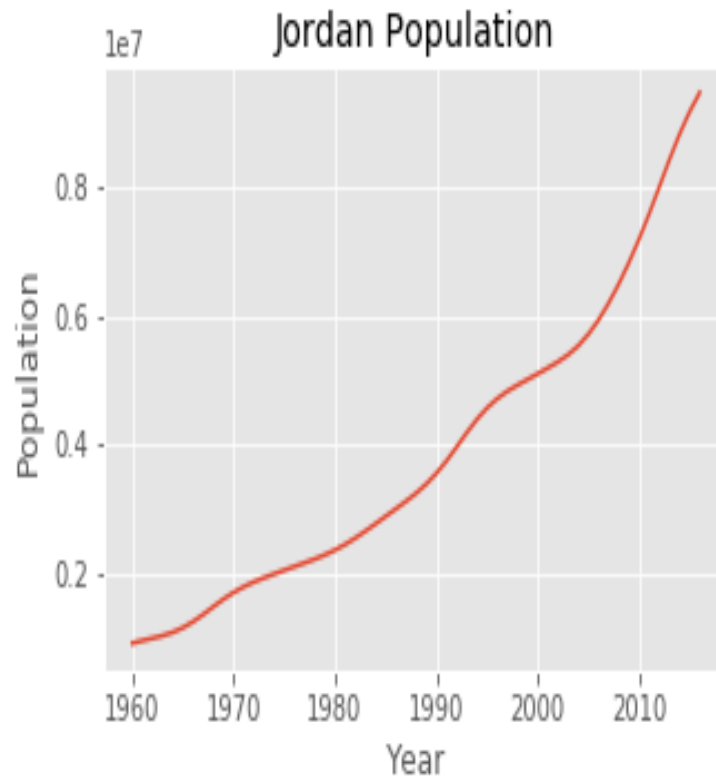


# Jordan



Jordan (; Arabic: الأردن Al-ʿUrdunn [al.ʕur.dunn]), officially The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Arabic: المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية Al-Mamlakah Al-Urdunnīyah Al-Hāshimīyah), is a sovereign Arab state in western Asia, on the East Bank of the Jordan River. Jordan is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the south, Iraq to the north-east, Syria to the north, Israel and Palestine to the west. The Dead Sea lies along its western borders and the country has a small shoreline on the Red Sea in its extreme south-west, but is otherwise landlocked. Jordan is strategically located at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe. The capital, Amman, is Jordan's most populous city as well as the country's economic, political and cultural centre. What is now Jordan has been inhabited by humans since the Paleolithic period. Three stable kingdoms emerged there at the end of the Bronze Age: Ammon, Moab and Edom. Later rulers include the Nabataean Kingdom, the Roman Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. After the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in 1916 during World War I, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned by Britain and France. The Emirate of Transjordan was established in 1921 by the Hashemite, then Emir, Abdullah I, and the emirate became a British protectorate. In 1946, Jordan became an independent state officially known as The Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan, but was renamed in 1949 to The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan after the country captured the West Bank during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War and annexed it until it was lost to Israel in 1967. Jordan renounced its claim to the territory in 1988, and became one of two Arab states to have signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994. Jordan is a founding member of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation. The country is a constitutional monarchy, but the king holds wide executive and legislative powers. Jordan is a relatively-small, semi-arid, almost-landlocked country with an area of 89,342 km<sup>2</sup> (34,495 sq mi) and a population numbering 10 million, making it the 11th-most populous Arab country. Sunni Islam, practiced by around 95% of the population, is the dominant religion in Jordan that coexists with an indigenous Christian minority. Jordan remains to be considered as among the safest of countries in the Middle East, even after the deteriorating situation of the region following the Arab spring in 2010s. Jordan prides itself on being an "oasis of stability" in a

turbulent region. In the midst of surrounding turmoil, it has been greatly hospitable, accepting refugees from almost all surrounding conflicts as early as 1948. An estimated 2.1 million Palestinian and 1.4 million Syrian refugees are present. The kingdom is also a refuge to thousands of Iraqi Christians fleeing persecution by ISIL. While Jordan continues to accept refugees, the recent large influx from Syria placed substantial strain on national resources and infrastructure. Jordan is classified as a country of "high human development" with an "upper middle income" economy. The Jordanian economy, one of the smallest economies in the region, is attractive to foreign investors based upon a skilled workforce. The country is a major tourist destination, also attracting medical tourism due to its well developed health sector. Nonetheless, a lack of natural resources, large flow of refugees and regional turmoil have hampered economic growth.

== Etymology == Jordan is named after the Jordan River, where Jesus is said to have been baptised. The origin of the river's name is debated, but the most common explanation is that it derives from the word "yarad" (the descender, "Yarden" is the Hebrew name for the river), found in Hebrew, Aramaic, and other Semitic languages. Others regard the name as having an Indo-Aryan origin, combining the words "yor" (year) and "don" (river), reflecting the river's perennial nature. Another theory is that it is from the Arabic root word "wrd" (to come to), as in people coming to a major source of water. The first recorded use of the name Jordan appears in Anastasi I, an ancient Egyptian papyrus that dates back to around 1000 BC. The lands of modern-day Jordan were historically called Transjordan, meaning "beyond the Jordan River". The name was Arabized into Al-Urdunn during the 636 Muslim conquest of the Levant. During crusader rule in the beginning of the second millennium, it was called Oultrejordain. In 1921, the Emirate of Transjordan was established and after it gained its independence in 1946, it became The Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan. The name was changed in 1949 to The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Hashemite is the house name of the royal family.

== History ==

=== Ancient period === Jordan is rich in Paleolithic remains, holding evidence of inhabitation by Homo erectus, Neanderthal and modern humans. The oldest evidence of human habitation dates back around 250,000 years. The Kharanah area in eastern Jordan has evidence of human huts from about 20,000 years ago. Other Paleolithic sites include Pella and Al-Azraq. In the Neolithic period, several settlements began to develop, most notably an agricultural community called 'Ain Ghazal in what is now Amman, one of the largest known prehistoric settlements in the Near East. Plaster statues estimated to date back to around 7250 BC were uncovered there, and are among the oldest large human statues ever found. Villages of Bab edh-Dhra in the Dead Sea area, Tal Hujayrat Al-Ghuzlan in Aqaba and Tulaylet Ghassul in the Jordan Valley all date to the Chalcolithic period. The prehistoric period of Jordan ended at around 2000 BC when the Semitic nomads known as the Amorites entered the region. During the Bronze Age and Iron Age, present-day Jordan was home to several ancient kingdoms, whose populations spoke Semitic languages of the Canaanite group. Among them were Ammon, Edom and Moab, which are described as tribal kingdoms rather than states. They are mentioned in ancient texts such as the Old Testament. Archaeological finds have shown that Ammon was in the area of the modern city of Amman, Moab in the highlands east of the Dead Sea and Edom in the area around Wadi Araba. These Transjordanian kingdoms were in continuous conflict with the neighbouring Hebrew kingdoms of Israel and Judah, centered west of the Jordan River, though the former was known to have at times controlled small parts east of the River. Frequent confrontations ensued and tensions between them increased. One record of this is the Mesha Stele erected by the Moabite king Mesha in around 840 BC on which he lauds himself for the building projects that he initiated in Moab and commemorates his glory and victory against the Israelites. The stele constitutes one of the most important direct accounts of Biblical history. Subsequently, the Assyrian Empire reduced these kingdoms to vassals. When the region was later under the influence of the Babylonians, the Old Testament mentions that these kingdoms aided them in the 597 BC sack of Jerusalem. These kingdoms are believed to have existed throughout fluctuations in regional rule and influence. They were under the control of several distant empires, including the Akkadian Empire (2335–2193 BC), Ancient Egypt (1500–1300 BC), the Hittite Empire (1400–1300 BC), the Middle Assyrian Empire (1365–1020 BC), the Neo-Assyrian Empire (911–605 BC), the Neo-Babylonian Empire (604–539 BC), the Achaemenid Empire (539–332 BC) and the Hellenistic Empire of Macedonia. However, by the time of Roman rule in the Levant around 63 BC, the people of Ammon, Edom and Moab had lost their distinct identities, and were assimilated into Roman culture.

