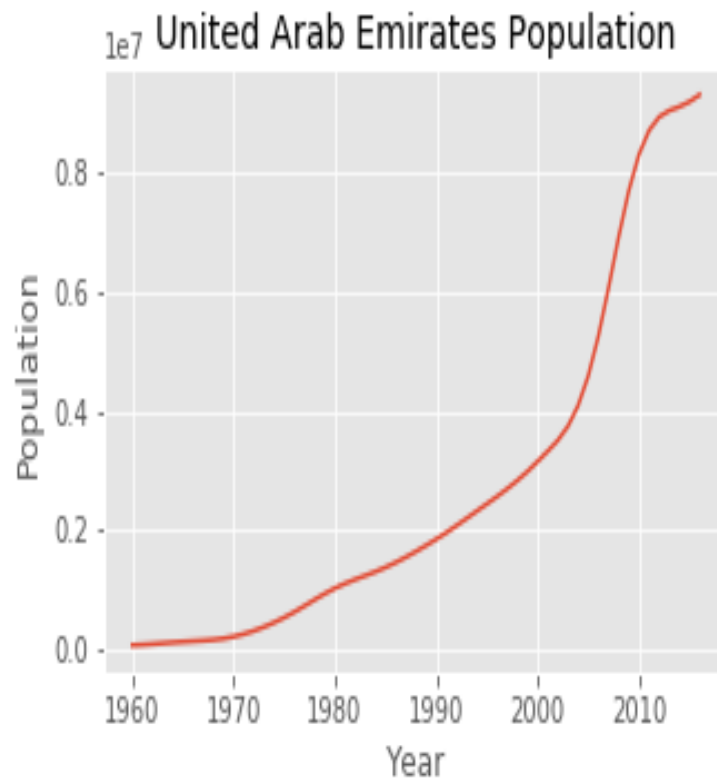


# United Arab Emirates



The United Arab Emirates ( ( listen); UAE; Arabic: **دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة** *Dawlat al-Imārāt al-'Arabīyah al-Muttaḥidah*), sometimes simply called the Emirates (Arabic: **الإمارات** *al-Imārāt*), is a federal absolute monarchy sovereign state in Western Asia at the southeast end of the Arabian Peninsula on the Persian Gulf, bordering Oman to the east and Saudi Arabia to the south, as well as sharing maritime borders with Qatar to the west and Iran to the north. In 2013, the UAE's population was 9.2 million, of which 1.4 million are Emirati citizens and 7.8 million are expatriates. The country is a federation of seven emirates, and was established on 2 December 1971. The constituent emirates are Abu Dhabi (which serves as the capital), Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain. Each emirate is governed by an absolute monarch; together, they jointly form the Federal Supreme Council. One of the monarchs (traditionally always the Emir of Abu Dhabi) is selected as the President of the United Arab Emirates. Islam is the official religion of the UAE. The UAE's oil reserves are the seventh-largest in the world while its natural gas reserves are the world's seventeenth-largest. Sheikh Zayed, ruler of Abu Dhabi and the first President of the UAE, oversaw the development of the Emirates and steered oil revenues into healthcare, education and infrastructure. The UAE's economy is the most diversified in the Gulf Cooperation Council, while its most populous city of Dubai is an important global city and an international aviation hub. Nevertheless, the country is much less reliant on oil and gas than previous years and is economically focusing on tourism and business. The UAE's rising international profile has led some analysts to identify it as a regional and middle power. == History == === Antiquity === The land of the Emirates has been occupied for thousands of years. Stone tools recovered from Jebel Faya in the emirate of Sharjah reveal a settlement of people from Africa some 127,000 years ago and a stone tool used for butchering animals discovered at Jebel Barakah on the Arabian coast suggests an even older habitation from 130,000 years ago. There is no proof of contact with the outside world at that stage, although in time it developed with civilisations in Mesopotamia and Iran. This contact persisted and became wide-ranging, probably motivated by trade in copper from the Hajar Mountains, which commenced around 3000 BCE.

In ancient times, Al Hasa (today's Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia) was part of Al Bahreyn and adjoined Greater Oman (today's UAE and Oman). From the second century AD, there was a movement of tribes from Al Bahreyn towards the lower Gulf, together with a migration among the Azdite Qahtani (or Yamani) and Quda'ah tribal groups from south-west Arabia towards central Oman. Sassanid groups were present on the Batinah coast. In 637, Julfar (in the area of today's Ra's al-Khaimah) was an important port that was used as a staging post for the Islamic invasion of the Sassanian Empire. The area of the Al Ain/Buraimi Oasis was known as Tu'am and was an important trading post for camel routes between the coast and the Arabian interior. The earliest Christian site in the UAE was first discovered in the 1990s, an extensive monastic complex on what is now known as Sir Bani Yas Island and which dates back to the 7th century. Thought to be Nestorian and built in 600 AD, the church appears to have been abandoned peacefully in 750 AD. It forms a rare physical link to a legacy of Christianity which is thought to have spread across the peninsula from 50 to 350 AD following trade routes. Certainly, by the 5th century, Oman had a bishop named John – the last bishop of Oman being Etienne, in 676 AD. === Islam === The spread of Islam to the North Eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula is thought to have followed directly from a letter sent by the Islamic prophet, Muhammad, to the rulers of Oman in 630 AD, nine years after the hijrah. This led to a group of rulers travelling to Medina, converting to Islam and subsequently driving a successful uprising against the unpopular Sassanids, who dominated the Northern coasts at the time. Following the death of Muhammad, the new Islamic communities south of the Persian Gulf threatened to disintegrate, with insurrections against the Muslim leaders. The Caliph Abu Bakr sent an army from the capital Medina which completed its reconquest of the territory (the Ridda Wars) with the battle of Dibba in which 10,000 lives are thought to have been lost. This assured the integrity of the Caliphate and the unification of the Arabian Peninsula under the newly emerging Rashidun Caliphate. === Ottoman and Portuguese era === The harsh desert environment led to the emergence of the "versatile tribesman", nomadic groups who subsisted due to a variety of economic activities, including animal husbandry, agriculture and hunting. The seasonal movements of these groups led to not only frequent clashes between groups but also the establishment of seasonal and semi-seasonal settlements and centres. These formed tribal groupings whose names are still carried by modern Emiratis, including the Bani Yas and Al Bu Falah of Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Liwa and the Al Bahrain coast, the Dhawahir, Awamir, Al Ali and Manasir of the interior, the Sharqiyyin of the east coast and the Qawasim to the North. By the 16th century, ports in the Persian Gulf and part of the population that today form the coastal Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, came under the direct influence of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the Portuguese, English and Dutch colonial forces also appeared in the Persian Gulf region, with the entire northern coast remaining under Persian rule throughout. By the 17th century, the Bani Yas confederation was the dominant force in most of the area now known as Abu Dhabi. The Portuguese maintained an influence over the coastal settlements, building forts in the wake of the bloody 16th-century conquests of coastal communities by Albuquerque and the Portuguese commanders who followed him – particularly on the east coast at Muscat, Sohar and Khor Fakkan. The southern coast of the Persian Gulf was known to the British as the "Pirate Coast", as boats of the Al Qawasim (Al Qasimi) federation based in the area harassed British-flagged shipping from the 17th century into the 19th. British expeditions to protect the Indian trade from raiders at Ras al-Khaimah led to campaigns against that headquarters and other harbours along the coast in 1809 and subsequently 1819. The following year, Britain and a number of local rulers signed a treaty to combat piracy along the Persian Gulf coast, giving rise to the term Trucial States, which came to define the status of the coastal emirates. Further treaties were signed in 1843 and 1853. Primarily in reaction to the ambitions of other European countries, namely France and Russia, the British and the Trucial Sheikdoms established closer bonds in an 1892 treaty, similar to treaties entered into by the British with other Persian Gulf principalities. The sheikhs agreed not to dispose of any territory except to the British and not to enter into relationships with any foreign government other than the British without their consent. In return, the British promised to protect the Trucial Coast from all aggression by sea and to help in case of land attack. This treaty, the Exclusive Agreement, was signed by the Rulers of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah and Umm Al Quwain between 6 and 8 March 1892. It was subsequently ratified by the Viceroy of India and the British Government in London. British maritime policing meant that pearling fleets could operate in relative security. However, the British prohibition of the slave trade meant an important source of income was lost to some sheikhs and merchants. The charge of piracy is disputed by modern Emirati historians, including the current Ruler of Sharjah in his 1986 book *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf*. In 1869, the Qubaisat tribe settled at Khawr al Udayd and tried to enlist the support of the Ottomans, whose flag was occasionally

