

# Swaziland



## KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	1968
Population:	1,231,000 (2012)
GDP p.c. growth:	0.7% p.a. 1990–2012
UN HDI 2012:	world ranking 141
Official languages:	siSwati, English
Time:	GMT plus 2hr
Currency:	lilangeni, plural emalangeni (E)

## Geography

Area:	17,364 sq km
Coastline:	none
Capital:	Mbabane

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a small landlocked country in the east of Southern Africa, bounded to the east by Mozambique and elsewhere by South Africa.

The country comprises four regions: Hhohho (in the north), Manzini (west-central), Lubombo (east) and Shiselweni (south).

**Topography:** There are four regions, all running from north to south. The western Highveld, a continuation of the Drakensberg

Mountains, rises to 1,862 metres. East of the Highveld is the grassy Middleveld, beside the Lowveld (also called the Bushveld) at around 150–300 metres with some higher ridges and knolls. The eastern region, the Lubombo, is a narrow escarpment. The four most important rivers, all flowing from the Highveld east towards the Indian Ocean, are the Komati, the Usutu, the Mbuluzi and the Ngwavuma. None are easily navigable. The Lowveld watercourses are wadis, except after heavy rain.

**Climate:** The Highveld is near-temperate and humid, the Middleveld and Lubombo subtropical, the Lowveld near-tropical. Swaziland is one of the best-watered countries in southern Africa although, in common with the region, rainfall may be unreliable and periods of drought occur in the Lowveld, for example in 2004–05. Summer (October–March) is the rainy season. There is occasional, short-lived frost in the Highveld and the Middleveld.

**Environment:** The most significant environmental issues are overgrazing, soil degradation, soil erosion, limited supplies of drinking water, and depletion of wildlife populations by excessive hunting.

**Vegetation:** Varies from the forested Highveld with its Usutu pines to the grassland and bush vegetation of the Lowveld. Forest covers 33 per cent of the land area, having increased at 0.9 per cent p.a. 1990–2010. Arable land comprises ten per cent and permanent cropland less than one per cent of the total land area.

**Wildlife:** There are eight nature reserves inhabited by indigenous species, several of them under threat elsewhere, such as black and white rhinoceros, elephant, buffalo, hippopotamus, and a vast variety of bird species – including storks and vultures. Six mammal species and 11 bird species are thought to be endangered (2012).

**Main towns:** Mbabane (capital, pop. 61,800 in 2010), Manzini (94,900), Malkerns (8,000), Nhlngano (7,000), Mhlume (6,800), Big Bend (6,700), Siteki (6,100), Simunye (5,500), Hluti (5,400), Pigg's Peak (4,600) and Lobamba (legislative capital, 3,800).

**Transport:** There are 3,590 km of roads, at least 30 per cent paved, linking with South Africa and Mozambique.

The 300 km railway is used mainly for freight and continues in a north-easterly direction to Maputo in Mozambique, providing



## Did you know?

Swaziland is a monarchy.

It is one of seven landlocked Commonwealth countries, all of which are in Africa. Mountains in the western highlands rise to 1,862 metres, and the lowlands to the east fall to around 150 metres.

As a neighbour of South Africa – Africa's economic powerhouse – Swaziland receives more than most other African countries in remittances per capita.

Swaziland with access to shipping. Since 1986, there has been a direct connection between Mpaka (35 km east of Manzini) and the South African railway network. The passenger service from Durban to Maputo, Mozambique, passes through Swaziland, stopping at Mpaka.

A new international airport, Sikhuphe International Airport, located to the east of Manzini, is due to replace Matsapha as the principal international airport in 2010.

## Society

### KEY FACTS 2012

Population per sq km:	71
Life expectancy:	49 years
Net primary enrolment:	85% (2007)

**Population:** 1,231,000 (2012); 21 per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 1.6 per cent p.a. 1990–2012; birth rate 30 per 1,000 people (49 in 1970); life expectancy 49 years, having fallen sharply since the latter 1990s due to AIDS (48 in 1970, 61 in 1990 and 60 in 1997).

