

## SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY PROFILE

Capital: Pretoria (Tshwane)



### Quick Facts

Population: 44,187,637

GDP (Purchasing Power Parity): \$533.2 billion

GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity): \$12,000

GDP composition by sector:

Agriculture: 3.4%

Industry: 31.6%

Services: 65.1%

Size of labor force: 15.23 million

Labor force: by occupation:

Agriculture: 30%

Industry: 25%

Services: 45%

Unemployment Rate: 25.2%

Population below poverty line (\$2/day): 50%

Life expectancy at birth: 42.73

HIV/AIDS – adult prevalence rate: 21.5%

Adult Literacy Rate (age 15 and over):

Male: 87%

Female: 85.7%

For more information: <http://cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sf.html>

### Political History

The first inhabitants of South Africa were the Khoikhoi hunter and gatherer people. When the Dutch first settled in South Africa, they were forced to trade with the Khoikhoi out of necessity. Along with fellow Calvinists the French Huguenots, the Dutch (the two groups and others intermarried to become Afrikaners) used slavery for labor and decimated the Khoikhoi through forced migration and diseases. Migration was not only forced on the Khoikhoi, but also the Zule and Sotho populations.

In 1814, the British acquired sovereignty over the Cape of Good Hope. When slavery was abolished in 1833, authorities in South Africa responded negatively. By

1941, they had passed the Masters and Servants Ordinance which reinforced white rule in South Africa. With the British gaining more economic influence as the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, the Boers (Dutch farmers) began to feel like they were losing a grip on the economy. The first of two Anglo-Boer wars took place in 1880-1881 and ended with a decisive Boer victory. The British were persistent and maintained their economic hold on South Africa. The second Anglo-Boer war lasted from 1899 to 1902 and resulted in the death of 26,000 Boers, who died from disease and concentration camps.

As the 1900s rolled in, the British were more powerful than ever. The Afrikaners felt less important than ever and blacks and coloreds were totally marginalized. In 1910, the Act of Union brought the various states of South Africa together for whites. It was still a land of oppression and marginalization for blacks. The African National Congress (ANC) was founded in 1923 by Pizley ka Isaka Seme. As blacks gained access to employment in the mines in the 1920s, whites began to feel threatened. The *swart gevaar* (the black threat) became an issue for whites and was the main issue during the 1929 elections. In 1939, the government of South Africa passed the Native Lands Act, which gave native blacks 8% of the land. Whites only made up 20% of the population, but they held onto 90% of the land.

From 1948, the government officially implemented the segregated apartheid system. Through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was increasing resistance. Steve Biko led blacks through the Black Consciousness Movement, which led to the Soweto riots on April 30, 1976. During these riots, school children protested being taught Afrikaans in school. The military fired indiscriminately on the crowd, killing 23 on the first day of the riots. Many people were murdered by the brutal tactics of the police and military during the riots. This is only one example of the many uprisings during the apartheid era.

The 1980s brought international pressure in the form of economic and cultural sanctions. On February 2, 1990, President F.W. de Klerk announced the de-banning of the ANC and the African National Congress as well as the release of Nelson Mandela. In 1992, a white electorate voted 68% in favor of dismantling apartheid. In 1994, in the country's first truly democratic elections, the ANC won overwhelmingly and Nelson Mandela became president. From 1994 – 1999, archbishop Desmond Tutu led South Africans, black and white, through the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 1997, power was transferred to Thabo Mbeki, who currently leads South Africa. Mbeki was under a lot of criticism at first, but as 2005 ended and 2006 began, he is enjoying more popularity both domestically and abroad.

### **The Economy**

South Africa is a middle-income country with an abundant supply of natural resources; well-developed financial, legal, communications, energy, and transport sectors; a very strong stock exchange; and a modern infrastructure supporting an efficient distribution of goods to major urban centers throughout the region. However, growth has not been strong enough to lower South Africa's high unemployment rate, and daunting economic problems remain from the apartheid era - especially poverty and lack of economic empowerment among the disadvantaged groups. The primary agricultural products in South Africa are corn, wheat, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables; beef, poultry, mutton, wool, and dairy products. The primary industries are mining (world's largest producer of

platinum, gold, chromium), automobile assembly, metalworking, machinery, textiles, iron and steel, chemicals, fertilizer, foodstuffs, and commercial ship repair. Distribution of income is highly inequitable. The poorest 10% in South Africa make just 1.1% of the income. The richest 10% make a whopping 45.9%. With violent crime on the rise, the economy could slide into a fragile state, but its strength is hard to find anywhere else in the region. The 2010 FIFA World Cup will bring enormous amounts of revenue and jobs to South Africa in the coming years.

### **Advocacy Issues**