seen flying there. Khawr al Udayd was claimed by Abu Dhabi at that time, a claim supported by the British. In 1906, the British Political Resident, Percy Cox, confirmed in writing to the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Zayed bin Khalifa Al Nahyan ('Zayed the Great') that Khawr al Udayd belonged to his sheikhdom. === British era and discovery of oil === During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the pearling industry thrived, providing both income and employment to the people of the Persian Gulf. The First World War had a severe impact on the industry, but it was the economic depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, coupled with the invention of the cultured pearl, that wiped out the trade. The remnants of the trade eventually faded away shortly after the Second World War, when the newly independent Government of India imposed heavy taxation on pearls imported from the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. The decline of pearling resulted in extreme economic hardship in the Trucial States. The British set up a development office that helped in some small developments in the emirates. The seven sheikhs of the emirates then decided to form a council to coordinate matters between them and took over the development office. In 1952, they formed the Trucial States Council, and appointed Adi Bitar, Dubai's Sheikh Rashid's legal advisor, as Secretary General and Legal Advisor to the Council. The council was terminated once the United Arab Emirates was formed. The tribal nature of society and the lack of definition of borders between emirates frequently led to disputes, settled either through mediation or, more rarely, force. The Trucial Oman Scouts was a small military force used by the British to keep the peace. In 1955, the United Kingdom sided with Abu Dhabi in the latter's dispute with Oman over the Buraimi Oasis, another territory to the south. A 1974 agreement between Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia would have settled the Abu Dhabi-Saudi border dispute, but this has not been ratified. The UAE's border with Oman was ratified in 2008. In 1922, the British government secured undertakings from the trucial rulers not to sign concessions with foreign companies. Aware of the potential for the development of natural resources such as oil, following finds in Persia (from 1908) and Mesopotamia (from 1927), a British-led oil company, the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), showed an interest in the region. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC, later to become British Petroleum, or BP) had a 23.75% share in IPC. From 1935, onshore concessions to explore for oil were agreed with local rulers, with APOC signing the first one on behalf of Petroleum Concessions Ltd (PCL), an associate company of IPC. APOC was prevented from developing the region alone because of the restrictions of the Red Line Agreement, which required it to operate through IPC. A number of options between PCL and the trucial rulers were signed, providing useful revenue for communities experiencing poverty following the collapse of the pearl trade. However, the wealth of oil which the rulers could see from the revenues accruing to surrounding countries such as Iran, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia remained elusive. The first bore holes in Abu Dhabi were drilled by IPC's operating company, Petroleum Development (Trucial Coast) Ltd (PDTC) at Ras Sadr in 1950, with a 13,000-foot-deep (4,000-metre) bore hole taking a year to drill and turning out dry, at the tremendous cost at the time of £1 million. In 1953, a subsidiary of BP, D'Arcy Exploration Ltd, obtained an offshore concession from the ruler of Abu Dhabi. BP joined with Compagnie Française des Pétroles (later Total) to form operating companies, Abu Dhabi Marine Areas Ltd (ADMA) and Dubai Marine Areas Ltd (DUMA). A number of undersea oil surveys were carried out, including one led by the famous marine explorer Jacques Cousteau. In 1958, a floating platform rig was towed from Hamburg, Germany, and positioned over the Umm Shaif pearl bed, in Abu Dhabi waters, where drilling began. In March, it struck oil in the Upper Thamama, a rock formation that would provide many valuable oil finds. This was the first commercial discovery of the Trucial Coast, leading to the first exports of oil in 1962. ADMA made further offshore discoveries at Zakum and elsewhere, and other companies made commercial finds such as the Fateh oilfield off Dubai and the Mubarak field off Sharjah (shared with Iran). PDTC had continued its onshore exploration activities, drilling five more bore holes that were also dry, but on 27 October 1960, the company discovered oil in commercial quantities at the Murban No. 3 well on the coast near Tarif. In 1962, PDTC became the Abu Dhabi Petroleum Company. As oil revenues increased, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, undertook a massive construction program, building schools, housing, hospitals and roads. When Dubai's oil exports commenced in 1969, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, was able to invest the revenues from the limited reserves found to spark the diversification drive that would create the modern global city of Dubai. === Independence === By 1966, it had become clear the British government could no longer afford to administer and protect what is now the United Arab Emirates. British MPs debated the preparedness of the Royal Navy to defend the sheikhdoms. Secretary of State for Defence Denis Healey reported that the British Armed Forces were seriously overstretched and in some respects dangerously under-equipped to defend the sheikhdoms. On 24 January 1968, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced the government's

