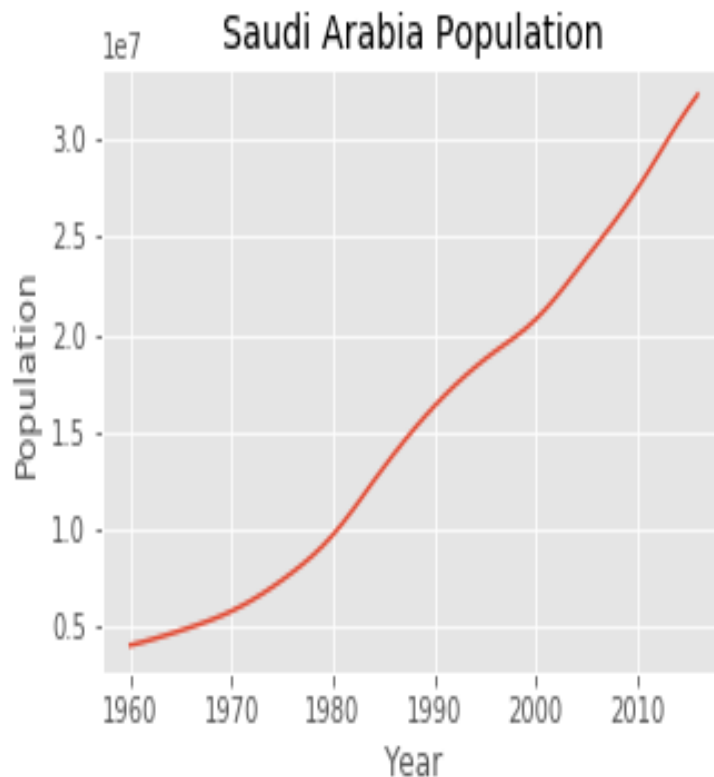


Saudi Arabia



Saudi Arabia[c] (/səˈdi reɪbi/ (listen), /sa-/ (listen)), officially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA),[d] is a sovereign Arab state in Western Asia constituting the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula. With a land area of approximately 2,150,000 km² (830,000 sq mi), Saudi Arabia is geographically the fifth-largest state in Asia and second-largest state in the Arab world after Algeria. Saudi Arabia is bordered by Jordan and Iraq to the north, Kuwait to the northeast, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to the east, Oman to the southeast and Yemen to the south. It is separated from Israel and Egypt by the Gulf of Aqaba. It is the only nation with both a Red Sea coast and a Persian Gulf coast and most of its terrain consists of arid desert and mountains. The area of modern-day Saudi Arabia formerly consisted of four distinct regions: Hejaz, Najd and parts of Eastern Arabia (Al-Ahsa) and Southern Arabia ('Asir). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932 by Ibn Saud. He united the four regions into a single state through a series of conquests beginning in 1902 with the capture of Riyadh, the ancestral home of his family, the House of Saud. Saudi Arabia has since been an absolute monarchy, effectively a hereditary dictatorship governed along Islamic lines. The ultraconservative Wahhabi religious movement within Sunni Islam has been called "the predominant feature of Saudi culture", with its global spread largely financed by the oil and gas trade. Saudi Arabia is sometimes called "the Land of the Two Holy Mosques" in reference to Al-Masjid al-Haram (in Mecca) and Al-Masjid an-Nabawi (in Medina), the two holiest places in Islam. The state has a total population of 28.7 million, of which 20 million are Saudi nationals and 8 million are foreigners. The state's official language is Arabic.