=== Classical period === Alexander the Great's conquest of the Achaemenid Empire in 332 BC introduced Hellenistic culture to the Middle East. After Alexander's death in 323 BC, his empire split among his generals and in the end, much of the land of modern-day Jordan was disputed between the Ptolemies based in Egypt and the Seleucids based in Syria. In the south and east, the Nabataeans had

an independent kingdom. The Nabataeans were nomadic Arabs who derived wealth from their capital Petra, whose proximity to major trade routes led to it becoming a regional trading hub. Campaigns by different Greek generals aspiring to annex the Nabataean Kingdom were unsuccessful. The Ptolemies were eventually displaced from the region by the Seleucid Empire. The conflict between these two groups enabled the Nabataeans to extend their kingdom northwards well beyond Petra in Edom. The Nabataeans are known for their great ability in constructing efficient water collecting methods in the barren desert and their talent in carving structures into solid rocks — notably the Khazneh (treasury). The Greeks founded new cities in Jordan including Philadelphia (Amman), Gerasa (Jerash), Gedara (Umm Qays), Pella (Tabaqat Fahl) and Arbila (Irbid). Later under Roman rule, these cities joined other Hellenistic cities in Palestine and Syria to form the Decapolis League, a loose confederation linked by economic and cultural interests: Scythopolis, Hippos, Capitolias, Canatha and Damascus were among its members. The most remarkable Hellenistic site in Jordan is Qasr Al-Abd at Iraq Al-Amir, just west of modern-day Amman. Roman legions under Pompey conquered much of the Levant in 63 BC, inaugurating a period of Roman rule that lasted for centuries. In 106 AD, Emperor Trajan annexed the nearby Nabataean Kingdom without any opposition, and rebuilt the King's Highway which became known as the Via Traiana Nova road. During Roman rule the Nabataeans continued to flourish and replaced their local gods with Christianity. Roman remains in Amman include: the Temple of Hercules at the Amman Citadel and the Roman theater. Jerash contains a well-preserved Roman city that had 15,000 inhabitants at its zenith. Jerash was visited by Emperor Hadrian during his journey to Palestine. In 324 AD, the Roman Empire split, and the Eastern Roman Empire (later known as the Byzantine Empire) continued to control or influence the region until 636 AD. Christianity had become legal within the empire in 313 AD and the official state religion in 390 AD, after Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. Ayla city (modern day Aqaba) in southern Jordan also came under Byzantine Empire rule. The Aqaba Church was built around 300 AD, and is considered to be the world's first purpose built Christian church. The Byzantines built 16 churches just south of Amman in Umm ar-Rasas. Administratively the area of Jordan fell under the Diocese of the East, and was divided between the provinces of Palaestina Secunda in the north-west and Arabia Petraea in the south and east. Palaestina Salutaris in the south was split off from Arabia Petraea in the late 4th century. The Sassanian Empire in the east became the Byzantines' rivals, and frequent confrontations sometimes led to the Sassanids controlling some parts of the region, including Transjordan. === Islamic era === Muslims under the Rashidun Caliphate from what is now Saudi Arabia, conquered the region from the south. The Arab Christian Ghassanids, clients of the Byzantines, were defeated despite imperial support. While the Muslim forces lost to the Byzantines in their first direct engagement during the Battle of Mu'tah in 629, in what is now the Karak Governorate, the Byzantines lost control of the Levant when they were defeated by the Rashidun army in 636 at the Battle of Yarmouk just north of modern-day Jordan. Transjordan was an essential territory for the conquest of nearby Damascus. The first, or Rashidun, caliphate was followed by that of the Umayyad (661–750). Under Umayyads rule, several desert castles were constructed, such as: Qasr Al-Mshatta, Qasr Al-Hallabat, Qasr Al-Kharanah, Qasr Tuba, Qasr Amra, and a large administrative palace in Amman. The Abbasid campaign to take over the Umayyad empire began in the region of Transjordan. After the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate, the area was ruled by the Fatimid Caliphate, then by the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem (1115–1189). The Crusaders constructed about nine Crusader castles as part of the lordship of Oultrejordain, including those of Montreal, Al-Karak and Wu'ayra (in Petra). In the 12th century, the Crusaders were defeated by Saladin, the founder of the Ayyubids dynasty (1189–1260). The Ayyubids built a new castle at Ajloun and rebuilt the former Roman fort of Qasr Azraq. Several of these castles were used and expanded by the Mamluks (1260–1516), who divided Jordan between the provinces of Karak and Damascus. During the next century Transjordan experienced Mongol attacks, but the Mongols were ultimately repelled by the Mamluks after the Battle of Ain Jalut (1260). In 1516, Ottoman forces conquered Mamluk territory. Agricultural villages in Jordan witnessed a period of relative prosperity in the 16th century, but were later abandoned. For the next centuries, Ottoman rule in the region, at times, was virtually absent and reduced to annual tax collection visits. This led to a short-lived occupation by the Wahhabi forces (1803–1812), an ultra-orthodox Islamic movement that emerged in Najd in modern-day Saudi Arabia. Ibrahim Pasha, son of the governor of the Egypt Eyalet under the request of the Ottoman sultan, rooted out the Wahhabis between 1811 and 1818. In 1833 Ibrahim Pasha turned on the Ottomans and established his rule over the Levant. His oppressive policies led to the unsuccessful peasants' revolt in Palestine in 1834. The cities of Al-Salt and Al-Karak were destroyed by Ibrahim Pasha's forces for harbouring a peasants' revolt leader. Egyptian rule was later forcibly ended,