decision, reaffirmed in March 1971 by Prime Minister Edward Heath to end the treaty relationships with the seven Trucial Sheikhdoms, that had been, together with Bahrain and Qatar, under British protection. Days after the announcement, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, fearing vulnerability, tried to persuade the British to honour the protection treaties by offering to pay the full costs of keeping the British Armed Forces in the Emirates. The British Labour government rejected the offer. After Labour MP Goronwy Roberts informed Sheikh Zayed of the news of British withdrawal, the nine Persian Gulf sheikhdoms attempted to form a union of Arab emirates, but by mid-1971 they were still unable to agree on terms of union even though the British treaty relationship was to expire in December of that year. Fears of vulnerability were realized the day before independence. An Iranian destroyer group broke formation from an exercise in the lower Gulf, sailing to the Tunb islands. The islands were taken by force, civilians and Arab defenders alike allowed to flee. A British warship stood idle during the course of the invasion. A destroyer group approached the island Abu Musa as well. But there, Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed Al Qasimi had already negotiated with the Iranian Shah, and the island was quickly leased to Iran for \$3 million a year. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia laid claim to swathes of Abu Dhabi. Bahrain became independent in August, and Qatar in September 1971. When the British-Trucial Sheikhdoms treaty expired on 1 December 1971, they became fully independent. The rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai decided to form a union between their two emirates independently, prepare a constitution, then call the rulers of the other five emirates to a meeting and offer them the opportunity to join. It was also agreed between the two that the constitution be written by 2 December 1971. On that date, at the Dubai Guesthouse Palace, four other emirates agreed to enter into a union called the United Arab Emirates. Bahrain and Qatar declined their invitations to join the union. Ras al-Khaimah joined later, in early 1972. In February 1972, the Federal National Council (FNC) was created; it was a 40-member consultative body appointed by the seven rulers. The UAE joined the Arab League in 1971. It was a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council in May 1981, with Abu Dhabi hosting the first summit. UAE forces joined the allies against Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. === After independence === The UAE supported military operations from the US and other coalition nations engaged in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan (2001) and Saddam Hussein in Iraq (2003) as well as operations supporting the Global War on Terror for the Horn of Africa at Al Dhafra Air Base located outside of Abu Dhabi. The air base also supported Allied operations during the 1991 Persian Gulf War and Operation Northern Watch. The country had already signed a military defense agreement with the U.S. in 1994 and one with France in 1995. In January 2008, France and the UAE signed a deal allowing France to set up a permanent military base in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. The UAE joined international military operations in Libya in March 2011. On 2 November 2004, the UAE's first president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, died. His eldest son, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, succeeded as Emir of Abu Dhabi. In accordance with the constitution, the UAE's Supreme Council of Rulers elected Khalifa as president. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan succeeded Khalifa as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. In January 2006, Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the prime minister of the UAE and the ruler of Dubai, died, and the crown prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum assumed both roles. The first ever national elections were held in the UAE on 16 December 2006. A small number of hand-picked voters chose half of the members of the Federal National Council, an advisory body. UAE has largely escaped the Arab Spring, which other countries have had; however, more than 100 Emirati activists were jailed and tortured because they sought reforms. Furthermore, some people have had their nationality revoked. Mindful of the protests in nearby Bahrain, in November 2012 the UAE outlawed online mockery of its own government or attempts to organise public protests through social media. == Geography == The United Arab Emirates is situated in Middle East, bordering the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, between Oman and Saudi Arabia; it is in a strategic location slightly south of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital transit point for world crude oil. The UAE lies between 22°30' and 26°10' north latitude and between 51° and 56°25' east longitude. It shares a 530-kilometre (330 mi) border with Saudi Arabia on the west, south, and southeast, and a 450-kilometre (280 mi) border with Oman on the southeast and northeast. The land border with Qatar in the Khawr al Udayd area is about nineteen kilometres (12 miles) in the northwest; however, it is a source of ongoing dispute. Following Britain's military departure from the UAE in 1971, and its establishment as a new state, the UAE laid claim to islands resulting in disputes with Iran that remain unresolved. The UAE also disputes claim on other islands against the neighboring state of Qatar. The largest emirate, Abu Dhabi, accounts for 87% of the UAE's total area (67,340 square kilometres (26,000 sq mi)). The smallest emirate, Ajman, encompasses only 259 km<sup>2</sup> (100 sq mi)(see figure). The UAE coast stretches for more than 650 km (404 mi) along the southern shore of the

Persian Gulf. Most of the coast consists of salt pans that extend far inland. The largest natural harbor is at Dubai, although other ports have been dredged at Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and elsewhere. Numerous islands are found in the Persian Gulf, and the ownership of some of them has been the subject of international disputes with both Iran and Qatar. The smaller islands, as well as many coral reefs and shifting sandbars, are a menace to navigation. Strong tides and occasional windstorms further complicate ship movements near the shore. The UAE also has a stretch of the Al Buhayrah coast of the Gulf of Oman, although the Musandam Peninsula, the very tip of Arabia by the Strait of Hormuz, is an exclave of Oman separated by the UAE. South and west of Abu Dhabi, vast, rolling sand dunes merge into the Rub al-Khali (Empty Quarter) of Saudi Arabia. The desert area of Abu Dhabi includes two important oases with adequate underground water for permanent settlements and cultivation. The extensive Liwa Oasis is in the south near the undefined border with Saudi Arabia. About 100 km (62 mi) to the northeast of Liwa is the Al-Buraimi oasis, which extends on both sides of the Abu Dhabi-Oman border. Lake Zakher is a human-made lake near the border with Oman. Prior to withdrawing from the area in 1971, Britain delineated the internal borders among the seven emirates in order to preempt territorial disputes that might hamper formation of the federation. In general, the rulers of the emirates accepted the British intervention, but in the case of boundary disputes between Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and also between Dubai and Sharjah, conflicting claims were not resolved until after the UAE became independent. The most complicated borders were in the Al-Hajar al-Gharbi Mountains, where five of the emirates contested jurisdiction over more than a dozen enclaves.

=== Flora and fauna === The oases grow date palms, acacia and eucalyptus trees. In the desert, the flora is very sparse and consists of grasses and thorn bushes. The indigenous fauna had come close to extinction because of intensive hunting, which has led to a conservation program on Bani Yas Island initiated by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in the 1970s, resulting in the survival of, for example, Arabian Oryx, Arabian camel and leopards. Coastal fish and mammals consist mainly of mackerel, perch, and tuna, as well as sharks and whales.

=== Climate === The climate of the UAE is subtropical-arid with hot summers and warm winters. The hottest months are July and August, when average maximum temperatures reach above 45 °C (113 °F) on the coastal plain. In the Al Hajar Mountains, temperatures are considerably lower, a result of increased elevation. Average minimum temperatures in January and February are between 10 and 14 °C (50 and 57 °F). During the late summer months, a humid southeastern wind known as Sharqi (i.e. "Easterner") makes the coastal region especially unpleasant. The average annual rainfall in the coastal area is less than 120 mm (4.7 in), but in some mountainous areas annual rainfall often reaches 350 mm (13.8 in). Rain in the coastal region falls in short, torrential bursts during the summer months, sometimes resulting in floods in ordinarily dry wadi beds. The region is prone to occasional, violent dust storms, which can severely reduce visibility. On 28 December 2004, there was snow in the UAE for the very first time, in the Jebel Jais mountain cluster. A few years later, there were more sightings of snow and hail. The Jebel Jais mountain cluster in Ras al-Khaimah has experienced snow only twice since records began.

