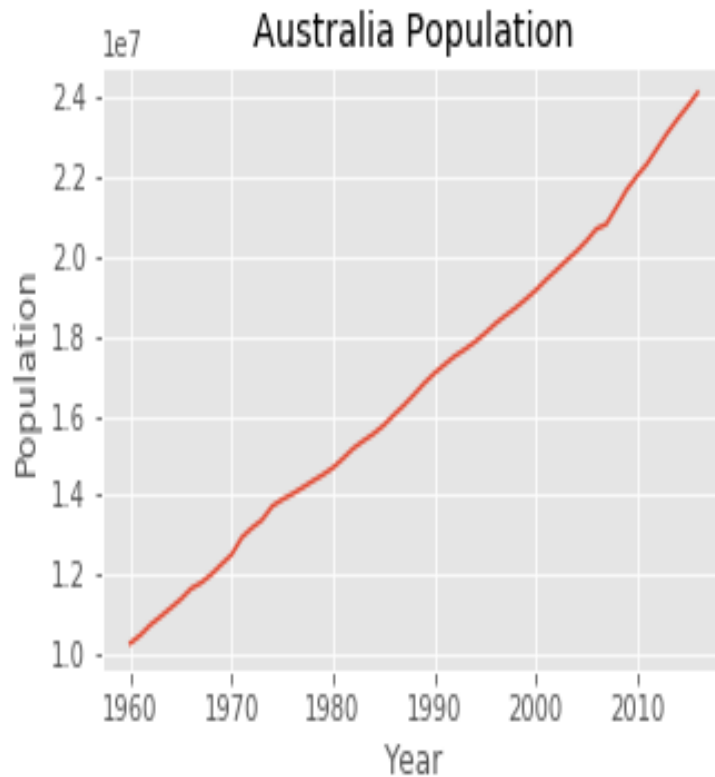


Australia



Coordinates: 25°S 133°E﻿ / ﻿25°S 133°E﻿ / -25; 133Australia (/ˈɒˌstreɪliə, ˈoʊ-/ (listen)), officially the Commonwealth of Australia, is a sovereign country comprising the mainland of the Australian continent, the island of Tasmania and numerous smaller islands. It is the largest country in Oceania and the world's sixth-largest country by total area. The neighbouring countries are Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and East Timor to the north; the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to the north-east; and New Zealand to the south-east. Australia's capital is Canberra, and its largest city is Sydney. For about 60,000 years before the first British settlement in the late 18th century, Australia was inhabited by indigenous Australians, who in documented times have spoken languages classifiable into roughly 250 groups. After the European discovery of the continent by Dutch explorers in 1606, Australia's eastern half was claimed by Great Britain in 1770 and initially settled through penal transportation to the colony of New South Wales from 26 January 1788. The population grew steadily in subsequent decades, and by the 1850s most of the continent had been explored and an additional five self-governing crown colonies established. On 1 January 1901, the six colonies federated, forming the Commonwealth of Australia. Australia has since maintained a stable liberal democratic political system that functions as a federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy comprising six states and several territories.