Swazis make up 90 per cent; persons of other African, European or mixed descent ten per cent. Large numbers of Mozambicans fled to Swaziland to escape the civil war, but repatriation was completed in 1993.

**Language:** siSwati is the national language and English is widely spoken.

**Religion:** Christians about 60 per cent and most of the rest hold traditional beliefs. Traditional beliefs often coexist with Christian beliefs.

**Health:** Public spending on health was six per cent of GDP in 2011. Services are provided by the state, missions and some industrial organisations. Some 72 per cent of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 57 per cent have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2011). Infant mortality was 56 per 1,000 live births in 2012 (150 in 1960). In 2012, 27 per cent of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

**Education:** Public spending on education was eight per cent of GDP in 2011. There are seven years of compulsory education starting at the age of six. Primary school comprises seven years and secondary five, with cycles of three and two years. Some 67 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2010). The school year starts in January.

The University of Swaziland offers degrees in agriculture, commerce, education, health sciences, humanities, sciences and social sciences, and incorporates the Institute of Distance Learning. Swaziland College of Technology provides diplomas and certificate courses in building, business, education and engineering. The



## History

The Nguni Swazi Kingdom rose to prominence early in the 19th century, under the leadership of King Sobhuza I, who enlarged the territory by conquering and absorbing numbers of non-Nguni people.

King Mswati II then moulded the young kingdom into a powerful military force. Through internal stability, military might and diplomacy, Swaziland remained an independent country until the 1890s, the King taking advantage of the rivalry between the British administration in Natal and the Boer republic of the Transvaal to avoid takeover by either.

From 1894 until 1902 the country was administered by the Boer republic, but not annexed. After the defeat of the Boers by Britain in 1902, Swaziland came under British control until independence.

King Sobhuza II reigned from 1921 to 1982 and is thought to have been the second-longest reigning monarch in world history – although he was only officially recognised as king in 1967 under the Swaziland Constitution Order of the British Government. Sobhuza II was a staunch conservative, determined to restore traditional customs and land rights, much of the land having been sold by the colonial authorities to individual European or African farmers. By the time of his death in 1982, almost 40 per cent of the land of the Kingdom was back in the traditional communal system of land tenure.

Swaziland became independent on 6 September 1968 and joined the Commonwealth. In 1973, the King repealed the independence constitution, abolishing parliament and all political parties. The tinkhundla system of government was introduced in 1978 and overhauled in 1993 (see *Constitution*). When the King died in 1982, there was a four-year delay before Prince Makhosetive acceded to the throne as King Mswati III in 1986.

From the mid-1980s there was building pressure for a return to multiparty democracy. The reintroduction of universal adult suffrage in 1993 only served to increase this pressure. There was from the mid-1990s a succession of strikes organised by the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions and increasingly public activity by opposition movements. A Constitutional Review Commission was set up in July 1996 to solicit the views of the Swazi nation on the type of constitution the people wanted, by visiting all the constituencies in the country and then submitting a report, including a draft new constitution by 1998.

Elections for pre-selected candidates were held in October 1998. About 60 per cent of the registered voters cast their vote. The King confirmed Dr Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini as Prime Minister. Most of the 16 ministers were royal appointees rather than elected members of parliament.

The Constitutional Review Commission finally presented its report to the King in November 2000, but it was not published. In 2001 the King attempted to give himself additional powers to contain the pressure for constitutional reform but climbed down in the face of national and international protests. In August 2001 he called a national gathering and the Commission's chairperson announced – to an audience of only about 10,000 people (the last national gathering was attended by 250,000) – that the King's powers were to be enlarged but gave no details of the fruits of the five-year review.

Subsequently the King set up a new commission to draft a new constitution and the draft was released in May 2003. However, under this constitution the country was to remain an absolute monarchy and, though freedom of assembly was to be allowed and the ban on political parties therefore technically lifted, under the continuing tinkhundla election system there is no role for parties.