== Politics == The United Arab Emirates is a federation of hereditary absolute monarchies. It is governed by a Federal Supreme Council made up of the seven emirs of Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Fujairah, Sharjah, Dubai, Ras al-Khaimah and Umm al-Qaiwain. All responsibilities not granted to the national government are reserved to the emirates. A percentage of revenues from each emirate is allocated to the UAE's central budget. Although elected by the Supreme Council, the presidency and prime ministership are essentially hereditary; the Emir of Abu Dhabi holds the presidency, and the Emir of Dubai is prime minister. All prime ministers but one have served concurrently as vice president. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan was the UAE's president from the nation's founding until his death on 2 November 2004. On the following day the Federal Supreme Council elected his son, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to the post. Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is the heir apparent. The UAE convened a half-elected Federal National Council in 2006. The FNC consists of 40 members drawn from all the emirates. Half are appointed by the rulers of the constituent emirates, and the other half are indirectly elected to serve two-year terms. However, the FNC is restricted to a largely consultative role. The UAE eGovernment is the extension of the UAE Federal Government in its electronic form. On 10 February 2016, 22-year-old Oxford and NYU-Abu Dhabi graduate Shamma Al Mazrui was named Minister of State for Youth Affairs, the youngest minister in the cabinet. Shaikh Mohammed noted that as head of the Youth Council, Al Mazrui will "represent the hopes of our youth". The UAE is frequently described as an "autocracy". According to the New York Times, the UAE is "an autocracy with the sheen of a progressive, modern state". The UAE ranks poorly in freedom indices measuring civil liberties and political rights. The UAE is annually ranked as "Not Free" in Freedom House's annual Freedom in the World report, which measures civil liberties and

political rights. The UAE also ranks poorly in the annual Reporters without Borders' Press Freedom Index. Al Nahyan family, one of the six ruling families of the United Arab Emirates, is believed to have a fortune of \$150 billion collectively as a family. === Foreign relations === The UAE has extensive diplomatic and commercial relations with other countries. It plays a significant role in OPEC and the UN, and is one of the founding members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The UAE was one of only three countries to recognise the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government (Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were the other two countries). The UAE maintained diplomatic relations with the Taliban until 11 September attacks in 2001. A hacker group calling itself GlobalLeaks distributed hacked emails from the inbox of Yousef Al Otaiba, UAE's Ambassador to US, which was covered by The New York Times, Huff Post and other major newspapers. Leaks show that the UAE supported a major effort to spread skepticism about Qatar in the United States. The New York Times further reported that UAE wanted to host Taliban embassy and used massive sums to influence decisions of D.C. diplomats. The UAE has long maintained close relations with Egypt and is Egypt's largest investor from the Arab world. Pakistan was the first country to formally recognize the UAE upon its formation and continues to be one of its major economic and trading partners; about 400,000 Pakistani expatriates are employed in the UAE. The UAE spends more than any other country in the world to influence U.S. policy and shape domestic debate, and it pays former high-level government officials who worked with it to carry out its agenda within the U.S. The largest expatriate presence in the UAE is Indian. Following British withdrawal from the UAE in 1971 and the establishment of the UAE as a state, the UAE disputed rights to a number of islands in the Persian Gulf against Iran. The UAE went so far as to bring the matter to the United Nations, but the case was dismissed. The dispute has not significantly impacted relations because of the large Iranian community presence and strong economic ties. In its dispute with the United States and Israel, Iran has repeatedly threatened to close the strait at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, a vital oil-trade route. Therefore, in July 2012, the UAE began operating a key overland oil pipeline which bypasses the Strait of Hormuz in order to mitigate any consequences of an Iranian shut-off. Commercially, the UK and Germany are the UAE's largest export markets and bilateral relations have long been close as a large number of their nationals reside in the UAE. Diplomatic relations between UAE and Japan were established as early as UAE's independence in December 1971. The two countries had always enjoyed friendly ties and trade between each other. Exports from the UAE to Japan include crude oil and natural gas and imports from Japan to UAE include cars and electric items. === Military === France and the United States have played the most strategically significant roles with defence cooperation agreements and military material provision. The UAE discussed with France the possibility of a purchase of 60 Rafale fighter aircraft in January 2013. The UAE helped the US launch its first air offensive against Islamic State targets in Syria. Although initially small in number, the UAE armed forces have grown significantly over the years and are presently equipped with some of the most modern weapon systems, purchased from a variety of outside countries, mainly France, the US and the UK (the former protector of the UAE). Most officers are graduates of the United Kingdom's Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, with others having attended the United States Military Academy at West Point, the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and St Cyr, the military academy of France. France opened the Abu Dhabi Base in May 2009. In March 2011, the UAE agreed to join the enforcement of the no-fly-zone over Libya by sending six F-16 and six Mirage 2000 multi-role fighter aircraft. During the Gulf war, the US had troops and equipment stationed in the UAE as well as other parts of the Persian Gulf. In 2015, UAE participated in the Saudi Arabian-led military intervention in Yemen against the Shia Houthis and forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was deposed in the 2011 uprising. UAE has been secretly buying foreign weapons and American F-16 through offset payments which were channelled to DC thinktanks such as Middle East Institute. On Friday 4 September 2015, at least 50 soldiers from the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain were killed in Marib Area of central Yemen. The Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack which was conducted using a Soviet-era rocket known as Tochka. It was later found out that this rocket targeted a weapons cache and caused a large explosion leading to the death of Emirati and Bahraini troops. According to SIPRI, between 2012 and 2016, the UAE was the 3rd largest importer of arms among countries in the world. Norway has suspended any kind of arms exports to the UAE due its involvement in Yemen War which on an estimate has killed 10 thousand people. === Political divisions === The United Arab Emirates is divided into seven emirates. Dubai is the most populated Emirate with 35.6% of the UAE population. The Emirate of Abu Dhabi has a further 31.2%, meaning that over two-thirds of the UAE population live in either Abu Dhabi or Dubai. Abu Dhabi has an area of 67,340 square kilometres (26,000 square miles), which is 86.7% of the country's total area, excluding the islands. It has a coastline extending for more than 400 km (250 mi)

and is divided for administrative purposes into three major regions. The Emirate of Dubai extends along the Persian Gulf coast of the UAE for approximately 72 km (45 mi). Dubai has an area of 3,885 square kilometres (1,500 square miles), which is equivalent to 5% of the country's total area, excluding the islands. The Emirate of Sharjah extends along approximately 16 km (10 mi) of the UAE's Persian Gulf coastline and for more than 80 km (50 mi) into the interior. The northern emirates which include Fujairah, Ajman, Ras al-Khaimah, and Umm al-Qaiwain all have a total area of 3,881 square kilometres (1,498 square miles). There are two areas under joint control. One is jointly controlled by Oman and Ajman, the other by Fujairah and Sharjah. There is an Omani exclave surrounded by UAE territory, known as Wadi Madha. It is located halfway between the Musandam peninsula and the rest of Oman in the Emirate of Sharjah. It covers approximately 75 square kilometres (29 square miles) and the boundary was settled in 1969. The north-east corner of Madha is closest to the Khor Fakkan-Fujairah road, barely 10 metres (33 feet) away. Within the Omani exclave of Madha, is a UAE exclave called Nahwa, also belonging to the Emirate of Sharjah. It is about eight kilometres (5.0 miles) on a dirt track west of the town of New Madha. It consists of about forty houses with its own clinic and telephone exchange.

