

# Brunei Darussalam



## KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	1984
Population:	412,000 (2012)
GDP p.c. growth:	-0.3% p.a. 1990–2012
UN HDI 2012:	world ranking 30
Official language:	Malay
Time:	GMT plus 8hr
Currency:	Brunei dollar (Br\$)

## Geography

Area:	5,765 sq km
Coastline:	161 km
Capital:	Bandar Seri Begawan

Brunei Darussalam (*Brunei* – 'Abode of Peace') is a small state in South-East Asia on the north-west coast of the island of Borneo, in the Indonesian Archipelago. Its 161 km coastline faces the South China Sea. On the land side, it is enclosed by the Malaysian state of Sarawak, which divides it in two.

The districts of Brunei–Muara, Tutong and Belait make up the larger, western part of the country; Temburong district the east.

**Topography:** The coastal plain is intersected by rivers descending from the hilly hinterland. To the east are mountains, the highest

point being Bukit Pagon at 1,812 metres. Most towns and villages are beside estuaries.

**Climate:** Tropical, with high humidity and heavy rainfall. There is no distinct wet season; the wettest months are January and November. Much of the rain falls in sudden thundery showers.

**Environment:** The most significant environmental issue is seasonal smoke/haze resulting from forest fires in Indonesia.

**Vegetation:** Mangrove swamps lie along the coast, and forest covers 72 per cent of the land area, a large part of this being primary forest, dense in places and of great genetic diversity. There are 15 forest reserves, covering about 40 per cent of the total land area. The government plans to increase the area of the forest reserves. Around 15 per cent of the land area is cultivated.

**Wildlife:** Most of the mammals are small and nocturnal, including tree shrews, moon rats and mouse deer. There are numerous bird species, especially hornbills. Some 34 mammal species and 24 bird species are thought to be endangered (2012).

**Main towns:** Bandar Seri Begawan (capital, pop. 76,200 in 2009, comprising Kampong Ayer 42,500), Kuala Belait (28,400), Seria (28,300), Tutong (21,500), Muara and Bangar.

**Transport:** The country has 3,030 km of roads, 81 per cent paved. The main deep-water port is at Muara, with a dedicated container terminal. The Brunei, Belait and Tutong rivers provide an important means of transport. Passenger vessels and water-taxis run between the shallow draught port at Bandar Seri Begawan, Temburong district, and the Malaysian port of Limbang. Brunei International Airport is six km north-east of the capital.

## Society

### KEY FACTS 2012

Population per sq km:	72
Life expectancy:	78 years
Net primary enrolment:	92%

**Population:** 412,000 (2012); 76 per cent of people live in urban areas, concentrated along the coast; growth 2.1 per cent p.a. 1990–2012; birth rate 16 per 1,000 people (36 in 1970); life expectancy 78 years (67 in 1970).

Malays comprise some two-thirds of the population, and Chinese (about 11 per cent), Europeans, Indians and other races the balance.

### Did you know?

Brunei Darussalam is a monarchy.

Scholarships for doctoral study are awarded by Brunei Darussalam to citizens of other Commonwealth countries under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.



**Language:** Official language is Malay; English is widely spoken. Other languages include Chinese (various dialects), Tamil, Iban and Dusun.

**Religion:** Official religion is Islam; minorities of Buddhists, Christians, Confucians and Taoists. The national ideology, *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB, Malay Muslim monarchy) fuses Islamic values and Brunei Malay culture.

**Health:** Public spending on health was two per cent of GDP in 2011. There are ten hospitals, health clinics, travelling clinics and a flying doctor service. Infant mortality was seven per 1,000 live births in 2012 (63 in 1960). Malaria has been completely eradicated.

**Education:** Public spending on education was three per cent of GDP in 2012. The primary component of a new education system was introduced during 2009–11. Under this system, there are six years of primary school, starting at the age of six and leading to Primary School Assessment, or Penilaian Sekolah Rendah, and, depending on academic ability, either four or five years of secondary school, leading to the Brunei–Cambridge or London Edexcel International GCE O-Level exams. The school year starts in January.

On the establishment of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) in Bandar Seri Begawan in 1985, local pursuit of degree courses became possible. The government, nevertheless, continued to award scholarships to qualified Brunei citizens to undertake courses of study not yet available at UBD and many Bruneians continue their studies in other Commonwealth countries or other countries such as the USA. Other institutions at tertiary level include the Jefri Bolkiah College of Engineering at Kuala Belait; and the Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University and Institut Teknologi Brunei at Gadong, Bandar Seri Begawan. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 1.70:1 (2011). There is virtually no illiteracy among people aged 15–24.

**Media:** *Borneo Bulletin* is an English-language daily newspaper. *Media Permata* is published daily in Malay, and *BruDirect* is an online news service.

