

Rwanda



KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	November 2009
Population:	11,458,000 (2012)
GDP p.c. growth:	2.3% p.a. 1990–2012
UN HDI 2012:	world ranking 167
Official languages:	Kinyarwanda, French, English
Time:	GMT plus 2hr
Currency:	Rwandan franc (Rwfr)

Geography

Area:	26,338 sq km
Coastline:	none
Capital:	Kigali

The Republic of Rwanda is a landlocked country with land borders with four countries: Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo (clockwise from the north). Water covers 1,390 sq km of the country; the largest lakes include Bulera, Ihema, Kivu (straddling the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo), Mugesera and Muhazi, and there are many rivers. The country comprises five provinces.

Topography: The terrain is rugged with steep hills and deep valleys, rising in the north to the highest peak, Karisimbi (4,519 metres), which lies in a range of volcanoes. The country is popularly known as the 'land of a thousand hills'.

Climate: Though the country is close to the Equator, the climate is tempered by altitude; it is hot and humid in the valleys, and drier and cooler in the higher elevations. The rainy seasons are March–May and October–November; the hottest season August–September.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are drought, limiting the potential for agriculture; overgrazing; soil erosion and degradation; and deforestation due to almost universal use of wood as a fuel.



Vegetation: Thick equatorial rainforest is found in the north and west of the country – forest covering some 18 per cent of the total land area – and savannah in the east. Forest cover has increased at 1.6 per cent p.a. 1990–2010. Arable land comprises 49 per cent and permanent cropland ten per cent of the total land area.

Wildlife: National parks and game reserves cover some eight per cent of the country and include the Volcanoes National Park (famous for its mountain gorillas) and Akagera National Park (elephants, buffaloes, giraffes and zebras). Some 20 mammal species and 14 bird species are thought to be endangered (2012).

Main towns: Kigali (capital, pop. 1.03m in 2010), Ruhengeri (117,500), Gisenyi (113,000), Butare (107,300), Gitarama (87,700), Ruhango (74,700), Byumba (74,700), Cyangugu (68,800), Kabuga (57,400), Nyanza (55,300), Rwamagana (53,000), Kibungo (48,900), Kibuye (47,900) and Gikongoro (34,800).

Transport: There are 14,000 km of roads, 19 per cent paved. There is no railway.

The main international airport is Kigali International.

Society

KEY FACTS 2012

Population per sq km:	435
Life expectancy:	64 years
Net primary enrolment:	99%

Population: 11,458,000 (2012); 19 per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 2.1 per cent p.a. 1990–2012; birth rate 36 per 1,000 people (53 in 1970); life expectancy 64 years (44 in 1970).

The main ethnic groups are Hutus, comprising an estimated 85 per cent of the population; Tutsis (14 per cent); and Twa (less than one per cent). Censuses carried out since the conflict of the 1990s have not included ethnicity.

Language: Kinyarwanda, French and English are the official languages, and Kiswahili is widely spoken.

Religion: Christians (mostly Roman Catholics) comprise about half the population and most of the rest hold traditional beliefs, often

Did you know?

Rwanda joined the Commonwealth in November 2009, becoming the association's 54th member.

In 2008 the Government of Rwanda decided to change the medium of education from French to English.

In September 2008 Rwanda became the first nation in the world to elect a majority of women MPs: 45 of the 80 members of the Chamber of Deputies. The number increased to 51 women deputies in the September 2013 election.

combined with Christianity. There is a small minority of Muslims, comprising about two per cent of the population, according to the 2002 census.

Health: Public spending on health was six per cent of GDP in 2011. Some 69 per cent of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 61 per cent have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2011). Infant mortality was 39 per 1,000 live births in 2012 (122 in 1960). In 2012, 2.9 per cent of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

The King Faisal Hospital, Kigali, is the country's principal referral centre and teaching hospital, Muhima Hospital is also located in Kigali, and there are health centres, health posts, clinics and dispensaries throughout the country.

Education: Public spending on education was four per cent of GDP in 2012. There are nine years of compulsory education starting at the age of seven. Primary school comprises six years and secondary six, with two cycles each of three years. The school year starts in January. Some 37 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2009). In October 2008 the government decided to change the medium of education from French to English.

The National University of Rwanda was established in 1963 with faculties of medicine and social sciences, and a teacher-training college. Faculties of law, science and technology, and the National Institute of Education followed, all now located at Butare in the south. Among other important tertiary institutions are the Kigali Health Institute; the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology; the Rwanda Institute of Administration and Management; and the School of Finance and Banking. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 0.70:1 (2011). Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 77 per cent (2010).

