

List of largest empires

The following is a **list of the largest empires** in world history. Rein Taagepera has defined an empire as "any relatively large sovereign political entity whose components are not sovereign" and its size as the area over which the empire has some undisputed military and taxation prerogatives,^[1] and these are the definitions used by this list.



The British Empire in 1920

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Largest empires by land area

For context, the land area of the Earth, excluding Antarctica, is 134,740,000 km² (52,023,000 sq mi).^[2]

Empires at their greatest extent

Empire size in this list is defined as the dry land area it controls. Where estimates vary, entries are sorted by the lowest estimate. The British Empire is the largest empire by total size, though its constituent units are discontinuous across oceans, whilst the Mongolian Empire is the largest contiguous empire, being one entity in Eurasia.

Empire	Maximum land area			
	million km ²	million mi ²	% of world	Year
British Empire	35.5 ^[3]	13.71	26.35%	1920 ^[3]
Mongol Empire	24.0 ^{[3][4]}	9.27	17.81%	1270 ^[4] or 1309 ^[3]
Russian Empire ^[a]	22.8 ^{[3][4]}	8.80	16.92%	1895 ^{[3][4]}
Spanish Empire	13.7 ^[3]	5.29	10.17%	1810 ^[3]
Qing dynasty	12.16 ^[5] –14.7 ^{[3][4]}	4.70–5.68	9.02%–10.91%	1820 ^[5] or 1790 ^{[3][4]}
Second French colonial empire	11.5 ^[3]	4.44	8.53%	1920 ^[3]
Abbasid Caliphate	11.1 ^{[3][4]}	4.29	8.24%	750 ^{[3][4]}
Umayyad Caliphate	11.1 ^[3]	4.29	8.24%	720 ^[3]
Yuan dynasty	11.0 ^[3] –13.72 ^[5]	4.25–5.30	8.16%–10.18%	1310 ^[3] or 1330 ^[5]
Xiongnu Empire	9.0 ^{[4][6]}	3.47	6.68%	176 BC ^{[4][6]}
Brazilian Empire	8.337 ^[7]	3.22	6.19%	1889 ^[7]
Empire of Japan	7.4 ^[8] –8.51	2.86–3.285 ^[9]	5.49%–6.32%	1938 ^[8] or 1942 ^[9]
Iberian Union	7.1 ^[3]	2.74	5.27%	1640 ^[3]
Eastern Han dynasty	6.5 ^[6]	2.51	4.82%	100 ^[6]
Ming dynasty	6.5 ^{[3][4]}	2.51	4.82%	1450 ^{[3][4]}
Rashidun Caliphate	6.4 ^[3]	2.47	4.75%	655 ^[3]
Göktürk Khaganate	6.0 ^{[4][6]}	2.32	4.45%	557 ^{[4][6]}
Golden Horde Khanate	6.0 ^{[3][4]}	2.32	4.45%	1310 ^{[3][4]}
Western Han dynasty	6.0 ^{[4][6]}	2.32	4.45%	50 BC ^{[4][6]}
Achaemenid Empire	5.5 ^{[4][6]}	2.12	4.08%	500 BC ^{[4][6]}
Second Portuguese Empire	5.5 ^[3]	2.12	4.08%	1820 ^[3]
Tang dynasty	5.4 ^{[3][4]} –10.76 ^[5]	2.08–4.15	4.01%–7.99%	715 ^{[3][4]} or 669 ^[5]
Macedonian Empire	5.2 ^{[4][6]}	2.01	3.86%	323 BC ^{[4][6]}
Ottoman Empire	5.2 ^{[3][4]}	2.01	3.86%	1683 ^{[3][4]}
Roman Empire	5.0 ^{[4][6]}	1.93	3.71%	117 ^{[4][6]}
Tibetan Empire	4.6 ^{[3][4]}	1.78	3.41%	800 ^{[3][4]}
Timurid Empire	4.4 ^{[3][4]}	1.70	3.27%	1405 ^{[3][4]}
Fatimid Caliphate	4.1 ^{[3][4]}	1.58	3.04%	969 ^{[3][4]}
Eastern Turkic Khaganate	4.0 ^[6]	1.54	2.97%	624 ^[6]
Hephthalite Empire	4.0 ^[6]	1.54	2.97%	470 ^[6]
Hunnic Empire	4.0 ^{[4][6]}	1.54	2.97%	441 ^{[4][6]}
Mughal Empire	4.0 ^{[3][4]}	1.54	2.97%	1690 ^{[3][4]}
Great Seljuq Empire	3.9 ^{[3][4]}	1.51	2.89%	1080 ^{[3][4]}