with Ottoman rule restored. Russian persecution of Sunni Muslim Circassians and Chechens led to their immigration into the region in 1867, where today they form a small part of the country's ethnic fabric. Overall population however declined due to oppression and neglect. Urban settlements with small populations included: Al-Salt, Irbid, Jerash and Al-Karak. The under-development of urban life in Jordan was exacerbated by the settlements being sometimes raided. Ottoman oppression provoked the region's both non-Bedouin and Bedouin tribes to revolt, Bedouin tribes like: Adwan, Bani Hassan, Bani Sakhr and the Howeitat. The most notable revolts were the Shoubak Revolt (1905) and the Karak Revolt (1910), which were brutally suppressed. Jordan's location lies on a pilgrimage route taken by Muslims going to Mecca, which helped the population economically when the Ottomans constructed the Hejaz Railway linking Mecca with Istanbul in 1908. Before the construction of the railway, the Ottomans built fortresses along the Hajj route to secure pilgrims' caravans. === Modern era === Four centuries of stagnation during Ottoman rule came to an end during World War I by the 1916 Arab Revolt; driven by long-term Arab resentment towards the Ottoman authorities, and growing Arab nationalism. The revolt was launched by Sharif Hussein of Mecca, a member of the Hashemite clan of Hejaz who claim descent from Muhammad. Locally, the revolt garnered the support of the Transjordanian tribes, including Bedouins, Circassians and Christians. The Allies of World War I, including Britain and France, offered support. The Great Arab Revolt started on 5 June 1916 from Medina and pushed northwards until the fighting reached Transjordan in the Battle of Aqaba on 6 July 1917. By 1918, the revolt — with the Allies' support — successfully gained control of most of the territories of the Hejaz and the Levant, including Damascus. However, it failed to gain international recognition as an independent state, due mainly to the secret 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement and the 1917 Balfour Declaration. This was seen by the Hashemites and the Arabs as a betrayal of their previous agreements with the British, including the 1915 McMahon–Hussein Correspondence, in which the British stated their willingness to recognise the independence of a unified Arab state stretching from Aleppo to Aden under the rule of the Hashemites. The region was divided into French and British spheres of influence. Abdullah I, the second son of Sharif Hussein arrived from Hejaz by train in Ma'an in southern Jordan on 11 November 1920, where he was greeted by Transjordanian leaders. Abdullah established the Emirate of Transjordan on 11 April 1921, which then became a British protectorate. In September 1922, the Council of the League of Nations recognised Transjordan as a state under the British Mandate for Palestine and the Transjordan memorandum, and excluded the territories east of the Jordan River from the provisions of the mandate dealing with Jewish settlement. Transjordan remained a British mandate until 1946, but it had been granted a greater level of autonomy than the region west of the Jordan River. The first organised army in Jordan was established on 22 October 1920, and was named the "Arab Legion". The Legion grew from 150 men in 1920 to 8,000 in 1946. Multiple difficulties emerged upon the assumption of power in the region by the Hashemite leadership. In Transjordan, small local rebellions at Kura in 1921 and 1923 were suppressed by Emir Abdullah with the help of British forces. Wahhabis from Najd regained strength and repeatedly raided the southern parts of his territory in (1922–1924), seriously threatening the Emir's position. The Emir was unable to repel those raids without the aid of the local Bedouin tribes and the British, who maintained a military base with a small RAF detachment close to Amman. === Post-independence === The Treaty of London, signed by the British Government and the Emir of Transjordan on 22 March 1946, recognised the independence of Transjordan upon ratification by both countries' parliaments. On 25 May 1946, the Emirate of Transjordan became The Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan, as the ruling Emir was re-designated as King by the parliament of Transjordan on the day it ratified the Treaty of London. The name was changed to The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1949. Jordan became a member of the United Nations on 14 December 1955. On 15 May 1948, as part of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, Jordan invaded Palestine together with other Arab states. Following the war, Jordan controlled the West Bank and on 24 April 1950 Jordan formally annexed these territories. In response, some Arab countries demanded Jordan's expulsion from the Arab League. On 12 June 1950, the Arab League declared that the annexation was a temporary, practical measure and that Jordan was holding the territory as a "trustee" pending a future settlement. King Abdullah was assassinated at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1951 by a Palestinian militant, amid rumours he intended to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Abdullah was succeeded by his son Talal, who would soon abdicate due to illness in favour of his eldest son Hussein. Talal established the country's modern constitution in 1952. Hussein ascended to the throne in 1953 at the age of 17. Jordan witnessed great political uncertainty in the following period. The 1950s were a period of political upheaval, as Nasserism and Pan-Arabism swept the Arab World. On 1 March 1956, King Hussein Arabized the command of the Army by dismissing a number of senior British officers, an

act made to remove remaining foreign influence in the country. In 1958, Jordan and neighbouring Hashemite Iraq formed the Arab Federation as a response to the formation of the rival United Arab Republic between Nasser's Egypt and Syria. The union lasted only six months, being dissolved after Iraqi King Faisal II (Hussein's cousin) was deposed by a bloody military coup on 14 July 1958. Jordan signed a military pact with Egypt just before Israel launched a preemptive strike on Egypt to begin the Six-Day War in June 1967, where Jordan and Syria joined the war. The Arab states were defeated and Jordan lost control of the West Bank to Israel. The War of Attrition with Israel followed, which included the 1968 Battle of Karameh where the combined forces of the Jordanian Armed Forces and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) repelled an Israeli attack on the Karameh camp on the Jordanian border with the West Bank. Despite the fact that the Palestinians had limited involvement against the Israeli forces, the events at Karameh gained wide recognition and acclaim in the Arab world. As a result, the time period following the battle witnessed an upsurge of support for Palestinian paramilitary elements (the fedayeen) within Jordan from other Arab countries. The fedayeen activities soon became a threat to Jordan's rule of law. In September 1970, the Jordanian army targeted the fedayeen and the resultant fighting led to the expulsion of Palestinian fighters from various PLO groups into Lebanon, in a civil war that became known as Black September. In 1973, Egypt and Syria waged the Yom Kippur War on Israel, and fighting occurred along the 1967 Jordan River cease-fire line. Jordan sent a brigade to Syria to attack Israeli units on Syrian territory but did not engage Israeli forces from Jordanian territory. At the Rabat summit conference in 1974, Jordan agreed, along with the rest of the Arab League, that the PLO was the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". Subsequently, Jordan renounced its claims to the West Bank in 1988. At the 1991 Madrid Conference, Jordan agreed to negotiate a peace treaty sponsored by the US and the Soviet Union. The Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace was signed on 26 October 1994. In 1997, Israeli agents entered Jordan using Canadian passports and poisoned Khaled Meshal, a senior Hamas leader. Israel provided an antidote to the poison and released dozens of political prisoners, including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin after King Hussein threatened to annul the peace treaty. On 7 February 1999, Abdullah II ascended the throne upon the death of his father Hussein. Abdullah embarked on aggressive economic liberalisation when he assumed the throne, and his reforms led to an economic boom which continued until 2008. Abdullah II has been credited with increasing foreign investment, improving public-private partnerships and providing the foundation for Aqaba's free-trade zone and Jordan's flourishing information and communication technology (ICT) sector. He also set up five other special economic zones. However, during the following years Jordan's economy experienced hardship as it dealt with the effects of the Great Recession and spillover from the Arab Spring. Al-Qaeda under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's leadership launched coordinated explosions in three hotel lobbies in Amman on 9 November 2005, resulting in 60 deaths and 115 injured. The bombings, which targeted civilians, caused widespread outrage among Jordanians. The attack is considered to be a rare event in the country, and Jordan's internal security was dramatically improved afterwards. No major terrorist attacks have occurred since then. Abdullah and Jordan are viewed with contempt by Islamic extremists for the country's peace treaty with Israel and its relationship with the West. The Arab Spring were large-scale protests that erupted in the Arab World in 2011, demanding economic and political reforms. Many of these protests tore down regimes in some Arab nations, leading to instability that ended with violent civil wars. In Jordan, in response to domestic unrest, Abdullah replaced his prime minister and introduced a number of reforms including: reforming the Constitution, and laws governing public freedoms and elections. Proportional representation was re-introduced to the Jordanian parliament in the 2016 general election, a move which he said would eventually lead to establishing parliamentary governments. Jordan was left largely unscathed from the violence that swept the region despite an influx of 1.4 million Syrian refugees into the natural resources-lacking country and the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

