectancy at birth**



Total population: 59.69 years

Male: 57.62 years

Female: 61.81 years (2022 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 219

### **Total fertility rate**

2.44 children born/woman (2022 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 71

### **Contraceptive prevalence rate**

66.1% (2014)

### **Drinking water source**

Improved: urban: 97.5% of population

Rural: 74.8% of population

Total: 80.3% of population

Unimproved: urban: 2.5% of population

Rural: 25.2% of population

Total: 19.7% of population (2020 est.)

### **Current Health Expenditure**

6.8% (2019)

### **Physician's density**

0.14 physicians/1,000 population (2020)

### **Hospital bed density**

2.1 beds/1,000 population (2011)

### **Sanitation facility access**

Improved: urban: 92.3% of population

Rural: 83.9% of population

Total: 85.9% of population

Unimproved: urban: 7.7% of population

Rural: 16.1% of population

Total: 14.1% of population (2020 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate**

26.8% (2020 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 1

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

200,000 (2020 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 29

**HIV/AIDS - deaths**

2,400 (2020 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 41

Major infectious diseases

**Degree of risk: intermediate (2020)**

Food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever

Vectorborne diseases: malaria

Water contact diseases: schistosomiasis

**Obesity - adult prevalence rate**

16.5% (2016)

Country comparison to the world: 124

**Tobacco use**

Total: 9.2% (2020 est.)

Male: 16.5% (2020 est.)

Female: 1.8% (2020 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 138

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

5.8% (2014)

Country comparison to the world: 72

**Education expenditures**

5.3% of GDP (2020 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 49

**Literacy**

Definition: age 15 and over can read and write

Total population: 88.4%

Male: 88.3%

Female: 88.5% (2018)

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

Total: 13 years

Male: 13 years

Female: 12 years (2013)

**Unemployment, youth ages 15-24**

Total: 47.1%

Male: 44.2%

Female: 50% (2016)

### 3. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

#### 3.1. Government structure

	Main Powers	Election Process	Election Cycle 1
Executive	King, the prime minister, and the cabinet exercise total executive authority.	Prime minister is appointed by the monarch.	Appointed by monarch.
Judicial	Based on a dual system where one part consists of courts based on the western model and laws, while the second part consists of Eswatini laws and customs.	Appointment by monarch	Mandatory retirement age of 75
Legislative	Create laws that must be passed by the king who has the power to deny every law in place and can recommend new laws to be installed.	Senate has 20 members appointed by the monarch and 10 members elected by the Legislative Assembly, and the House of Assembly has 10 members appointed by the monarch and 55 members elected by plurality vote in single-member constituencies.	5 years

### 3.2. Legal environment

Eswatini's dual legal system where both the common law, which is based on Roman Dutch law and Eswatini unwritten customary law operate side by side.

## 4. ECONOMICS

A small, landlocked kingdom, Eswatini is bordered in the north, west and south by the Republic of South Africa and by Mozambique in the east. Eswatini depends on South Africa for a majority of its exports and imports. Eswatini's currency is pegged to the South African rand, effectively relinquishing Eswatini's monetary policy to South Africa. The government is dependent on customs duties from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) for almost half of its revenue. Eswatini is a lower middle income country. As of 2017, more than one-quarter of the adult population was infected by HIV/AIDS; Eswatini has the world's highest HIV prevalence rate, a financial strain and source of economic instability.

The manufacturing sector diversified in the 1980s and 1990s, but manufacturing has grown little in the last decade. Sugar and soft drink concentrate are the largest foreign exchange earners, although a drought in 2015-16 decreased sugar production and exports. Overgrazing, soil depletion, drought, and floods are persistent problems. Mining has declined in importance in recent years. Coal, gold, diamond, and quarry stone mines are small scale, and the only iron ore mine closed in 2014. With an estimated 28% unemployment rate, Eswatini's need to increase the number and size of small and medium enterprises and to attract foreign direct investment is acute.

Eswatini's national development strategy, which expires in 2022, prioritizes increases in infrastructure, agriculture production, and economic diversification, while aiming to reduce poverty and government spending. Eswatini's revenue from SACU receipts are likely to continue to decline as South Africa pushes for

a new distribution scheme, making it harder for the government to maintain fiscal balance without introducing new sources of revenue.

#### 4.1. GDP INFORMATION

Real GDP (purchasing power parity)

\$9.74 billion (2020 est.)

\$9.9 billion (2019 est.)

\$9.68 billion (2018 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

country comparison to the world: 162

Real Gdp Growth Rate

1.6% (2017 est.)

1.4% (2016 est.)

0.4% (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 151

Real Gdp Per Capita

\$8,400 (2020 est.)

\$8,600 (2019 est.)

\$8,500 (2018 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

country comparison to the world: 147

#### 4.2. MAIN INDUSTRIES CONTRIBUTING TO GDP

The economy of Eswatini is fairly diversified. Agriculture, forestry and mining account for about 13 percent of Eswatini's GDP whereas manufacturing (textiles and sugar-related processing) represent 37 percent of GDP. Services – with government services in the lead – constitute the other 50 percent of GDP.