Empire	Maximum land area			
	million km ²	million mi ²	% of world	Year
Seleucid Empire	3.9 ^{[4][6]}	1.51	2.89%	301 BC ^{[4][6]}
Italian Empire	3.798 ^[10] –4.25 ^[11]	1.47–1.64	2.82%–3.15%	1938 ^[10] or 1941 ^[11]
Ilkhanate	3.75 ^{[3][4]}	1.45	2.78%	1310 ^{[3][4]}
Chagatai Khanate	3.5 ^{[3][4]}	1.35	2.60%	1310 ^[3] or 1350 ^{[3][4]}
Sasanian Empire	3.5 ^{[4][6]}	1.35	2.60%	550 ^{[4][6]}
Western Turkic Khaganate	3.5 ^[6]	1.35	2.60%	630 ^[6]
Western Xiongnu	3.5 ^[6]	1.35	2.60%	20 ^[6]
First French colonial empire	3.4 ^[3]	1.31	2.52%	1670 ^[3]
Ghaznavid Empire	3.4 ^{[3][4]}	1.31	2.52%	1029 ^{[3][4]}
Maurya Empire	3.4 ^[6] –5.0 ^[4]	1.31–1.93	2.52%–3.71%	261 BC ^[6] or 250 BC ^[4]
Delhi Sultanate (Tughlaq dynasty)	3.2 ^{[3][4]}	1.24	2.37%	1312 ^{[3][4]}
German colonial empire	3.199 ^{[12][13]}	1.24	2.37%	1912 ^[13]
Song dynasty	3.1 ^{[3][4]}	1.20	2.30%	980 ^{[3][4]}
Uyghur Khaganate	3.1 ^{[3][4]}	1.20	2.30%	800 ^{[3][4]}
Western Jin dynasty	3.1 ^[6]	1.20	2.30%	280 ^[6]
Sui dynasty	3.0 ^[6]	1.16	2.23%	589 ^[6]
Samanid Empire	2.85 ^{[3][4]}	1.10	2.12%	928 ^{[3][4]}
Eastern Jin dynasty	2.8 ^[6]	1.08	2.08%	347 ^[6]
Median Empire	2.8 ^{[4][6]}	1.08	2.08%	585 BC ^{[4][6]}
Parthian Empire	2.8 ^{[4][6]}	1.08	2.08%	0 ^{[4][6]}
Rouran Khaganate	2.8 ^{[4][6]}	1.08	2.08%	405 ^{[4][6]}
Byzantine Empire	2.7 ^[4] –2.8 ^[6]	1.04–1.08	2.00%–2.08%	555 ^[4] or 450 ^[6]
Indo-Scythian Kingdom	2.6 ^[6]	1.00	1.93%	20 ^[6]
Liao dynasty	2.6 ^{[3][4]} –4.5 ^[5]	1.00–1.74	1.93%–3.34%	947 ^{[3][4]} or 1111 ^[5]
Greco-Bactrian Kingdom	2.5 ^[6]	0.97	1.86%	184 BC ^[6]
Later Zhao	2.5 ^[6]	0.97	1.86%	329 ^[6]
Maratha Empire	2.5 ^[4]	0.97	1.86%	1760 ^[4]
Jin dynasty (1115–1234)	2.3 ^{[3][4]}	0.89	1.71%	1126 ^{[3][4]}
Khwarazmian Empire	2.3 ^[4] –3.6 ^[3]	0.89–1.39	1.71%–2.67%	1210 ^[4] or 1218 ^[3]
Qin dynasty	2.3 ^[6]	0.89	1.71%	220 BC ^[6]
First French Empire	2.1 ^[3]	0.81	1.56%	1813 ^[3]
Kievan Rus'	2.1 ^{[3][4]}	0.81	1.56%	1000 ^{[3][4]}
Mamluk Sultanate	2.1 ^{[3][4]}	0.81	1.56%	1300 ^[3] or 1400 ^[4]