== Geography ==

Jordan sits strategically at the crossroads of the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe, in the Levant area of the Fertile Crescent, a cradle of civilization. It is 89,341 square kilometres (34,495 sq mi) large, and 400 kilometres (250 mi) long between its northernmost and southernmost points; Umm Qais and Aqaba respectively. The kingdom lies between 29° and 34° N, and 34° and 40° E. The east is an arid plateau irrigated by oases and seasonal water streams. Major cities are overwhelmingly located on the north-western part of the kingdom due to its fertile soils and relatively abundant rainfall. These include Irbid, Jerash and Zarqa in the northwest, the capital Amman and Al-Salt in the central west, and Madaba, Al-Karak and Aqaba in the southwest. Major towns in the eastern part of the country are the oasis towns of Azraq and Ruwaished. In the west, a highland area of arable land and Mediterranean evergreen forestry drops suddenly into the Jordan Rift Valley. The rift

valley contains the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, which separates Jordan from Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Jordan has a 26 kilometres (16 mi) shoreline on the Gulf of Aqaba in the Red Sea, but is otherwise landlocked. The Yarmouk River, an eastern tributary of the Jordan, forms part of the boundary between Jordan and Syria (including the occupied Golan Heights) to the north. The other boundaries are formed by several international and local agreements and do not follow well-defined natural features. The highest point is Jabal Umm al Dami, at 1,854 m (6,083 ft) above sea level, while the lowest is the Dead Sea −420 m (−1,378 ft), the lowest land point on earth. Jordan has a diverse range of habitats, ecosystems and biota due to its varied landscapes and environments. The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature was set up in 1966 to protect and manage Jordan's natural resources. Nature reserves in Jordan include the Dana Biosphere Reserve, the Azraq Wetland Reserve, the Shaumari Wildlife Reserve and the Mujib Nature Reserve. === Climate === The climate in Jordan varies greatly. Generally, the further inland from the Mediterranean, greater contrasts in temperature occur and the less rainfall there is. The country's average elevation is 812 m (2,664 ft) (SL). The highlands above the Jordan Valley, mountains of the Dead Sea and Wadi Araba and as far south as Ras Al-Naqab are dominated by a Mediterranean climate, while the eastern and northeastern areas of the country are arid desert. Although the desert parts of the kingdom reach high temperatures, the heat is usually moderated by low humidity and a daytime breeze, while the nights are cool. Summers, lasting from May to September, are hot and dry, with temperatures averaging around 32 °C (90 °F) and sometimes exceeding 40 °C (104 °F) between July and August. The winter, lasting from November to March, is relatively cool, with temperatures averaging around 13 °C (55 °F). Winter also sees frequent showers and occasional snowfall in some western elevated areas. === Ecology === Over 2,000 plant species have been recorded in Jordan. Many of the flowering plants bloom in the spring after the winter rains and the type of vegetation depends largely on the levels of precipitation. The mountainous regions in the northwest are clothed in forests, while further south and east the vegetation becomes more scrubby and transitions to steppe-type vegetation. Forests cover 1.5 million dunums (1,500 km<sup>2</sup>), less than 2% of Jordan, making Jordan among the world's least forested countries, the international average being 15%. Plant species include, Aleppo pine, Sarcopoterium, Salvia dominica, black iris, Tamarix, Anabasis, Artemisia, Acacia, Mediterranean cypress and Phoenecian juniper. The mountainous regions in the northwest are clothed in natural forests of pine, deciduous oak, evergreen oak, pistachio and wild olive. Mammal and reptile species include, the long-eared hedgehog, Nubian ibex, wild boar, fallow deer, Arabian wolf, desert monitor, honey badger, glass snake, caracal, golden jackal and the roe deer, among others. Bird include the hooded crow, Eurasian jay, lappet-faced vulture, barbury falcon, hoopoe, pharaoh eagle-owl, common cuckoo, Tristram's starling, Palestine sunbird, Sinai rosefinch, lesser kestrel, house crow and the white-spectacled bulbul. == Politics and government == Jordan is a unitary state under a constitutional monarchy. Jordan's constitution, adopted in 1952 and amended a number of times since, is the legal framework that governs the monarch, government, bicameral legislature and judiciary. The king retains wide executive and legislative powers from the government and parliament. The king exercises his powers through the government that he appoints for a four-year term, which is responsible before the parliament that is made up of two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The judiciary is independent according to the constitution. The king is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the army. He can declare war and peace, ratify laws and treaties, convene and close legislative sessions, call and postpone elections, dismiss the government and dissolve the parliament. The appointed government can also be dismissed through a majority vote of no confidence by the elected House of Representatives. After a bill is proposed by the government, it must be approved by the House of Representatives then the Senate, and becomes law after being ratified by the king. A royal veto on legislation can be overridden by a two-thirds vote in a joint session of both houses. The parliament also has the right of interpellation. The 65 members of the upper Senate are directly appointed by the king, the constitution mandates that they be veteran politicians, judges and generals who previously served in the government or in the House of Representatives. The 130 members of the lower House of Representatives are elected through party-list proportional representation in 23 constituencies for a 4-year term. Minimum quotas exist in the House of Representatives for women (15 seats, though they won 20 seats in the 2016 election), Christians (9 seats) and Circassians and Chechens (3 seats). Courts are divided into three categories: civil, religious, and special. The civil courts deal with civil and criminal matters, including cases brought against the government. The civil courts include Magistrate Courts, Courts of First Instance, Courts of Appeal, High Administrative Courts which hear cases relating to administrative matters, and the