== Law ==

The UAE has a federal court system. There are three main branches within the court structure: civil, criminal and Sharia law. The UAE's judicial system is derived from the civil law system and Sharia law. The court system consists of civil courts and Sharia courts. UAE's criminal and civil courts apply elements of Sharia law, codified into its criminal code and family law. Flogging is a punishment for criminal offences such as adultery, premarital sex and alcohol consumption. According to Sharia court rulings, flogging ranges from 80 to 200 lashes. Verbal abuse pertaining to a person's honour is illegal and punishable by 80 lashes. Between 2007 and 2014, many people in the UAE were sentenced to 100 lashes. More recently in 2015, two men were sentenced to 80 lashes for hitting and insulting a woman. In 2014, an expatriate in Abu Dhabi was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 80 lashes after alcohol consumption and raping a toddler. Alcohol consumption for Muslims is illegal and punishable by 80 lashes; many Muslims have been sentenced to 80 lashes for alcohol consumption. Sometimes 40 lashes are given. Illicit sex is sometimes penalized by 60 lashes. 80 lashes is the standard number for anyone sentenced to flogging in several emirates. Sharia courts have penalized domestic workers with floggings. In October 2013, a Filipino housemaid was sentenced to 100 lashes for illegitimate pregnancy. Drunk-driving is strictly illegal and punishable by 80 lashes; many expatriates have been sentenced to 80 lashes for drunk-driving. In Abu Dhabi, people have been sentenced to 80 lashes for kissing in public. Under UAE law, premarital sex is punishable by 100 lashes. Stoning is a legal punishment in the UAE. In May 2014, an Asian housemaid was sentenced to death by stoning in Abu Dhabi. Other expatriates have been sentenced to death by stoning for committing adultery. Between 2009 and 2013, several people were sentenced to death by stoning. Abortion is illegal and punishable by a maximum penalty of 100 lashes and up to five years in prison. In recent years, several people have retracted their guilty plea in illicit sex cases after being sentenced to stoning or 100 lashes. The punishment for committing adultery is 100 lashes for unmarried people and stoning to death for married people. Sharia courts have exclusive jurisdiction over family law cases and also have jurisdiction over several criminal cases including adultery, premarital sex, robbery, alcohol consumption and related crimes. The Sharia-based personal status law regulates matters such as marriage, divorce and child custody. The Islamic personal status law is applied to Muslims and sometimes non-Muslims. Non-Muslim expatriates can be liable to Sharia rulings on marriage, divorce and child custody. Apostasy is a crime punishable by death in the UAE. Blasphemy is illegal; expatriates involved in insulting Islam are liable for deportation. UAE incorporates hudud crimes of Sharia (i.e., crimes against God) into its Penal Code – apostasy being one of them. Article 1 and Article 66 of UAE's Penal Code requires hudud crimes to be punished with the death penalty; therefore, apostasy is punishable by death in the UAE. In several cases, the courts of the UAE have jailed women who have reported rape. For example, a British woman, after she reported being gang raped by three men, was charged with the crime of "alcohol consumption". Another British woman was charged with "public intoxication and extramarital sex" after she reported being raped, while an Australian woman was similarly sentenced to jail after she reported gang rape in the UAE. In another recent case, an 18-year Emirati woman withdrew her complaint of gang rape by 6 men when the prosecution threatened her with a long jail term and flogging. The woman still had to serve one year in jail. In July 2013, a Norwegian woman, Marte Dalelv, reported rape to the police and received a prison sentence for "illicit sex and alcohol consumption". Emirati women must receive permission from a male guardian to marry and remarry. This requirement is derived from the UAE's interpretation of Sharia, and has been federal law since 2005. In all emirates, it is illegal for Muslim women to marry non-Muslims. In the UAE, a marriage union

between a Muslim woman and non-Muslim man is punishable by law, since it is considered a form of "fornication". Kissing in public is illegal and can result in deportation. Expats in Dubai have been deported for kissing in public. In Abu Dhabi, people have been sentenced to 80 lashes for kissing in public. A new federal law in the UAE prohibits swearing in Whatsapp and penalizes swearing by a \$68,061 fine and imprisonment; expatriates are penalized by deportation. In July 2015, an Australian expatriate was deported for swearing on Facebook. Homosexuality is illegal and is a capital offense in the UAE. In 2013, an Emirati man was on trial for being accused of a "gay handshake". Article 80 of the Abu Dhabi Penal Code makes sodomy punishable with imprisonment of up to 14 years, while article 177 of the Penal Code of Dubai imposes imprisonment of up to 10 years on consensual sodomy. Amputation is a legal punishment in the UAE due to the Sharia courts. Crucifixion is a legal punishment in the UAE. Article 1 of the Federal Penal Code states that "provisions of the Islamic Law shall apply to the crimes of doctrinal punishment, punitive punishment and blood money." The Federal Penal Code repealed only those provisions within the penal codes of individual emirates which are contradictory to the Federal Penal Code. Hence, both are enforceable simultaneously. During the month of Ramadan, it is illegal to publicly eat, drink, or smoke between sunrise and sunset. Exceptions are made for pregnant women and children. The law applies to both Muslims and non-Muslims, and failure to comply may result in arrest. Dancing in public is illegal in the UAE. === Human rights === Flogging and stoning are legal punishments in the UAE. The requirement is derived from Sharia law, and has been federal law since 2005. Some domestic workers in the UAE are victims of the country's interpretations of Sharia judicial punishments such as flogging and stoning. The annual Freedom House report on Freedom in the World has listed the United Arab Emirates as "Not Free" every year since 1999, the first year for which records are available on their website. The UAE has escaped the Arab Spring; however, more than 100 Emirati activists were jailed and tortured because they sought reforms. Since 2011, the UAE government has increasingly carried out forced disappearances. Many foreign nationals and Emirati citizens have been arrested and abducted by the state. The UAE government denies these people are being held (to conceal their whereabouts), placing these people outside the protection of the law. According to Human Rights Watch, the reports of forced disappearance and torture in the UAE are of grave concern. The Arab Organization for Human Rights has obtained testimonies from many defendants, for its report on "Forced Disappearance and Torture in the UAE", who reported that they had been kidnapped, tortured and abused in detention centres. The report included 16 different methods of torture including severe beatings, threats with electrocution and denying access to medical care. In 2013, 94 Emirati activists were held in secret detention centres and put on trial for allegedly attempting to overthrow the government. Human rights organizations have spoken out against the secrecy of the trial. An Emirati, whose father is among the defendants, was arrested for tweeting about the trial. In April 2013, he was sentenced to 10 months in jail. The latest forced disappearance involves three sisters from Abu Dhabi. Repressive measures were also used against non-Emiratis in order to justify the UAE government's claim that there is an "international plot" in which UAE citizens and foreigners were working together to destabilize the country. Foreign nationals were also subjected to a campaign of deportations. There are many documented cases of Egyptians and other foreign nationals who had spent years working in the UAE and were then given only a few days to leave the country. Foreign nationals subjected to forced disappearance include two Libyans and two Qataris. Amnesty reported that the Qatari men have been abducted by the UAE government and the UAE government has withheld information about the men's fate from their families. Amongst the foreign nationals detained, imprisoned and expelled is Iyad El-Baghdadi, a popular blogger and Twitter personality. He was arrested by UAE authorities, detained, imprisoned and then expelled from the country. Despite his lifetime residence in the UAE, as a Palestinian citizen, El-Baghdadi had no recourse to contest this order. He could not be deported back to the Palestinian territories, therefore he was deported to Malaysia. In 2007, the UAE government attempted to cover up information on the rape of a French teenage boy by three Emirati locals, one of whose HIV-positive status was hidden by Emirati authorities. Diplomatic pressure led to the arrest and conviction of the Emirati rapists. In April 2009, a video tape of torture smuggled out of the UAE showed Sheikh Issa bin Zayed Al Nahyan torturing a man (Mohammed Shah Poor) with whips, electric cattle prods, wooden planks with protruding nails and running him over repeatedly with a car. In December 2009, Issa appeared in court and proclaimed his innocence. The trial ended on 10 January 2010, when Issa was cleared of the torture of Mohammed Shah Poor. Human Rights Watch criticised the trial and called on the government to establish an independent body to investigate allegations of abuse by UAE security personnel and other persons of authority. The US State Department has expressed concern over the verdict and said all members of