Media: *The New Times* (daily), *Rwanda Herald* and *Rwanda Newslines* are all published in English; *Umuseso* in Kinyarwanda.

Radio Rwanda provides public radio services in Kinyarwanda, French, English and Kiswahili, and there are several private commercial or faith radio stations. Télévision Rwandaise provides a public service in the urban areas.

Some two per cent of households have TV sets (2007). There are three personal computers per 1,000 people (2006).

Communications: Country code 250 (no area codes); internet domain '.rw'.

There are four main telephone lines, 497 mobile phone subscriptions and 80 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Heroes' Day (1 February), Tutsi Genocide Memorial Day (7 April), Labour Day (1 May), Independence Day (1 July), Liberation Day (4 July), Assumption (15 August), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday and Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan, two days).

Economy

KEY FACTS 2012

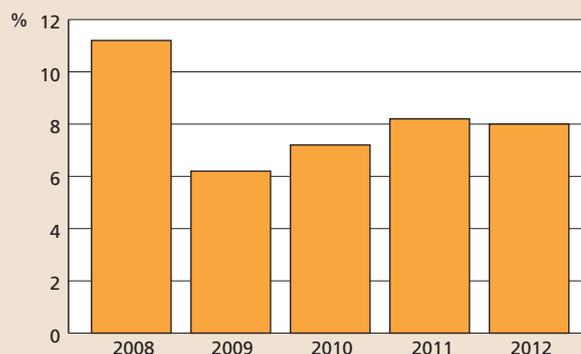
GNI:	US\$6.9bn
GNI p.c.:	US\$600
GDP growth:	8.2% p.a. 2008–12
Inflation:	7.9% p.a. 2008–12

Rwanda is landlocked and densely populated. It has relatively few exploitable resources and most people are engaged in subsistence agriculture which in 2012 contributed about 35 per cent of GDP. Water resources are unevenly spread across the country and some areas experience periodic droughts. Commercial cultivation of coffee and tea was introduced by the colonial administration in the first half of the 20th century.

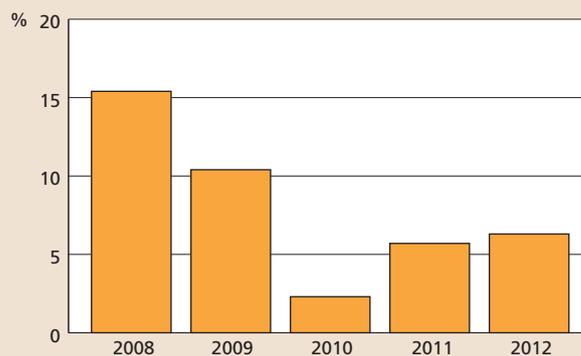
During the long period of intercommunal conflict and massive displacement of people that lasted from independence in 1962 to the establishment in 1994 of the government of national unity led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, development and diversification of economy and investment in infrastructure and education were on hold.

From 1994, with the strong support of the international donor community and a large injection of aid, the government embarked on a programme of economic reforms, which aimed to grow the private sector and develop a market economy, and to promote investment in coffee, tea and minerals production. Foreign direct investment grew more slowly than aid.

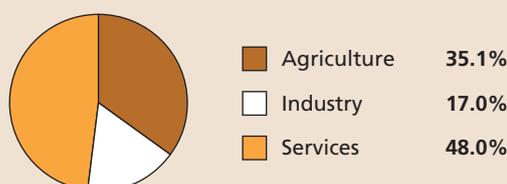
Real Growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by Sector (2012)



The 2000s also saw large-scale privatisation in the utilities, transport and mining sectors and the emergence of new industries such as eco-tourism and electricity generation from methane gas at Lake Kivu. Growth in mining activity and of exports of minerals such as cassiterite (a tin ore), coltan (a metallic ore containing niobium and tantalum) and wolfram (tungsten) reduced the country's dependence on exports of coffee and tea.

Rwanda's external debt was substantially reduced when it reached completion point under the IMF/World Bank Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in March 2005 and qualified for the Multilateral

Debt Relief Initiative in March 2006, bringing about a fall in external debt to 17 per cent of GDP in 2006.