Constitutional Court which was set up in 2012 in order to hear cases regarding the constitutionality of laws. Although Islam is the state religion, the constitution preserves religious and personal freedoms. Religious law only extends to matters of personal status such as divorce and inheritance in religious courts, and is partially based on Islamic Sharia law. The special court deals with cases forwarded by the civil one. The capital city of Jordan is Amman, located in north-central Jordan. Jordan is divided into 12 governorates (muhafazah) (informally grouped into three regions: northern, central, southern). These are subdivided into a total of 52 nawahi, which are further divided into neighbourhoods in urban areas or into towns in rural ones. The current monarch, Abdullah II, ascended to the throne in February 1999 after the death of his father Hussein. Abdullah re-affirmed Jordan's commitment to the peace treaty with Israel and its relations with the United States. He refocused the government's agenda on economic reform, during his first year. King Abdullah's eldest son, Prince Hussein, is the current Crown Prince of Jordan. The current prime minister is Hani Al-Mulki who received his position on 29 May 2016. Abdullah had announced his intentions of turning Jordan into a parliamentary system, where the largest bloc in parliament forms a government. However, the underdevelopment of political parties in the country have hampered such moves. Jordan has around 50 political parties representing nationalist, leftist, Islamist, and liberal ideologies. Political parties contested a fifth of the seats in the 2016 elections, the remainder belonging to independent politicians. According to Freedom House, Jordan is ranked as the 3rd freest Arab country, and as "partly free" in the Freedom in the World 2017 report. The 2010 Arab Democracy Index from the Arab Reform Initiative ranked Jordan first in the state of democratic reforms out of 15 Arab countries. Jordan ranked first among the Arab states and 78th globally in the Human Freedom Index in 2015, and ranked 55th out of 175 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) issued by Transparency International in 2014, where 175th is most corrupt. In the 2016 Press Freedom Index maintained by Reporters Without Borders, Jordan ranked 135th out of 180 countries worldwide, and 5th of 19 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. Jordan's score was 44 on a scale from 0 (most free) to 105 (least free). The report added "the Arab Spring and the Syrian conflict have led the authorities to tighten their grip on the media and, in particular, the Internet, despite an outcry from civil society". Jordanian media consists of public and private institutions. Popular Jordanian newspapers include Al Ghad and the Jordan Times. The two most-watched local TV stations are Ro'ya TV and Jordan TV. Internet penetration in Jordan reached 76% in 2015. === Largest cities === === Administrative divisions === The first level subdivision in Jordan is the muhafazah or governorate. The governorates are divided into liwa or districts, which are often further subdivided into qda or sub-districts. Control for each administrative unit is in a "chief town" (administrative centre) known as a nahia. === Foreign relations === The kingdom has followed a pro-Western foreign policy and maintained close relations with the United States and the United Kingdom. During the first Gulf War (1990), these relations were damaged by Jordan's neutrality and its maintenance of relations with Iraq. Later, Jordan restored its relations with Western countries through its participation in the enforcement of UN sanctions against Iraq and in the Southwest Asia peace process. After King Hussein's death in 1999, relations between Jordan and the Persian Gulf countries greatly improved. Jordan is a key ally of the USA and UK and, together with Egypt, is one of only two Arab nations to have signed peace treaties with Israel, Jordan's direct neighbour. Jordan views an independent Palestinian state with the 1967 borders, as part of the two-state solution and of supreme national interest. The ruling Hashemite dynasty has had custodianship over holy sites in Jerusalem since 1924, a position re-inforced in the Israel–Jordan peace treaty. Turmoil in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque between Israelis and Palestinians created tensions between Jordan and Israel concerning the former's role in protecting the Muslim and Christian sites in Jerusalem. Jordan is a founding member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and of the Arab League. It enjoys "advanced status" with the European Union and is part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which aims to increase links between the EU and its neighbours. Jordan and Morocco tried to join the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 2011, but the Gulf countries offered a five-year development aid programme instead. === Military, crime and law enforcement === The first organised army in Jordan was established on 22 October 1920, and was named the "Arab Legion". Jordan's capture of the West Bank during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War proved that the Arab Legion, known today as the Jordan Armed Forces, was the most effective among the Arab troops involved in the war. The Royal Jordanian Army, which boasts around 110,000 personnel, is considered to be among the most professional in the region, due to being particularly well-trained and organised. The Jordanian military enjoys strong support and aid from the United States, the United Kingdom and France. This is due to Jordan's critical position in the Middle East. The development of Special Operations Forces has been particularly significant, enhancing the

capability of the military to react rapidly to threats to homeland security, as well as training special forces from the region and beyond. Jordan provides extensive training to the security forces of several Arab countries. There are about 50,000 Jordanian troops working with the United Nations in peacekeeping missions across the world. Jordan ranks third internationally in participation in U.N. peacekeeping missions, with one of the highest levels of peacekeeping troop contributions of all U.N. member states. Jordan has dispatched several field hospitals to conflict zones and areas affected by natural disasters across the region. In 2014, Jordan joined an aerial bombardment campaign by an international coalition led by the United States against the Islamic State as part of its intervention in the Syrian Civil War. In 2015, Jordan 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. Jordan's law enforcement is under the purview of the Public Security Directorate (which includes approximately 50,000 persons) and the General Directorate of Gendarmerie, both of which are subordinate to the country's Ministry of Interior. The first police force in the Jordanian state was organised after the fall of the Ottoman Empire on 11 April 1921. Until 1956 police duties were carried out by the Arab Legion and the Transjordan Frontier Force. After that year the Public Safety Directorate was established. The number of female police officers is increasing. In the 1970s, it was the first Arab country to include females in its police force. Jordan's law enforcement was ranked 37th in the world and 3rd in the Middle East, in terms of police services' performance, by the 2016 World Internal Security and Police Index. == Economy == Jordan is classified by the World Bank as an "upper-middle income" country. However, approximately 14.4% of the population lives below the national poverty line on a longterm basis (as of 2010), while almost a third fell below the national poverty line during some time of the year—known as transient poverty. The economy, which boasts a GDP of \$39.453 billion (as of 2016), grew at an average rate of 8% per annum between 2004 and 2008, and around 2.6% 2010 onwards. GDP per capita rose by 351% in the 1970s, declined 30% in the 1980s, and rose 36% in the 1990s—currently \$5,092 per capita. The Jordanian economy is one of the smallest economies in the region, and the country's populace suffers from relatively high rates of unemployment and poverty. Jordan's economy is relatively well diversified. Trade and finance combined account for nearly one-third of GDP; transportation and communication, public utilities, and construction account for one-fifth, and mining and manufacturing constitute nearly another fifth. Despite plans to expand the private sector, the state remains the dominant force in Jordan's economy. Net official development assistance to Jordan in 2009 totalled USD 761 million; according to the government, approximately two-thirds of this was allocated as grants, of which half was direct budget support. The official currency is the Jordanian dinar, which is pegged to the IMF's special drawing rights (SDRs), equivalent to an exchange rate of 1 US\$  $\equiv$  0.709 dinar, or approximately 1 dinar  $\equiv$  1.41044 dollars. In 2000, Jordan joined the World Trade Organization and signed the Jordan–United States Free Trade Agreement, thus becoming the first Arab country to establish a free trade agreement with the United States. Jordan enjoys advanced status with the EU, which has facilitated greater access to export to European markets. Due to slow domestic growth, high energy and food subsidies and a bloated public-sector workforce, Jordan usually runs annual budget deficits. The Great Recession and the turmoil caused by the Arab Spring have depressed Jordan's GDP growth, damaging trade, industry, construction and tourism. Tourist arrivals have dropped sharply since 2011. Since 2011, the natural gas pipeline in Sinai supplying Jordan from Egypt was attacked 32 times by Islamic State affiliates. Jordan incurred billions of dollars in losses because it had to substitute more expensive heavy-fuel oils to generate electricity. In November 2012, the government cut subsidies on fuel, increasing its price. The decision, which was later revoked, caused large scale protests to break out across the country. Jordan's total foreign debt in 2012 was \$22 billion, representing 72% of its GDP. In 2016, the debt reached \$35.1 billion representing 90.6% of its GDP. This substantial increase is attributed to effects of regional instability causing: decrease in tourist activity; decreased foreign investments; increased military expenditure; attacks on Egyptian pipeline; the collapse of trade with Iraq and Syria; expenses from hosting Syrian refugees and accumulated interests from loans. According to the World Bank, Syrian refugees have cost Jordan more than \$2.5 billion a year, amounting to 6% of the GDP and 25% of the government's annual revenue. Foreign aid covers only a small part of these costs, 63% of the total costs are covered by Jordan. An austerity programme was adopted by the government which aims to reduce Jordan's debt-to-GDP ratio to 77 percent by 2021. The proportion of well-educated and skilled workers in Jordan is among the highest in the region in sectors such as ICT and industry, due to a relatively modern educational system. This has attracted large foreign investments to Jordan and has enabled the country to export its workforce to Persian Gulf countries. Flows of remittances to Jordan