Emirati society "must stand equal before the law" and called for a careful review of the decision to ensure that the demands of justice are fully met in this case. In recent years, a large number of Shia Muslim expatriates have been deported from the UAE. Lebanese Shia families in particular have been deported for their alleged sympathy for Hezbollah. According to some organizations, more than 4,000 Shia expatriates have been deported from the UAE in recent years. The issue of sexual abuse among female domestic workers is another area of concern, particularly given that domestic servants are not covered by the UAE labour law of 1980 or the draft labour law of 2007. Worker protests have been suppressed and protesters imprisoned without due process. In its 2013 Annual Report, Amnesty International drew attention to the United Arab Emirates' poor record on a number of human rights issues. They highlighted the government's restrictive approach to freedom of speech and assembly, their use of arbitrary arrest and torture, and UAE's use of the death penalty. In 2012, Dubai police subjected three British citizens to beatings and electric shocks after arresting them on drugs charges. The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, expressed "concern" over the case and raised it with the UAE President, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, during his 2013 state visit to the UK. The three men were pardoned and released in July 2013. === Migrant workers === The treatment of migrant workers in the UAE has been likened to "modern-day slavery". Migrant workers are excluded from the UAE's collective labour rights, hence migrants are vulnerable to forced labour. Migrant workers in the UAE are not allowed to join trade unions. Moreover, migrant workers are banned from going on strike. Dozens of workers were deported in 2014 for going on strike. As migrant workers do not have the right to join a trade union or go on strike, they don't have the means to denounce the exploitation they suffer. Those who protest risk prison and deportation. The International Trade Union Confederation has called on the United Nations to investigate evidence that thousands of migrant workers in the UAE are treated as slave labour. In 2013, police arrested a US citizen and some UAE citizens, in connection with a YouTube parody video which allegedly portrayed Dubai and its residents in a bad light. The video was shot in areas of Satwa, Dubai, and featured gangs learning how to fight using simple weapons, including shoes, the aghal, etc. In 2015, nationals from different countries were put in jail for offences. An Australian woman was accused of 'writing bad words on social media', after she had posted a picture of a vehicle parked illegally. She was later deported from the UAE. The State Security Apparatus in the UAE has been accused of a series of atrocities and human rights abuses including enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrests and torture, the latest being the forced disappearance of Turkish businessman Dr Amer Al Shawa on 2 October 2014. Freedom of association is also severely curtailed. All associations and NGOs have to register through the Ministry of Social Affairs and are therefore under de facto State control. About twenty non-political groups operate on the territory without registration. All associations have to be submitted to censorship guidelines and all publications have first to be approved by the government. Secret Dubai was an independent blog in Dubai, from 2002 until 2010. It generated a significant following in the Middle East Blogosphere until the UAE's Telecoms Regulatory Authority (TRA) in the UAE blocked the website. === Dress code === The UAE has a modest dress code. The dress code is part of Dubai's criminal law. Most malls in the UAE have a dress code displayed at entrances. At Dubai's malls, females should cover their shoulders and knees; therefore women are not permitted to wear sleeveless tops. But people can wear swimwear at the pools and beaches. People are also requested to wear modest clothing when entering mosques, such as the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi. == Media == The UAE's media is annually classified as "not free" in the Freedom of the Press report by Freedom House. The UAE ranks poorly in the annual Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders. Dubai Media City and twofour54 are the UAE's main media zones. The UAE is home to some pan-Arab broadcasters, including the Middle East Broadcasting Centre and Orbit Showtime Network. In 2007, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum decreed that journalists can no longer be prosecuted or imprisoned for reasons relating to their work. At the same time, the UAE has made it illegal to disseminate online material that can threaten "public order". Criticism of the government is not allowed. Criticism of government officials and royal family members is not allowed. Prison terms have been given to those who "deride or damage" the reputation of the state and "display contempt" for religion. There have been many politically motivated press freedom violations; for example in 2012 a YouTube user was arrested in Dubai for filming and uploading a video of a UAE local (who happened to be a Government official) hitting an overseas worker. == Economy == UAE has the second largest economy in the GCC (after Saudi Arabia), with a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$377 billion (1.38 trillion AED) in 2012. Since independence in 1971, UAE's economy has grown by nearly 231 times to 1.45 trillion AED in 2013. The non-oil trade has grown to 1.2 trillion AED, a growth by around 28 times from 1981 to 2012. UAE is ranked as the 26th