With peace and stable democratic government, strong economic growth ensued, averaging more than ten per cent p.a. over 1996–2002, albeit much less on a per capita basis. It then slowed to 5.6 per cent p.a. during 2003–07 before strengthening to 11.2 per cent in 2008. It was hardly affected by the world economic downturn of 2008–09, and continued vigorously at above seven per cent during 2010–14.

History



By the 17th century Tutsis had established a kingdom in present-day Rwanda where Hutus, Tutsis and Twa were living. Rwanda became part of German East Africa in 1899. After World War I, it came under Belgian administration under a League of Nations mandate, and, from 1920, as part of a UN trust territory, 'Ruanda-Urundi'.

After World War II, Rwanda continued to be administered by Belgium. In 1959, as the independence movement gathered pace, the ruling Tutsi elite formed a political party, Union Nationale Rwandaise. The Belgian authorities encouraged the Hutu majority also to aspire to political power and, in the same year, a rival party, Parti de l'émancipation du peuple Hutu (Parmehutu), was established.

As the 1960 local elections approached, Parmehutu initiated a Hutu uprising resulting in the death of many Tutsis and forcing King Kigeri V and tens of thousands of Tutsis to flee into exile in Uganda and Burundi. In 1961 the monarchy was abolished and Rwanda became a republic, gaining independence from Belgium in 1962, with Parmehutu leader Grégoire Kayibanda as President; many more Tutsis left the country and those who remained faced continuing state-sponsored violence and institutionalised discrimination. The most serious eruption of violence at this time was triggered in 1963 by an incursion from Burundi of exiled Rwandan Tutsis and resulted in the death of at least 15,000 Tutsis at the hands of Hutu gangs.

Kayibanda was overthrown in 1973 in a military coup led by army chief of staff Juvénal Habyarimana. There then ensued a period of military rule, until 1978, when a new constitution was promulgated and Habyarimana became President.

In 1990 forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) entered the country from Uganda and the civil war began. Though predominantly a Tutsi movement, the RPF did win the support of a significant element of moderate Hutus. A new constitution promoting multiparty democracy was introduced in 1991. Peace talks brokered by the UN in August 1993 resulted in a power-sharing agreement between Habyarimana and the RPF, the Arusha Accords.

In April 1994 an aircraft carrying Habyarimana and the Burundian President was shot down on its return from Arusha to Kigali, killing all the passengers. The President's violent death triggered the co-ordinated massacre of Tutsis – and some Hutus who opposed the government – by Hutu militia and elements of the Rwandan army. In response the RPF began a major offensive from the north. An estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the months following the plane crash. In July 1994 the RPF took control of Kigali and formed an administration

based on the principles of power-sharing and national reconciliation which were the basis of the 1993 Arusha Accords. The administration comprised five political parties: the RPF, Christian Democratic Party, Liberal Party, Republican Democratic Movement and Social Democratic Party. Pasteur Bizimungu was inaugurated as President for a five-year term; the RPF military chief Paul Kagame became Vice-President and Defence Minister. The government's priorities were security, rebuilding the economy and national reconciliation; it prohibited any official recognition of ethnicity. By February 2007 some 60,000 prisoners accused of genocide had been released.

Shortly after the new government took office, a 70-member Transitional National Assembly was formed, including representatives of the five governing parties and three other smaller parties, the Democratic Union for Rwandese People, Islamic Party and Socialist Party, as well as six representatives of the Rwandese Patriotic Army.

The UN Security Council created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in November 1994 to contribute to the process of national reconciliation and to the maintenance of peace in the region. The tribunal was established in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in February 1995, for the prosecution of those responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in Rwanda during 1994.

Some two million Hutus followed the Hutu militias into exile in Zaire, where they were accommodated in UN refugee camps. Many other Hutus fled to Tanzania. By 1995 the Hutu militias and Zairean government forces were initiating attacks on Zairean Banyamulenge Tutsis who lived in Eastern Zaire. In October 1996 Rwandan troops and Zairean Tutsis attacked the refugee camps where the Hutu militia were based with the aim of repatriating the refugees. In 1997 the Zairean regime was overthrown, Laurent Kabila became President and the country was renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). However, in 1998, when it was clear that the new government of DRC was not going to return the Hutu militias to Rwanda, Rwanda began to lend its support to forces that opposed Kabila. However, in July 2002 Rwanda and the DRC agreed that Rwanda would withdraw its troops and DRC would work with Rwanda in disarming Hutu militia. By October 2002 Rwanda reported it had completed its withdrawal, and in March 2005 the main Hutu rebel group, Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda, announced the end of its armed struggle. In November 2007 Rwanda signed a peace agreement with the DRC, under which DRC was to hand over those implicated in the 1994 genocide to Rwanda or to the ICTR.