Vocational and Commercial Training Institute offers business and technical training. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 1.00:1 (2011). Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 94 per cent (2010). There is a national library and a mobile library service to remoter parts of the country.

**Media:** The English-language dailies are *The Swazi Observer/The Weekend Observer* and *The Times of Swaziland/Sunday Times*.

Three national radio stations and television channel Swazi TV are public services. South African media are available.

Some 35 per cent of households have TV sets (2006). There are 37 personal computers per 1,000 people (2006).

**Communications:** Country code 268; internet domain '.sz'. Public telephones are widely available. Mobile phone coverage is good in urban areas. There are internet cafés in Mbabane and Manzini, and post offices in all the main towns.

There are 37 main telephone lines, 654 mobile phone subscriptions and 208 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

**Public holidays:** New Year's Day, King's Birthday (19 April), National Flag Day (25 April), Labour Day (1 May), Birthday of late King Sobhuza II (22 July), Independence Day (Somhlolo, 6 September), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Umhlanga Reed Dance Day (August/September, date fixed at short notice) and Incwala ceremony (December/January, date fixed at short notice).

## Economy

### KEY FACTS 2012

GNI:	US\$3.5bn
GNI p.c.:	US\$2,860
GDP growth:	0.8% p.a. 2008–12
Inflation:	7.9% p.a. 2008–12

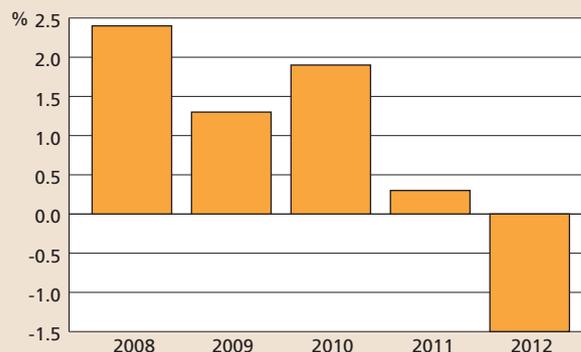
Despite subdued growth in the latter 1980s and early 1990s, a period much influenced by the economic problems and then political change in South Africa, Swaziland has, over the longer period, one of the best growth records in Africa, and has pursued liberal policies towards foreign and private investment – especially in mining and industry – since independence in 1968. GDP grew by 6.7 per cent p.a. 1980–90 and 3.4 per cent p.a. 1990–2000.

Its vulnerability lies in heavy dependence on soft drink concentrate and sugar cane, and on South Africa, which provides imports, investment and employment. It does, however, have established wood pulp, fruit-canning, and clothing and textiles industries, and manufactures a variety of consumer goods, including refrigerators, footwear and plastic domestic goods.

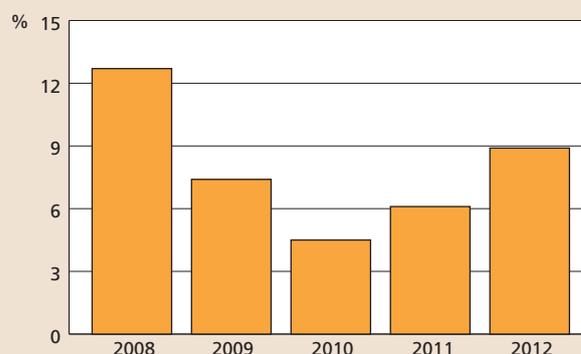
There is dual administration of Swaziland's official financial assets. Those of the Swazi nation, comprising communal land resources (known as Swazi Nation Land) and minerals, are managed by Tibiyo TakaNgwane, an institution created by royal charter in 1968 and not responsible to parliament. The modern economy is managed by the government, but there is an increasing demand, backed by the unions, for far-reaching economic reform.