grew rapidly, particularly during the end of the 1970s and 1980s, and remains an important source of external funding. Remittances from Jordanian expatriates were \$3.8 billion in 2015, a notable rise in the amount of transfers compared to 2014 where remittances reached over \$3.66 billion listing Jordan as fourth largest recipient in the region. === Transportation === Jordan is ranked as having the 35th best infrastructure in the world, one of the highest rankings in the developing world, according to the 2010 World Economic Forum's Index of Economic Competitiveness. This high infrastructural development is necessitated by its role as a transit country for goods and services to Palestine and Iraq. Palestinians use Jordan as a transit country due to the Israeli restrictions and Iraqis use Jordan due to the instability in Iraq. According to data from the Jordanian Ministry of Public Works and Housing, as of 2011, the Jordanian road network consisted of 2,878 km (1,788 mi) of main roads; 2,592 km (1,611 mi) of rural roads and 1,733 km (1,077 mi) of side roads. The Hejaz Railway built during the Ottoman Empire which extended from Damascus to Mecca will act as a base for future railway expansion plans. Currently, the railway has little civilian activity; it is primarily used for transporting goods. A national railway project is currently undergoing studies and seeking funding sources. Jordan has three commercial airports, all receiving and dispatching international flights. Two are in Amman and the third is in Aqaba, King Hussein International Airport. Amman Civil Airport serves several regional routes and charter flights while Queen Alia International Airport is the major international airport in Jordan and is the hub for Royal Jordanian, the flag carrier. Queen Alia International Airport expansion was completed in 2013 with new terminals costing \$700 million, to handle over 16 million passengers annually. It is now considered a state-of-the-art airport and was awarded 'the best airport by region: Middle East' for 2014 and 2015 by Airport Service Quality (ASQ) survey, the world's leading airport passenger satisfaction benchmark programme. The Port of Aqaba is the only port in Jordan. In 2006, the port was ranked as being the "Best Container Terminal" in the Middle East by Lloyd's List. The port was chosen due to it being a transit cargo port for other neighbouring countries, its location between four countries and three continents, being an exclusive gateway for the local market and for the improvements it has recently witnessed. === Tourism === The tourism sector is considered a cornerstone of the economy, being a large source of employment, hard currency and economic growth. In 2010, there were 8 million visitors to Jordan. The majority of tourists coming to Jordan are from European and Arab countries. The tourism sector in Jordan has been severely affected by regional turbulence. The most recent blow to the tourism sector was caused by the Arab Spring, which scared off tourists from the entire region. Jordan experienced a 70% decrease in the number of tourists from 2010 to 2016. Tourist numbers started to recover as of 2017. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan is home to around 100,000 archaeological and tourist sites. Some very well preserved historical cities include Petra and Jerash, the former being Jordan's most popular tourist attraction and an icon of the kingdom. Jordan is part of the Holy Land and has several biblical attractions that attract pilgrimage activities. Biblical sites include: Al-Maghtas—a traditional location for the Baptism of Jesus, Mount Nebo, Umm ar-Rasas, Madaba and Machaerus. Islamic sites include shrines of the prophet Muhammad's companions such as 'Abd Allah ibn Rawahah, Zayd ibn Harithah and Muadh ibn Jabal. Ajlun Castle built by Muslim Ayyubid leader Saladin in the 12th century AD during his wars with the Crusaders, is also a popular tourist attraction. Modern entertainment and recreation in urban areas, mostly in Amman, also attract tourists. Recently, the nightlife in Amman, Aqaba and Irbid has started to emerge and the number of bars, discos and nightclubs is on the rise. Alcohol is widely available in tourist restaurants, liquor stores and even some supermarkets. Valleys like Wadi Mujib and hiking trails in different parts of the country attract adventurers. Moreover, seaside recreation is present on the shores of Aqaba and the Dead Sea through several international resorts. Jordan has been a medical tourism destination in the Middle East since the 1970s. A study conducted by Jordan's Private Hospitals Association found that 250,000 patients from 102 countries received treatment in Jordan in 2010, compared to 190,000 in 2007, bringing over \$1 billion in revenue. Jordan is the region's top medical tourism destination, as rated by the World Bank, and fifth in the world overall. The majority of patients come from Yemen, Libya and Syria due to the ongoing civil wars in those countries. Jordanian doctors and medical staff have gained experience in dealing with war patients through years of receiving such cases from various conflict zones in the region. Jordan also is a hub for natural treatment methods in both Ma'in Hot Springs and the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is often described as a 'natural spa'. It contains 10 times more salt than the average ocean, which makes it impossible to sink in. The high salt concentration of the Dead Sea has been proved as being therapeutic for many skin diseases. The uniqueness of this lake attracts several Jordanian and foreign vacationers, which boosted investments in the hotel sector in the area. The Jordan Trail, a 650 km (400 mi) hiking trail stretching the entire

country from north to south, crossing several of Jordan's attractions was established in 2015. The trail aims to revive the Jordanian tourism sector. === Natural resources === Jordan is the world's second poorest country in terms of water resources per capita, and scarce water resources were aggravated by the influx of Syrian refugees. Water from Disi aquifer and ten major dams historically played a large role in providing Jordan's need for fresh water. The Jawa Dam in northeastern Jordan, which dates back to the fourth millennium BC, is the world's oldest dam. The Dead Sea is receding at an alarming rate. Multiple canals and pipelines were proposed to reduce its recession, which had begun causing many problems. The Red Sea–Dead Sea Water Conveyance project, carried out by Jordan, will provide water to the country and to Israel and Palestine, while the brine will be carried to the Dead Sea to help stabilise its levels. The first phase of the project is scheduled to begin in 2018 and to be completed in 2021. Phosphate mines in the south have made Jordan one of the largest producers and exporters of this mineral in the world. Despite the fact that reserves of crude oil are non-commercial, Jordan has the 5th largest oil-shale reserves in the world, which could be commercially exploited in the central and northwestern regions of the country. Official figures estimate the kingdom's oil shale reserves at more than 70 billion tonnes. Attarat Power Plant, which started construction in late 2017, is a \$2.2 billion oil shale-dependent power plant that will be completed in 2020 with a total capacity of 470 megawatts. The project is part of the kingdom's visionary plan that aims to diversify its energy resources by 2025. The extraction of shale oil had been delayed by a couple of years due to: the advanced level of technology that is required for extraction; and the relatively higher cost. Jordan aims to benefit from its large uranium reserves with two nuclear plants, 1000 MW each, scheduled for 2025. Natural gas was discovered in Jordan in 1987. The estimated size of the reserve discovered was about 230 billion cubic feet, a modest quantity compared with its other Arab neighbours. The Risha field, in the eastern desert beside the Iraqi border, produces nearly 35 million cubic feet of gas a day, which is sent to a nearby power plant to produce a minimal amount of Jordan's electricity needs. Jordan receives 330 days of sunshine per year, and wind speeds reach over 7 m/s in the mountainous areas. King Abdullah inaugurated several large-scale projects in the 2010s including the 117 MW Tafila Wind Farm, the 53 MW Shams Ma'an and the 103 MW Quweira solar power plants. By the end of 2017, it was reported that more than 732 MW of solar energy projects had been completed, which contributed to 7% of Jordan's electricity. After having initially set the percentage of renewable energy Jordan aimed to generate by 2020 at 10%, the government announced in 2018 that it sought to beat that figure and aim for 20%. A report by pv magazine described Jordan as the "Middle East's solar powerhouse". === Industry === Jordan's well developed industrial sector, which includes mining, manufacturing, construction, and power, accounted for approximately 26% of the GDP in 2004 (including manufacturing, 16.2%; construction, 4.6%; and mining, 3.1%). More than 21% of Jordan's labor force was employed in industry in 2002. In 2014, industry accounted for 6% of the GDP. The main industrial products are potash, phosphates, cement, clothes, and fertilisers. The most promising segment of this sector is construction. Petra Engineering Industries Company, which is considered to be one of the main pillars of Jordanian industry, has gained international recognition with its air-conditioning units reaching NASA. Jordan is now considered to be a leading pharmaceuticals manufacturer in the MENA region led by Jordanian pharmaceutical company Hikma. Jordan's military industry thrived after the King Abdullah Design and Development Bureau (KADDB) defence company was established by King Abdullah II in 1999, to provide an indigenous capability for the supply of scientific and technical services to the Jordanian Armed Forces, and to become a global hub in security research and development. It manufactures all types of military products, many of which are presented at the bi-annually held international military exhibition SOFEX. In 2015, KADDB exported \$72 million worth of industries to over 42 countries. == Science and technology == Science and technology is the country's fastest developing economic sector. This growth is occurring across multiple industries, including information and communications technology (ICT) and nuclear technology. Jordan contributes 75% of the Arabic content on the Internet. In 2014, the ICT sector accounted for more than 84,000 jobs and contributed to 12% of the GDP. More than 400 companies are active in telecom, information technology and video game development. There are 600 companies operating in active technologies and 300 start-up companies. Nuclear science and technology is also expanding. The Jordan Research and Training Reactor, which was inaugurated in 2016, is a 5MW training reactor located at the Jordan University of Science and Technology in Ar Ramtha. The facility is the first nuclear reactor in the country and will provide Jordan with radioactive isotopes for medical usage and provide training to students to produce a skilled workforce for the country's planned commercial nuclear reactors. Jordan signed a contract with Russian company Rosatom in 2014 for the construction of two \$5 billion nuclear reactors which are