### **Agriculture**

Title Deed lands, where the bulk of high-value crops are grown (sugar, forestry, and citrus) are characterized by high levels of investment and irrigation, and high productivity. Nevertheless, the majority of the population – about 75 percent—is employed in subsistence agriculture on Swazi Nation Land, which, in contrast, suffers from low productivity and investment. This dual nature of the Swazi economy, with high productivity in textile manufacturing and in the industrialized agricultural title deed lands on the one hand, and declining productivity subsistence agriculture on Swazi Nation Land on the other, may well explain the country's overall low growth, high inequality and unemployment.

### **Sugar industry**

Eswatini is the fourth largest producer of sugar in Africa and is 25th in production in the world. This demonstrates the immense focus of the industry in order to continue to grow their economy. Eswatini's GDP was \$8.621 billion (US dollars) in 2014 based on purchasing power parity and of that 7.2% of that is from the agriculture sector and of that sector, sugarcane and sugar products have the largest impact on GDP. According to the World CIA Factbook, wood pulp and sugarcane were the largest exports of Eswatini until the wood pulp producer closed in January 2010. This left the sugarcane industry as the sole main export. The largest company that produces sugar in Eswatini is the Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation (RES Corporation) and it produces a little under two-thirds of total sugar in the country and produces over 3,000 jobs for the people of Eswatini. The RES Corporation is composed of two main sugar mill producers, Mhlume and Simunye, which produce a combined 430,000 tons of cane per season. The second largest sugarcane company is Ubombo Sugar Limited which has grown from producing 5,600 tons in 1958 to approximately 230,000 tons of sugar annually. The third largest sugarcane producer is the Tambankulu Estate (largest independent sugar estate) and it produces 62,000 tons of sugar annually on 3,816 hectares of land.

### **Mining**

Currently, Eswatini's mineral sector is governed under a policy drawn up prior to Eswatini's independence. In response to the sector's recent decline, a new mining policy is being drafted by consultants, paid for by a grant from China, and legislation to facilitate small-scale mining has also been proposed.

The country's main source of foreign exchange is the Bulembu asbestos mine, however production has hit a steep decline. Diamond, iron ore and gold have also been found in the past, however a lack of investment and development policy has seen the region's potential falter.

Although fewer than 1,000 Swazis are directly employed in the mining sector, many workers from Eswatini processed timber from the country's extensive pine populations for mines in South Africa, and around 10,000–15,000 Swazis were employed in South African mines. Their contributions to Eswatini's economy through wage repatriation have been diminished, though, by the collapse of the international gold market and layoffs in South Africa.

#### 4.3. TRADE ORGANIZATIONS THE COUNTRY HAS JOINED

Eswatini is a member of the:

World Trade Organisation (WTO),

Southern African Customs Union (SACU),

Southern African Development Community (SADC),

Free Trade Area (FTA), and

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) FTA.

#### 4.4. FINANCING AND BANKING ENVIRONMENT

The banking system in Eswatini has three tiers of operation. There is the Central Bank, four commercial banks, and one building society.

The Central Bank of Eswatini is the monetary authority responsible for management of the country's foreign exchange reserves, administration of exchange controls, and regulation of financial institutions.



There are four commercial banks operating in Eswatini: First National Bank of Eswatini, NedBank, SwaziBank, and Standard Bank. The GKoE-owned Eswatini Development and Savings Bank was restructured and has grown into a profitable corporation

Three of the four commercial banks (excluding Swazi Bank) are subsidiaries of their South African parent banks.

Each of the operating banks has at least eight branches. Normal banking services are offered at all four banks, and interest rates on borrowing are those in South Africa. The prime rate is 10.25 percent. Through Eswatini's membership in the Common Monetary Area, after-tax profits can be repatriated anywhere the investor chooses. The corporate tax rate is 27.5%. There are no exchange regulations affecting transactions within the CMA.

Export financing is available through the Export-Import Bank but must be applied for by a Swati partner. There are no Export-Import Bank bundling facilities in Eswatini. Project financing is available through such multilateral institutions as the World Bank and African Development Bank. In the past, resources have gone largely to infrastructure development, including roads and irrigation systems.

## **5. CULTURE**

Swazi culture is the way of life and customs of the Swazi people through various historical stages. The culture of Swazi people involves music, food, religion, architecture, and kinship, among many other things.[1] The Swazi people are composed of various Nguni clans who speak the Nguni language siSwati. These people mostly reside in Eswatini and South Africa.

### **5.1. RELIGION**

Religious leaders estimate that 90 percent of the population is Christian, approximately 2 percent is Muslim (of whom many are not ethnic Swati), and the remainder belongs to other religious groups, including those with indigenous African beliefs.

## 5.2. OFFICIAL LANGUAGE AND OTHER LOCAL LANGUAGES

Eswatini is home to several languages. Native languages are Swazi, Zulu, Tsonga, Afrikaans, and English. Recent immigrant languages include Chichewa and Southern Sotho.

Swazi, a Southern Bantu language, is the national language of Eswatini, and is spoken by approximately 95 percent of Swazis. Swazi and English are the country's two official languages, and proceedings of the Parliament of Eswatini take place in both languages.

Swazi language education is present in all national schools, and literacy in Swati—defined as the ability to read and write the language—is very high in Eswatini. Swazi is also used in mass media.

English is the medium of instruction, and is taught in all public and private schools. Competency in English is a prerequisite for admission into most post-secondary institutions.