The economy grew well in the late 1990s but growth was generally slower in the 2000s, due to the deteriorating investment climate, erosion of trade preferences, declining competitiveness, weak

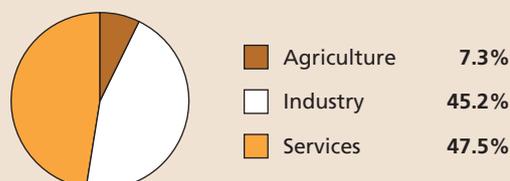
### Real Growth in GDP



### Inflation



### GDP by Sector (2012)



institutional capacity and devastation of the workforce by HIV/AIDS. Average GDP growth was 2.6 per cent p.a. in 2000–08. In response to the world economic downturn of 2008–09 Swaziland's economy slowed in 2009–10 and underwent a small contraction during 2011–13.

## Constitution

Status:	National monarchy
Legislature:	Parliament of Swaziland
Independence:	6 September 1968

Under the 2006 constitution the Kingdom of Swaziland is an absolute monarchy. The monarch appoints the Prime Minister and approves the cabinet and can veto legislation and dissolve parliament, though since July 2005 he can no longer rule by decree.

Under the tinkhundla electoral system, which was introduced in 1978 and amended in 1993 and 2005, there is a bicameral parliament. The House of Assembly has up to 65 members, ten (including at least five women) appointed by the monarch and 55 elected by universal adult suffrage from a list provided by the

tinkhundla (tribal or community committees). The Senate has up to 30 members, with ten chosen by the Assembly (including at least five women) and 20 by the monarch (at least eight women).

In each of the 55 tinkhundla, numerous candidates are nominated by show of hands; these are then reduced in secret ballots to three candidates per tinkhundla; the 55 Assembly members are elected in a general election.

The 2006 constitution made provision for an independent judiciary and for human rights, including freedom of assembly and association, but it made no reference to political parties.

## Politics

Last elections:	20 September 2013
Next elections:	2018
Head of state:	King Mswati III
Head of government:	Prime Minister Dr Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini
Women MPs:	6%

Assembly and Senate elections for the pre-selected candidates were held in October 2003 and the turnout was low, especially in urban areas. A Commonwealth expert team was present. It said that while there were shortcomings 'the elections were well conducted', but that 'no elections can be credible when they are for a parliament which does not have power and when political parties are banned'. In November 2003 King Mswati III confirmed A. T. Dlamini as Prime Minister.

A new constitution – drafted by the Constitutional Review Commission, chaired by Prince David Dlamini – was approved by parliament and signed by the King in July 2005. It came into effect in February 2006.

In the first elections under the new constitution, a new parliament was elected in September 2008. The election was observed by a Commonwealth expert team. The King appointed Dr Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini as Prime Minister; he had previously served in that position 1996–2003.

In the parliamentary elections, held on 20 September 2013, 55 members were elected, 12 of whom were returned, including only two of the six government ministers. The King reappointed Dr Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini as Prime Minister.

## International relations

Swaziland is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Non-Aligned Movement, Southern African Customs Union, Southern African Development Community, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

## Traveller information

**Immigration and customs:** Passports must be valid for at least three months from the date of arrival. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. Prohibited imports include alcohol and some cosmetics; and some fresh food, plants and seeds (except with the relevant health certificate). Permission is required to use a camera.

**Travel within the country:** Traffic drives on the left. Visitors wishing to drive will need an international driving permit.

A bus network links main towns and minibus taxis run on the shorter routes. Taxis provide urban transport.

**Travel health:** Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include cholera, diphtheria, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, malaria, rabies, schistosomiasis (bilharzia) and typhoid.

There were 879,000 tourist arrivals in 2011.

## Further information

Government of Swaziland: [www.gov.sz](http://www.gov.sz)

Central Bank of Swaziland: [www.centralbank.org.sz](http://www.centralbank.org.sz)

Swaziland Tourism: [www.welcometoswaziland.com](http://www.welcometoswaziland.com)

Commonwealth Secretariat: [www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)

Commonwealth of Nations:

[www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Swaziland](http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Swaziland)

## Media

*The Swazi Observer:* [www.observer.org.sz](http://www.observer.org.sz)

*The Times of Swaziland:* [www.times.co.sz](http://www.times.co.sz)

Swazi TV: [www.swazitv.co.sz](http://www.swazitv.co.sz)

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