best nation in the world for doing business based on its economy and regulatory environment, ranked by the Doing Business 2017 Report published by the World Bank Group. Although UAE has the most diversified economy in the GCC, the UAE's economy remains extremely reliant on oil. With the exception of Dubai, most of the UAE is dependent on oil revenues. Petroleum and natural gas continue to play a central role in the economy, especially in Abu Dhabi. More than 85% of the UAE's economy was based on the oil exports in 2009. While Abu Dhabi and other UAE emirates have remained relatively conservative in their approach to diversification, Dubai, which has far smaller oil reserves, was bolder in its diversification policy. In 2011, oil exports accounted for 77% of the UAE's state budget. Successful efforts at economic diversification have reduced the portion of GDP based on oil/gas output to 25%. Dubai suffered from a significant economic crisis in 2007–2010 and was bailed out by Abu Dhabi's oil wealth. Dubai is running a balanced budget, reflecting economic growth. Tourism acts as a growth sector for the entire UAE economy. Dubai is the top tourism destination in the Middle East. According to the annual MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index, Dubai is the fifth most popular tourism destination in the world. Dubai holds up to 66% share of the UAE's tourism economy, with Abu Dhabi having 16% and Sharjah 10%. Dubai welcomed 10 million tourists in 2013. The UAE has the most advanced and developed infrastructure in the region. Since the 1980s, the UAE has been spending billions of dollars on infrastructure. These developments are particularly evident in the larger emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The northern emirates are rapidly following suit, providing major incentives for developers of residential and commercial property. Property prices in Dubai fell dramatically when Dubai World, the government construction company, sought to delay a debt payment. UAE law does not allow trade unions to exist. The right to collective bargaining and the right to strike are not recognised, and the Ministry of Labour has the power to force workers to go back to work. Migrant workers who participate in a strike can have their work permits cancelled and be deported. Consequently, there are very few anti-discrimination laws in relation to labour issues, with Emiratis – other GCC Arabs – getting preference in public sector jobs despite lesser credentials than competitors and lower motivation. In fact, just over eighty percent of Emirati workers hold government posts, with many of the rest taking part in state-owned enterprises such as Emirates airlines and Dubai Properties. == Transport == Dubai International Airport was the busiest airport in the world by international passenger traffic in 2014, overtaking London Heathrow. A 1,200 km (750 mi) country-wide railway is under construction which will connect all the major cities and ports. The Dubai Metro is the first urban train network in the Arabian Peninsula. The major ports of the United Arab Emirates are Khalifa Port, Zayed Port, Port Jebel Ali, Port Rashid, Port Khalid, Port Saeed, and Port Khor Fakkan. The UAE is served by two telecommunications operators, Etisalat and Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company ("du"). Etisalat operated a monopoly until du launched mobile services in February 2007. Internet subscribers were expected to increase from 0.904 million in 2007 to 2.66 million in 2012. The regulator, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, mandates filtering websites for religious, political and sexual content. === Expo 2020 === UAE launched a successful bid for Expo 2020 with Dubai. The win is unprecedented in the region. World Expos are a meeting point for the global community to share innovations and make progress on issues such as the global economy, sustainable development and improved quality of life. World Expos can be a catalyst for economic, cultural and social transformation and generates legacies for the host city and nation. == Culture == Emirati culture is based on Arabian culture and has been influenced by the cultures of Persia, India, and East Africa. Arabian and Persian inspired architecture is part of the expression of the local Emirati identity. Persian influence on Emirati culture is noticeably visible in traditional Emirati architecture and folk arts. For example, the distinctive wind tower which tops traditional Emirati buildings, the barjeel has become an identifying mark of Emirati architecture and is attributed to Persian influence. This influence is derived both from traders who fled the tax regime in Persia in the early 19th Century and from Emirati ownership of ports on the Persian coast, for instance the Al Qassimi port of Lingeh. The United Arab Emirates has a diverse society. Major holidays in the United Arab Emirates include Eid al Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, and National Day (2 December), which marks the formation of the United Arab Emirates. Emirati males prefer to wear a kandura, an ankle-length white tunic woven from wool or cotton, and Emirati women wear an abaya, a black over-garment that covers most parts of the body. Ancient Emirati poetry was strongly influenced by the 8th-century Arab scholar Al Khalil bin Ahmed. The earliest known poet in the UAE is Ibn Majid, born between 1432 and 1437 in Ras Al-Khaimah. The most famous Emirati writers were Mubarak Al Oqaili (1880–1954), Salem bin Ali al Owais (1887–1959) and Ahmed bin Sulayem (1905–1976). Three other poets from Sharjah, known as the Hirah group, are observed to have been heavily influenced by the Apollo and Romantic poets. The Sharjah International

Book Fair is the oldest and largest in the country. The list of museums in the United Arab Emirates includes some of regional repute, most famously Sharjah with its Heritage District containing 17 museums, which in 1998 was the Cultural Capital of the Arab World. In Dubai, the area of Al Quoz has attracted a number of art galleries as well as museums such as the Salsali Private Museum. Abu Dhabi has established a culture district on Saadiyat Island. Six grand projects are planned, including the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and the Louvre Abu Dhabi. Dubai also plans to build a Kunsthal museum and a district for galleries and artists. Emirati culture is a part of the culture of Eastern Arabia. Liwa is a type of music and dance performed locally, mainly in communities that contain descendants of Bantu peoples from the African Great Lakes region. The Dubai Desert Rock Festival is also another major festival consisting of heavy metal and rock artists. The cinema of the United Arab Emirates is minimal but expanding. === Cuisine === The traditional food of the Emirates has always been rice, fish, and meat. The people of the United Arab Emirates have adopted most of their foods from other West and South Asian countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India and Oman. Seafood has been the mainstay of the Emirati diet for centuries. Meat and rice are other staple foods; lamb and mutton are the more favored meats, than goat and beef. Popular beverages are coffee and tea, which can be complemented with cardamom, saffron, or mint to give them a distinct flavor. Fast food has become very popular among young people, to the extent that campaigns are underway to highlight the dangers of fast food excesses. Alcohol is allowed to be served only in hotel restaurants and bars. All nightclubs are permitted to sell alcohol. Specific supermarkets may sell alcohol, but these products are sold in separate sections. Note that although alcohol may be consumed, it is illegal to be intoxicated in public or drive a motor vehicle with any trace of alcohol in the blood. == Sports == Formula One is particularly popular in the United Arab Emirates, and is annually held at the picturesque Yas Marina Circuit. The race is held at evening time, and is the first ever Grand Prix to start in daylight and finish at night. Other popular sports include camel racing, falconry, endurance riding, and tennis. The emirate of Dubai is also home to two major golf courses: The Dubai Golf Club and Emirates Golf Club. In the past, child camel jockeys were used, leading to widespread criticism. Eventually the UAE passed laws banning the use of children for the sport, leading to the prompt removal of almost all child jockeys. Ansar Burney is often praised for the work he has done in this area. === Football === Football is a popular sport in the UAE. Al Nasr SC, Al-Ain, Al-Wasl, Al-Sharjah, Al-Wahda, and Shabab Al Ahli Dubai are the most popular teams and enjoy the reputation of long-time regional champions. The United Arab Emirates Football Association was established in 1971 and since then has dedicated its time and effort to promoting the game, organizing youth programs and improving the abilities of not only its players, but also the officials and coaches involved with its regional teams. The UAE national football team qualified for the FIFA World Cup in 1990 with Egypt. It was the third consecutive World Cup with two Arab nations qualifying, after Kuwait and Algeria in 1982, and Iraq and Algeria again in 1986. The UAE won the Gulf Cup Championship two times: the first cup in January 2007 held in Abu Dhabi and the second in January 2013, held in Bahrain. The country is scheduled to host the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. === Cricket === Cricket is one of the most popular sports in the UAE, largely because of the expatriate population from the SAARC countries, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The Sharjah Cricket Association Stadium in Sharjah has hosted four international test cricket matches so far. Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi also hosted international cricket matches. Dubai has two cricket stadiums (Dubai Cricket Ground No. 1 and No. 2) with a third, the DSC Cricket Stadium, as part of Dubai Sports City. Dubai is also home to the International Cricket Council. The UAE national cricket team qualified for the 1996 Cricket World Cup and narrowly missed out on qualification for the 2007 Cricket World Cup. They qualified for the 2015 Cricket World Cup held in Australia and New Zealand. The next edition of the Asia Cup Cricket tournament is likely to be held next year in the first week of March. == Education == The education system through secondary level is monitored by the Ministry of Education in all emirates except Abu Dhabi, where it falls under the authority of the Abu Dhabi Education Council. It consists of primary schools, middle schools and high schools. The public schools are government-funded and the curriculum is created to match the United Arab Emirates' development goals. The medium of instruction in the public school is Arabic with emphasis on English as a second language. There are also many private schools which are internationally accredited. Public schools in the country are free for citizens of the UAE, while the fees for private schools vary. The higher education system is monitored by the Ministry of Higher Education. The ministry also is responsible for admitting students to its undergraduate institutions. The adult literacy rate in 2011 was 90%. Thousands of nationals are pursuing formal learning at 86 adult education centres spread across the country. The UAE has shown a strong interest in improving education and research. Enterprises

