



Lesotho



KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	1966
Population:	2,194,000 (2011)
GDP p.c. growth:	2.3% p.a. 1990–2011
UN HDI 2012:	World ranking 158
Net primary enrolment:	75.0% (2011)
Net secondary enrolment:	31.7% (2011)
Adult literacy:	75.8% (2009)

Geography

Area:	30,355 sq km
Coastline:	none
Capital:	Maseru

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a small landlocked country entirely surrounded by South Africa. It is known as the 'Mountain Kingdom', the whole country being over 1,000m in altitude.

The country is divided into ten districts, each named after the principal town: Berea, Butha Buthe, Leribe, Mafeteng, Maseru, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek, Quthing and Thaba-Tseka.

Society

Population per sq km:	72
Life expectancy:	48 years
Official languages:	Sesotho, English

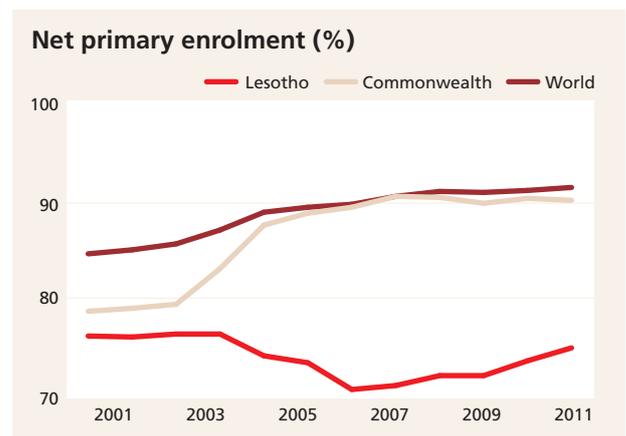
Population: 2,194,000 (2011); 28 per cent live in urban areas; growth 1.4 per cent p.a. 1990–2011; birth rate 28 per 1,000 people (43 in 1970); life expectancy 48 years (49 in 1970 and 59 in 1990).

The people are mostly Basotho, with a few thousand expatriate Europeans and several hundred Asians.

Language: Sesotho and English are official languages; Zulu and Xhosa are also spoken.

Religion: Mainly Christians (Roman Catholics 56 per cent, and Lesotho Evangelicals and Anglicans 24 per cent); the rest hold traditional beliefs, which often coexist with Christianity.

Health: Public spending on health was five per cent of GDP in 2010. Seventy-eight per cent of the population use an improved drinking water source and 26 per cent have adequate sanitation facilities (2010). Infant mortality was 63 per 1,000 live births in



2011 (137 in 1960). Lesotho is vulnerable to AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; a high proportion of young men work in other countries with serious AIDS problems. In 2011, 23.3 per cent of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

Media: There are several independent weekly newspapers, including *Mopheme/The Survivor* (Sesotho/English), *The Mirror* and *Public Eye* (English), and *Makatolle*, *MoAfrica* and *Mohlanka* in Sesotho. The government newspaper is *Lentsoe la Basotho* in Sesotho.

Radio is the most important source of information. Public broadcasters Radio Lesotho and Lesotho Television provide national services. There are several private commercial and faith radio stations. South African radio and TV are received in Lesotho.

Some 13 per cent of households have TV sets (2006). There are three personal computers per 1,000 people (2005).

Communications: Country code 266; internet domain '.ls'. Mobile phone coverage is confined to the main towns.

There are internet cafes in Maseru. Post office branches can be found in all the main cities.

There are 18 main telephone lines, 562 mobile phone subscriptions and 42 internet users per 1,000 people (2011).

Education

Governance

Ministry of Education and Training

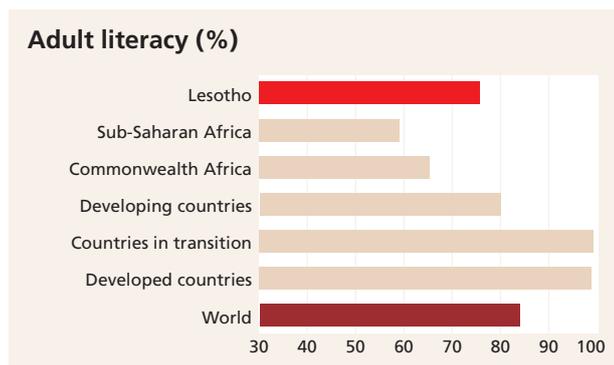
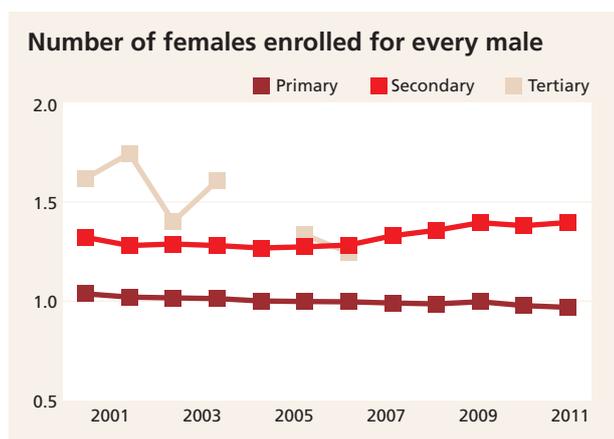
Maseru

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Minister: Makabelo Priscilla Mosothoane

Principal secretary: Motsokapa Makara



The Ministry of Education and Training's Special Education Unit provides for learners with special education needs and is also responsible for the development of special education teacher-training programmes.

The Council on Higher Education was established in 2008 by the Ministry of Education and Training to regulate the various tertiary education institutions, and is responsible for increasing access to higher education and developing the means of funding it.

Policy and plans

Public spending on education was 13.0 per cent of GDP in 2008.

The National Strategic Development Plan 2012/13–2016/17 aims to implement the National Vision 2020, which was launched in 2003. Among the overarching objectives of the Plan is radical transformation of technical, vocational and higher education to produce world-class skills and expanding access to ICT. A key issue for the Plan is the rapid emergence of a global knowledge economy, where growth and competitiveness depend on high-level skills and the realisation that natural resources are dwindling and the climate is changing, and future economic activity must be sustainable.

Guidelines for the care and welfare of the rapidly increasing population of orphans and vulnerable children in Lesotho were drawn up by government and NGOs in 2006. These aim to protect the rights and ensure the safety of such children at the hands of their carers, and to encourage the care of HIV/AIDS orphans within the community. (see 'Health' above)

Schools

Primary female–male ratio:	0.97:1 (2011)
Secondary female–male ratio:	1.40:1 (2011)
Primary pupil–teacher ratio:	34:1 (2011)
Secondary pupil–teacher ratio:	24:1 (2010)

Primary school comprises seven years and secondary five, with cycles of three and two years. Some 66 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2010). The school year starts in March.

Tertiary

Higher education institutions include National University of Lesotho; Lesotho Institute of Public Administration and Management; Lesotho College of Education; Lerotholi Polytechnic; and Lesotho Agricultural College. Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 92 per cent (2010).

Further information

Lesotho Government Portal: www.gov.ls

Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org

Commonwealth Education Online: www.cedol.org

Education institutions

Ministry of Education and Training: www.education.gov.ls

Council on Higher Education: www.che.ac.ls

Examinations Council of Lesotho: www.ecol.org.ls

National University of Lesotho: www.nul.ls

Lerotholi Polytechnic: www.lp.ac.ls

Lesotho College of Education: www.lce.ac.ls