currently at the planning stage and are expected to start delivering electricity in 2025. Jordan was also selected as the location for the Synchrotron-Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME) facility, supported by UNESCO and CERN. This particle accelerator, which was inaugurated in 2017, will allow collaboration between scientists from various rival Middle Eastern countries. The facility is the only particle accelerator in the Middle East, and one of only 60 synchrotron radiation facilities in the world.

== Demographics ==

The 2015 census showed Jordan's population to be 9,531,712 (Female: 47%; Males: 53%). Around 2.9 million (30%) were non-citizens, a figure including refugees, and illegal immigrants. There were 1,977,534 households in Jordan in 2015, with an average of 4.8 persons per household (compared to 6.7 persons per household for the census of 1979). The capital and largest city of Jordan is Amman, which is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities and one of the most liberal in the Arab world. The population of Amman was 65,754 in 1946, but came to be over 4 million in 2015. Arabs make up about 98% of the population. The rest 2% is attributed to other ethnic groups such as Circassians, and Armenians and other minorities. About 84.1% of the population live in urban towns and cities.

=== Immigrants and refugees ===

Jordan is a home to 2,175,491 Palestinian refugees as of Dec-2016; most of them, but not all, were granted Jordanian citizenship. The first wave of Palestinian refugees arrived during the 1948 Arab Israeli war and peaked in the 1967 Six Day War and the 1990 Gulf War. In the past, Jordan had given many Palestinian refugees citizenship, however recently Jordanian citizenship is given only in rare cases. 370,000 of these Palestinians live in UNRWA refugee camps. Following the capture of the West Bank by Israel in 1967, Jordan revoked the citizenship of thousands of Palestinians to thwart any attempt to permanently resettle from the West Bank to Jordan. West Bank Palestinians with family in Jordan or Jordanian citizenship were issued yellow cards guaranteeing them all the rights of Jordanian citizenship if requested. Up to 1,000,000 Iraqis came to Jordan following the Iraq War in 2003, and most of them have returned. In 2015, their number in Jordan was 130,911. Many Iraqi Christians (Assyrians/Chaldeans) however settled temporarily or permanently in Jordan. Immigrants also include 15,000 Lebanese who arrived following the 2006 Lebanon War. Since 2010, over 1.4 million Syrian refugees have fled to Jordan to escape the violence in Syria. The kingdom has continued to demonstrate hospitality, despite the substantial strain the flux of Syrian refugees places on the country. The effects are largely affecting Jordanian communities, as the vast majority of Syrian refugees do not live in camps. The refugee crisis effects include competition for job opportunities, water resources and other state provided services, along with the strain on the national infrastructure. In 2007, there were up to 150,000 Assyrian Christians; most are Eastern Aramaic speaking refugees from Iraq. Kurds number some 30,000, and like the Assyrians, many are refugees from Iraq, Iran and Turkey. Descendants of Armenians that sought refuge in the Levant during the 1915 Armenian Genocide number approximately 5,000 persons, mainly residing in Amman. A small number of ethnic Mandeans also reside in Jordan, again mainly refugees from Iraq. Around 12,000 Iraqi Christians have sought refuge in Jordan after the Islamic State took the city of Mosul in 2014. Several thousand Libyans, Yemenis and Sudanese have also sought asylum in Jordan to escape instability and violence in their respective countries. The 2015 Jordanian census recorded that there were 1,265,000 Syrians, 636,270 Egyptians, 634,182 Palestinians, 130,911 Iraqis, 31,163 Yemenis, 22,700 Libyans and 197,385 from other nationalities residing in the country. There are around 1.2 million illegal, and 500,000 legal, migrant workers in the kingdom. Thousands of foreign women, mostly from the Middle East and Eastern Europe, work in nightclubs, hotels and bars across the kingdom. American and European expatriate communities are concentrated in the capital, as the city is home to many international organizations and diplomatic missions.

=== Religion and languages ===

Sunni Islam is the dominant religion in Jordan. Muslims make up about 95% of the country's population; in turn, 93% of those self-identify as Sunnis. There are also a small number of Ahmadi Muslims, and some Shiites. Many Shia are Iraqi and Lebanese refugees. Muslims who convert to another religion as well as missionaries from other religions face societal and legal discrimination. Jordan contains some of the oldest Christian communities in the world, dating as early as the 1st century AD after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Christians today make up about 3.68% of the population, down from 20% in 1930, though their absolute number has grown. This is due to high immigration rates of Muslims into Jordan, higher emigration rates of Christians to the west and higher birth rates for Muslims. Jordanian Christians number around 250,000, all of whom are Arabic-speaking, according to a 2014 estimate by the Orthodox Church. The study excluded minority Christian groups and the thousands of western, Iraqi and Syrian Christians residing in Jordan. Christians are exceptionally well integrated in the Jordanian society and enjoy a high level of freedom, though they are not free to evangelize Muslims. Christians traditionally occupy two cabinet posts, and

are reserved 9 seats out of the 130 in the parliament. The highest political position reached by a Christian is deputy prime minister, held by Marwan al-Muasher in 2005. Christians are also influential in media. Smaller religious minorities include Druze and Bahá'ís. Most Jordanian Druze live in the eastern oasis town of Azraq, some villages on the Syrian border, and the city of Zarqa, while most Jordanian Bahá'ís live in the village of Adassiyeh bordering the Jordan Valley. The official language is Modern Standard Arabic, a literary language taught in the schools. Most Jordanians natively speak one of the non-standard Arabic dialects known as Jordanian Arabic. Jordanian Sign Language is the language of the deaf community. English, though without official status, is widely spoken throughout the country and is the de facto language of commerce and banking, as well as a co-official status in the education sector; almost all university-level classes are held in English and almost all public schools teach English along with Standard Arabic. Chechen, Circassian, Armenian, Tagalog, and Russian are popular among their communities. French is offered as an elective in many schools, mainly in the private sector. German is an increasingly popular language; it has been introduced at a larger scale since the establishment of the German-Jordanian University in 2005.