include the establishment of the CERT Research Centers and the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology and Institute for Enterprise Development. According to the QS Rankings, the top-ranking universities in the country are the United Arab Emirates University (421–430th worldwide), Khalifa University (441–450th worldwide), the American University of Sharjah (431–440th) and University of Sharjah (551–600th worldwide).

== Demographics == The demography of the UAE is extremely diverse. In 2010, the UAE's population was estimated to be 8,264,070, of whom only 40% were UAE nationals or Emiratis. The country's net migration rate stands at 21.71, the world's highest. Under Article 8 of UAE Federal Law no. 17, an expatriate can apply for UAE citizenship after residing in the country for 20 years, providing that person has never been convicted of a crime and can speak fluent Arabic. According to an estimate by the World Bank, the UAE's population in 2018 stands at 9.543 million. Expatriates and immigrants account for 88.52% while Emiratis make up remaining 11.48% of the population. There are 5 million Emirati citizens. The United Arab Emirates' population is ethnically diverse. According to the CIA, in 2015, 40% of residents were Emirati; 10.2% were Pakistanis; 30% were South Asian. In 2009, Emirati citizens accounted for 16.5% of the total population; South Asian (Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankans and Indians) constituted the largest group, making up 12% of the total; other Asians (Filipinos, Iranians) made up 16.7%, while Western expatriates were 8.4% of the total population. Indian and Pakistani expatriates make up more than a third (23%) of the population of three emirates – Dubai, Sharjah, and Ajman according to the latest 2014 statistics provided by Euromonitor International, a market intelligence company. The five most populous nationalities in the three emirates, are: Indian (11%), Pakistani (10%), Emirati (40%), Bangladeshi (7%), and Filipino (6%). There is a growing presence of Europeans especially in multicultural cities such as Dubai. Western expatriates, from Europe, Australia, Northern America and Latin America make up 500,000 of the UAE population. More than 100,000 British nationals live in the country. The rest of the population were from other Arab states. About 88% of the population of the United Arab Emirates is urban. The average life expectancy was 76.7 in 2012, higher than for any other Arab country. With a male/female sex ratio of 2.2 males for each female in the total population and 2.75 to 1 for the 15–65 age group, the UAE's gender imbalance is second highest in the world after Qatar.

=== Religion === Islam is the largest and the official state religion of the UAE. The government follows a policy of tolerance toward other religions and rarely interferes in the activities of non-Muslims. By the same token, non-Muslims are expected to avoid interfering in Islamic religious matters or the Islamic upbringing of Muslims. The government imposes restrictions on spreading other religions through any form of media as it is considered a form of proselytizing. There are approximately 31 churches throughout the country, one Hindu temple in the region of Bur Dubai, one Sikh Gurudwara in Jebel Ali and also a Buddhist temple in Al Garhoud. Based on the Ministry of Economy census in 2005, 76% of the total population was Muslim, 13% Christian, and 11% other (mainly Hindu). Census figures do not take into account the many "temporary" visitors and workers while also counting Baha'is and Druze as Muslim. Among Emirati Muslim citizens, 85% are Sunni, while Shi'a are 15%, mostly concentrated in the emirates of Sharjah and Dubai. Omani immigrants are mostly Ibadi, while Sufi influences exist too.

=== Largest cities ===

=== Languages === Arabic is the national language of the United Arab Emirates. The Gulf dialect of Arabic is spoken natively by the Emirati people. Since the area was occupied by the British until 1971, English is the primary lingua franca in the UAE. As such, a knowledge of the language is a requirement when applying for most local jobs. Other world languages are represented by expatriate population drawn from a wide mix of nationalities.

== Health == The life expectancy at birth in the UAE is at 76.96 years. Cardiovascular disease is the principal cause of death in the UAE, constituting 28% of total deaths; other major causes are accidents and injuries, malignancies, and congenital anomalies. According to World Health Organisation data from 2014, 37.2% of adults in the UAE are clinically obese, with a Body mass index (BMI) score of 30 or more. In February 2008, the Ministry of Health unveiled a five-year health strategy for the public health sector in the northern emirates, which fall under its purview and which, unlike Abu Dhabi and Dubai, do not have separate healthcare authorities. The strategy focuses on unifying healthcare policy and improving access to healthcare services at reasonable cost, at the same time reducing dependence on overseas treatment. The ministry plans to add three hospitals to the current 14, and 29 primary healthcare centres to the current 86. Nine were scheduled to open in 2008. The introduction of mandatory health insurance in Abu Dhabi for expatriates and their dependants was a major driver in reform of healthcare policy. Abu Dhabi nationals were brought under the scheme from 1 June 2008 and Dubai followed for its government employees. Eventually, under federal law, every Emirati and expatriate in the country will be covered by compulsory health insurance under a unified mandatory scheme. The country has benefited from medical tourists from all over the

Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. The UAE attracts medical tourists seeking plastic surgery and advanced procedures, cardiac and spinal surgery, and dental treatment, as health services have higher standards than other Arab countries in the Persian Gulf. == See also == List of United Arab Emirates-related topics Outline of the United Arab Emirates LGBT rights in the United Arab Emirates == Notes == == References == == Further reading == "Towards A Foreign Language, Teaching Policy for the Arab World: U.A.E Perspective." United Arab Emirates University (1996). Abu Libdeh, A. (1994). 'English on Khalifa Street'. The Journal of the College of Education. UAE University 10, 25–51. Swan, M. (26 April 2012). Arabic school aims to boost the popularity of the language. The National, p. 6. == External links == Government of the United Arab Emirates The World Government Summit – UAE The 2020 World Exposition in UAE "United Arab Emirates". The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. United Arab Emirates web resources provided by GovPubs at the University of Colorado–Boulder Libraries United Arab Emirates at Curlie (based on DMOZ) United Arab Emirates profile from the BBC News. United Arab Emirates country profile from the Lebanese Economy Forum, extracted from the CIA Factbook & Worldbank data. Wikimedia Atlas of United Arab Emirates World Bank Summary Trade Statistics United Arab Emirates Bohra caste relations Minister Cabinet 2016 Timeline of the United Arab Emirates History from Bronze Age to present day