Constitution

Status:	Republic with executive President
Legislature:	Parliament of Rwanda
Independence:	1 July 1962

The present constitution came into force in June 2003, with the principal aim of promoting national unity and protecting personal liberties and human rights.

The executive President is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and is elected by universal adult suffrage for a seven-year term; he or she may serve a maximum of two terms. The President nominates the Prime Minister and appoints the council of ministers on the advice of the Prime Minister.

The bicameral legislature comprises the Chamber of Deputies and Senate. The Chamber of Deputies has 80 members, 53 directly elected every five years by universal adult suffrage and 27 representing: women (24 seats), youth (two) and disabled people (one). The Senate has 26 members, who serve for eight years; 12 represent the provincial government councils, and two represent academic institutions. The other members are nominated, eight by the President and four the Parties' Forum.

Politics

Last elections:	9 August 2010 (presidential), 16 September 2013 (parliamentary)
Next elections:	2017 (presidential), 2018 (parliamentary)
Head of state:	President Paul Kagame
Head of government:	the President
Ruling party:	Rwandan Patriotic Front
Women MPs:	64%

In April 2000 President Pasteur Bizimungu was succeeded by Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) leader Paul Kagame. Following endorsement of a new constitution by referendum in May 2003, Kagame won the presidential election in August 2003, with 95 per cent of votes, and the RPF won the country's first multiparty parliamentary elections in September 2003, with 40 of the 53 directly elected seats and 74 per cent of votes. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) took seven seats and the Liberal Party six; turnout was 96 per cent. Former President Bizimungu received a 15-year jail sentence for embezzlement and inciting violence in June 2004; he was released in April 2007 when he received a presidential pardon.

When in November 2006 a French judge issued an international arrest warrant for Kagame, alleging that the RPF was responsible for shooting down the plane carrying former President Juvénal Habyarimana in April 1994, Rwanda broke off diplomatic relations with France. In October 2007 the Rwandan Government set up an inquiry into the plane crash that had sparked the genocide, which concluded in late 2009 that Habyarimana's own army had been responsible. In August 2008 Rwanda released a report naming more than 30 senior French officials alleged to have been involved in the 1994 genocide. Rwanda and France resumed diplomatic relations in November 2009.

In the parliamentary elections of September 2008 the RPF was returned taking 42 seats and 79 per cent of votes cast; the SDP won seven seats and the Liberal Party four. Turnout was again close to 100 per cent.

In the presidential election of August 2010, when 99 per cent of the electorate voted, Kagame won a resounding victory, receiving 93.1 per cent of the votes cast. His main rival, Jean Damascene Ntawukuriryayo of the SDP, secured 5.1 per cent.

The RPF was returned with a strong mandate in the parliamentary elections of 16 September 2013, gaining 41 elective seats in the Chamber of Deputies, with 76 per cent of votes cast. The SDP took seven seats and the Liberal Party five. Turnout was again 99 per cent.

International relations

Rwanda is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, East African Community, Non-Aligned Movement, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Rwanda joined the East African Community in July 2007. Commonwealth leaders, holding their biennial CHOGM in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, admitted Rwanda as the association's 54th member on 28 November 2009.

Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid at least until the date of departure. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers aged over 12 months. Prohibited imports include animals and fresh food coming from countries which the Rwandan authorities have listed as posing a health risk.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the right. An international driving licence is required to drive in Rwanda. Roads between Kigali and major towns are paved, though landslides can occur in the rains.

Planes are available for charter. Taxis are available in the larger towns. Fares should be agreed in advance and tipping is not usual.

Travel health: Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include hepatitis A, malaria, schistosomiasis (bilharzia), typhoid and yellow fever. The World Health Organization has recommended vaccination against yellow fever.

There were 619,000 tourist arrivals in 2010.

Further information

Government of Rwanda: www.gov.rw
 National Electoral Commission: www.nec.gov.rw
 Parliament of Rwanda: www.parliament.gov.rw
 National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda: www.statistics.gov.rw
 National Bank of Rwanda: www.bnr.rw
 Rwanda Tourism: www.rwandatourism.com
 Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org
 Commonwealth of Nations: www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Rwanda

Media

The New Times: www.newtimes.co.rw
 Rwanda Broadcasting Agency: www.rba.co.rw
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