== Culture ==

=== Art and museums ===

Many institutions in Jordan aim to increase cultural awareness of Jordanian Art and to represent Jordan's artistic movements in fields such as paintings, sculpture, graffiti and photography. The art scene has been developing in the past few years and Jordan has been a haven for artists from surrounding countries. In January 2016, for the first time ever, a Jordanian film called Theeb was nominated for the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. The largest museum in Jordan is The Jordan Museum. It contains much of the valuable archaeological findings in the country, including some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Neolithic limestone statues of 'Ain Ghazal and a copy of the Mesha Stele. Most museums in Jordan are located in Amman including The Children's Museum Jordan, The Martyr's Memorial and Museum and the Royal Automobile Museum. Museums outside Amman include the Aqaba Archaeological Museum. The Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts is a major contemporary art museum located in Amman. Music in Jordan is now developing with a lot of new bands and artists, who are now popular in the Middle East. Artists such as Omar Al-Abdallat, Toni Qattan, Diana Karazon and Hani Metwasi have increased the popularity of Jordanian music. The Jerash Festival is an annual music event that features popular Arab singers. Pianist and composer Zade Dirani has gained wide international popularity. There is also an increasing growth of alternative Arabic rock bands, who are dominating the scene in the Arab World, including: El Morabba3, Autostrad, JadaL, Akher Zapheer and Aziz Maraka.

=== Sports ===

Football is the most popular sport in Jordan. The national football team has improved in recent years, though it has yet to qualify for the World Cup. In 2013, Jordan spurned the chance to play at the 2014 World Cup when they lost to Uruguay during inter-confederation play-offs. This was the highest that Jordan had advanced in the World Cup qualifying rounds since 1986. The women's football team is also gaining reputation, and in March 2016 ranked 58th in the world. Jordan hosted the 2016 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup, the first women's sports tournament in the Middle East. Less common sports are gaining popularity. Rugby is increasing in popularity, a Rugby Union is recognised by the Jordan Olympic Committee which supervises three national teams. Although cycling is not widespread in Jordan, the sport is developing rapidly as a lifestyle and a new way to travel especially among the youth. In 2014, a NGO Make Life Skate Life completed construction of the 7Hills Skatepark, the first skatepark in the country located in Downtown Amman. Jordan's national basketball team is participating in various international and Middle Eastern tournaments. Local basketball teams include: Al-Orthodoxi Club, Al-Riyadi, Zain, Al-Hussein and Al-Jazeera.

=== Cuisine ===

As the 8th largest producer of olives in the world, olive oil is the main cooking oil in Jordan. A common appetizer is hummus, which is a puree of chick peas blended with tahini, lemon, and garlic. Ful medames is another well-known appetiser. A typical worker's meal, it has since made its way to the tables of the upper class. A typical Jordanian meze often contains koubba maqliya, labaneh, baba ghanoush, tabbouleh, olives and pickles. Meze is generally accompanied by the Levantine alcoholic drink arak, which is made from grapes and aniseed and is similar to ouzo, rakı and pastis. Jordanian wine and beer are also sometimes used. The same dishes, served without alcoholic drinks, can also be termed "muqabbilat" (starters) in Arabic. The most distinctive Jordanian dish is mansaf, the national dish of Jordan. The dish is a symbol for Jordanian hospitality and is influenced by the Bedouin culture. Mansaf is eaten on different occasions such as funerals, weddings and on religious holidays. It consists of a plate of rice with meat that was boiled in thick yogurt, sprayed with nuts and sometimes herbs. As an old tradition, the dish is eaten using one's hands, but the tradition is not always used. Simple fresh fruit is often served towards the end of a Jordanian meal, but there is also dessert, such as baklava, hareeseh, knafeh, halva and qatayef, a dish made specially for Ramadan. In Jordanian cuisine,

drinking coffee and tea flavoured with na'na or meramiyyeh is almost a ritual. == Health and education == Life expectancy in Jordan was around 74.8 years in 2017. The leading cause of death is cardiovascular diseases, followed by cancer. Childhood immunization rates have increased steadily over the past 15 years; by 2002 immunisations and vaccines reached more than 95% of children under five. In 1950, Water and sanitation was available to only 10% of the population, while in 2015 reached 98% of Jordanians. Jordan prides itself on its health services, some of the best in the region. Qualified medics, favourable investment climate and Jordan's stability has contributed to the success of this sector. The country's health care system is divided between public and private institutions. On 1 June 2007, Jordan Hospital (as the biggest private hospital) was the first general specialty hospital to gain the international accreditation JCAHO. The King Hussein Cancer Center is a leading cancer treatment center. 66% of Jordanians have medical insurance. The Jordanian educational system comprises 2 years of pre-school education, 10 years of compulsory basic education, and two years of secondary academic or vocational education, after which the students sit for the General Certificate of Secondary Education Exam (Tawjihi) exams. Scholars may attend either private or public schools. According to the UNESCO, the literacy rate in 2015 was 98.01% and is considered to be the highest in the Middle East and the Arab world, and one of the highest in the world. UNESCO ranked Jordan's educational system 18th out of 94 nations for providing gender equality in education. Jordan has the highest number of researchers in research and development per million people among all the 57 countries that are members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In Jordan there are 8060 researchers per million people, while the world average is 2532 per million. Primary education is free in Jordan. Jordan has 10 public universities, 19 private universities and 54 community colleges, of which 14 are public, 24 private and others affiliated with the Jordanian Armed Forces, the Civil Defense Department, the Ministry of Health and UNRWA. There are over 200,000 Jordanian students enrolled in universities each year. An additional 20,000 Jordanians pursue higher education abroad primarily in the United States and Europe. According to the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities, the top-ranking universities in the country are the University of Jordan (UJ) (1,220th worldwide), Jordan University of Science & Technology (JUST) (1,729th) and Hashemite University (2,176th). UJ and JUST occupy 8th and 10th between Arab universities. Jordan has 2,000 researchers per million people. == See also == Human rights in Jordan List of World Heritage Sites in Jordan Index of Jordan-related articles Outline of Jordan == References == == Further reading == El-Anis, Imad. *Jordan and the United States: The Political Economy of Trade and Economic Reform in the Middle East* (I.B. Tauris, distributed by Palgrave Macmillan; 2011) 320 pages; case studies of trade in textiles, pharmaceuticals, and financial services. Goichon, Amélie-Marie. *Jordanie réelle*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer (1967–1972). 2 vol., ill. Robins, Philip. *A History of Jordan* (2004). Ryan, Curt. *Jordan in Transition: From Hussein to Abdullah* (2002). Salibi, Kamal S. *The Modern History of Jordan* (1998). Teller, Matthew. *The Rough Guide to Jordan* (4th ed., 2009). == External links == Government of Jordan "Jordan". *The World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency. Jordan profile from the BBC News Wikimedia Atlas of Jordan Google Street View locations