Radio Television Brunei provides radio and television services, broadcasting in Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese and Gurkhali. Foreign TV stations are available via a cable network.

There are 89 personal computers per 1,000 people (2005).

**Communications:** Country code 673; internet domain '.bn'. Coin- and card-operated public telephones are available throughout the country. There is good mobile phone coverage in and around the main towns, particularly in the north-west.

There are 172 main telephone lines, 1,139 mobile phone subscriptions and 603 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

**Public holidays:** New Year's Day, Chinese New Year, National Day (23 February), Royal Brunei Armed Forces Day (31 May), Sultan's Birthday (15 July) and Christmas Day.

Religious festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Prophet's Birthday, Isra Mikraj (Ascension of the Prophet), First Day of Ramadan, Nuzul al-Quraan (Anniversary of the Revelation of the Quran), Hari Raya Aidil Fitri (Eid al-Fitr/end of Ramadan), Hari Raya Aidil Adha (Eid al-Adha/Feast of the Sacrifice) and Hijriah (Islamic New Year).

## Economy

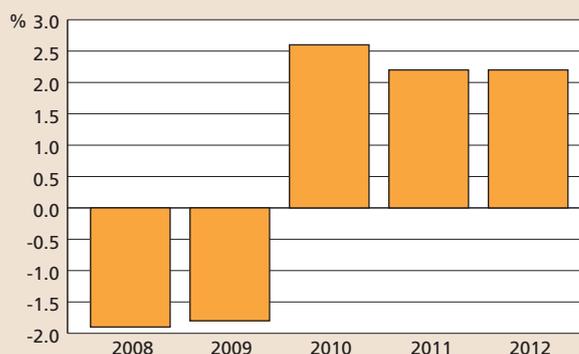
### KEY FACTS 2012

GDP:	US\$17.0bn
GDP p.c.:	US\$41,130
GDP growth:	0.6% p.a. 2008–12
Inflation:	1.2% p.a. 2008–12

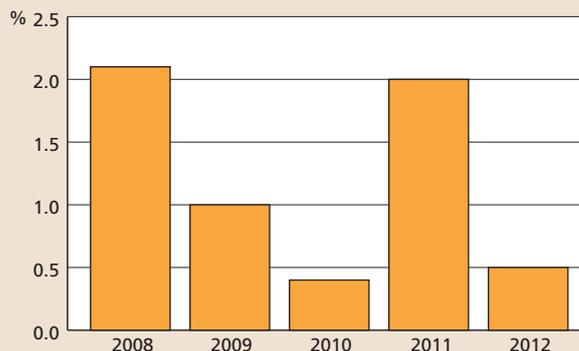
Due to its extensive resources of oil and gas and small population, Brunei is among the world's richer countries. The oil and gas sector dominates the economy and generates the bulk of export earnings and government revenues. Brunei is vulnerable to fluctuations in world prices: the slump in oil prices was largely responsible for negative growth in the 1980s.

The economy and social infrastructure have been developed through a series of national development programmes. During the 1990s, the emphasis was on social services and public utilities. This continued into the 2000s, together with diversification of manufacturing and encouragement of private investment, including foreign investment. Major projects include a gas pipeline,

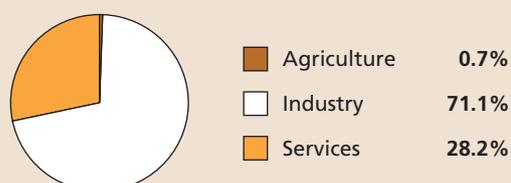
Real Growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by Sector (2012)



a power plant, upgrade of the international airport, development at the port of Muara, and an industrial park with a methanol plant that began production and exports in mid-2010.

As the regional economic crisis of 1997–98 receded, the government announced plans to encourage fuller private-sector participation in public enterprises to promote foreign investment – including, for the first time, allowing foreigners to own land in Brunei – and for the country to become a regional trade and services centre.

The economy benefited from high global energy prices in the early 2000s, with little inflation. It slowed in 2007 (with a growth rate of 0.2 per cent) and, in the strongly adverse climate of the world economic downturn, shrank in 2008 (–1.9 per cent) and 2009 (–1.8 per cent) before returning to good steady growth of two to three per cent p.a. in 2010–14, when energy prices were buoyant again.

### Oil and gas

The oil and gas sector contributes about 68 per cent of GDP (2011) and the major part of exports. Average daily oil production in 2012 was 158,000 barrels. Estimates of oil and gas reserves are rising with new offshore discoveries. Proven reserves of oil were estimated in January 2013 to be 1.1 billion barrels, and of gas, 300 billion cubic metres.

### Constitution

Status:	National monarchy
Legislature:	Legislative Council of Brunei Darussalam
Independence:	1 January 1984

### History

The pre-Islamic history of Brunei is unclear, but archaeological evidence shows the country to have been trading with the Asian mainland as early as CE 518. Islam became predominant during the 14th century and the Brunei Sultanate rose to prominence in the 15th and 16th centuries, when it controlled coastal areas of North-West Borneo, parts of Kalimantan and the Philippines. The Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish began arriving after the 16th century. Brunei lost outlying possessions to the Spanish and the Dutch and its power gradually declined as the British and Dutch colonial empires expanded.

In the 19th century the Sultan of Brunei sought British support in defending the coast against Dayak pirates, and ennobled James Brooke, a British adventurer, as Rajah of Sarawak in 1839. The British proceeded to annex the island of Labuan in 1846. North Borneo became a British protected state in 1888 and Brunei voluntarily accepted the status of a British protected state under the Sultan, with Britain having charge of its foreign relations. The loss of Limbang district to Sarawak in 1890 split Brunei into two and remains an obstacle to good relations with Malaysia to this day.

In 1906 a treaty was signed between Britain and Brunei making Brunei a full protectorate. The treaty assured the succession of the ruling dynasty, with the arrangement that a British resident would advise the Sultan on all matters except those concerning local customs and religion.

Under the 1959 constitution, the Sultan is the head of state with full executive authority and is assisted and advised by five councils – the Religious Council, the Privy Council, the Council of Cabinet Ministers, the Legislative Council and the Council of Succession.

The Legislative Council was suspended in 1984, since when the Sultan has ruled through emergency decree. He has sole power to amend the provisions of existing laws. There are no elections; the last election was held in 1962. The national ideology, *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB), invokes Islam and Brunei's history in support of the Sultan's absolute power, as well as the paramountcy of the Malays in Brunei.

In September 2004 a Legislative Council was revived and 21 members appointed, with no immediate timetable for election of the proposed 15 directly elected members. In September 2005 the Sultan dissolved the existing Legislative Council and appointed 29 new members.

### Politics

Next elections:	no elections
Head of state:	Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah
Head of government:	the Sultan

The Parti Kebangsaan Demokratik Brunei (PKDB) or Brunei National Democratic Party, with a membership of about 3,000, mostly Malay businessmen and professionals, was formed in 1985. It called for free elections and an end to emergency rule. The party was de-registered in 1988, after failing to conform to the requirements of the law. The only legal and registered political party at present is the Parti Pembangunan (National Development Party).



In 1929 large resources of oil were discovered in Seria; these and subsequent discoveries made Brunei a wealthy country. In 1959 a written constitution was introduced, giving Brunei internal self-rule and allowing for a legislative council. The residency agreement of 1906 was revoked, transferring the resident's power to the Sultan and appointed officials below him.

During 1962 there were sporadic and unsuccessful attempts at rebellion, instigated by the North Borneo Liberation Army. These were put down with the help of British Gurkha units flown in from Singapore and the Sultan declared a state of emergency. This has been renewed every two years since.

In the 1960s, Brunei considered merging with the Federation of Malaysia, which at the time included the provinces of the Malaysian peninsula, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore. The idea was opposed by the Brunei People's Party, which at that time held 16 seats in the 33-member legislative council, and which proposed instead the creation of a state comprising Northern Borneo, Sarawak and Sabah. The Sultan finally decided against joining the Federation.

In 1971, under an agreement with the UK, Brunei ceased to be a British protected state. The constitution was amended to give the Sultan full control over all internal matters, the UK retaining responsibility for defence and foreign affairs. Brunei became a fully independent sovereign state on 1 January 1984.

The present Sultan, head of state and government and concurrently Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Finance Minister is Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah. Official policy is to encourage economic growth while preserving cultural and religious values.

## International relations

Brunei Darussalam is a member of Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

## Traveller information

**Immigration and customs:** Passports must be valid at least until the date of departure. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. Prohibited imports include alcohol; although adults who are not Muslims are permitted a duty-free allowance, which must be declared on arrival.

**Travel within the country:** Traffic drives on the left, and car hire is available for those with an international driving permit.

Taxis are widely available in Bandar Seri Begawan; fares are generally metered. A national bus service links the main towns.

**Travel health:** Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include dengue fever, hepatitis A, hepatitis B and Japanese encephalitis.

There were 209,000 tourist arrivals in 2012.

## Further information

Prime Minister's Office: [www.pmo.gov.bn](http://www.pmo.gov.bn)

Brunei Tourism: [www.bruneitourism.travel](http://www.bruneitourism.travel)

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

Commonwealth of Nations:  
[www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Brunei\\_Darussalam](http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Brunei_Darussalam)

## Media

*Borneo Bulletin:* [borneobulletin.brunei-online.com](http://borneobulletin.brunei-online.com)

Radio Television Brunei: [www.rtb.gov.bn](http://www.rtb.gov.bn)

BruDirect: [www.brudirect.com](http://www.brudirect.com)

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