Empire	Maximum land area			
	million km ²	million mi ²	% of world	Year
Third Portuguese Empire	2.1 ^[3]	0.81	1.56%	1900 ^[3]
Almohad Caliphate	2.0 ^[4] –2.3 ^[3]	0.77–0.89	1.48%–1.71%	1200 ^[4] or 1150 ^[3]
Cao Wei	2.0 ^[6]	0.77	1.48%	263 ^[6]
Former Qin	2.0 ^[6]	0.77	1.48%	376 ^[6]
Former Zhao	2.0 ^[6]	0.77	1.48%	316 ^[6]
Inca Empire	2.0 ^{[3][4]}	0.77	1.48%	1527 ^{[3][4]}
Kushan Empire	2.0 ^[4] –2.5 ^[6]	0.77–0.97	1.48%–1.86%	200 ^{[4][6]}
Liu Song dynasty	2.0 ^[6]	0.77	1.48%	450 ^[6]
Northern Wei	2.0 ^[6]	0.77	1.48%	450 ^[6]
Western Roman Empire	2.0 ^[6]	0.77	1.48%	395 ^[6]
Ayyubid dynasty	1.7 ^[3] –2.0 ^[4]	0.66–0.77	1.26%–1.48%	1200 ^[3] or 1190 ^[4]
Gupta Empire	1.7 ^[6] –3.5 ^[4]	0.66–1.35	1.26%–2.60%	440 ^[6] or 400 ^[4]
Buyid dynasty	1.6 ^{[3][4]}	0.62	1.19%	980 ^{[3][4]}
Eastern Wu	1.5 ^[6]	0.58	1.11%	221 ^[6]
Northern Qi	1.5 ^[6]	0.58	1.11%	557 ^[6]
Northern Xiongnu	1.5 ^[6]	0.58	1.11%	60 ^[6]
Northern Zhou	1.5 ^[6]	0.58	1.11%	577 ^[6]
Assyria	1.4 ^{[4][14]}	0.54	1.04%	670 BC ^{[4][14]}
Eastern Maurya Empire	1.3 ^[6]	0.50	0.96%	210 BC ^[6]
Liang dynasty	1.3 ^{[4][6]}	0.50	0.96%	502, ^[6] 549, ^[6] or 579 ^[4]
Kingdom of Aksum	1.25 ^[4]	0.48	0.93%	350 ^[4]
Shang dynasty	1.25 ^{[4][14]}	0.48	0.93%	1122 BC ^{[4][14]}
Francia	1.2 ^{[3][4]}	0.46	0.89%	814 ^{[3][4]}
Srivijaya	1.2 ^[4]	0.46	0.89%	1200 ^[4]
Indo-Greek Kingdom	1.1 ^[6]	0.42	0.82%	150 BC ^[6]
Mali Empire	1.1 ^{[3][4]}	0.42	0.82%	1380 ^{[3][4]}
Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth	1.1 ^{[3][4]}	0.42	0.82%	1480 ^[4] or 1650 ^[3]
Almoravid dynasty	1.0 ^[4]	0.39	0.74%	1120 ^[4]
Empire of Harsha	1.0 ^{[3][4]}	0.39	0.74%	625 ^[3] or 648 ^{[3][4]}
Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty	1.0 ^[3]	0.39	0.74%	860 ^[3]
Holy Roman Empire	1.0 ^[3]	0.39	0.74%	1050 ^[3]
Khazar Khanate	1.0 ^[3] –3.0 ^[4]	0.39–1.16	0.74%–2.23%	900 ^[3] or 850 ^[4]
Khmer Empire	1.0 ^{[3][4]}	0.39	0.74%	1290 ^{[3][4]}

Empire	Maximum land area			
	million km ²	million mi ²	% of world	Year
New Kingdom of Egypt	1.0 ^[4] [¹⁴]	0.39	0.74%	1450 BC ^[14] or 1300 BC ^[4]
Ptolemaic Kingdom	1.0 ^[6]	0.39	0.74%	301 BC ^[6]
Qara Khitai	1.0 ^[3] –1.5 ^[4]	0.39–0.58	0.74%–1.11%	1130 ^[3] or 1210 ^[4]
Shu Han	1.0 ^[6]	0.39	0.74%	221 ^[6]
Tahirid dynasty	1.0 ^[3]	0.39	0.74%	800 ^[3]
Western Xia	1.0 ^[4]	0.39	0.74%	1100 ^[4]
First Bulgarian Empire	0.807 ^[15]	0.31	0.60%	927 ^[15]
Akkadian Empire	0.8 ^[14]	0.31	0.59%	2250 BC ^[14]
Avar Khaganate	0.8 ^[6]	0.31	0.59%	600 ^[6]
Chu (state)	0.8 ^[6]	0.31	0.59%	300 BC ^[6]
First Portuguese Empire	0.8 ^[3]	0.31	0.59%	1580 ^[3]
Huns	0.8 ^[6]	0.31	0.59%	287 ^[6]
Songhai Empire	0.8 ^[3]	0.31	0.59%	1550 ^[3]
Hyksos	0.65 ^[14]	0.25	0.48%	1650 BC ^[14]
Twenty-sixth Dynasty of Egypt	0.65 ^[14]	0.25	0.48%	550 BC ^[14]
Austro-Hungarian Empire	0.62	0.24 ^[16]	0.46%	1905 ^[16]
Caliphate of Córdoba	0.6 ^[3]	0.23	0.45%	1000 ^[3]
Visigothic Kingdom	0.6 ^[6]	0.23	0.45%	580 ^[6]
Zhou dynasty	0.55 ^[17]	0.21	0.41%	1100 BC ^[17]
Kosala	0.5 ^[6]	0.19	0.37%	543 BC ^[6]
Lydia	0.5 ^[14]	0.19	0.37%	585 BC ^[14]
Magadha	0.5 ^[6]	0.19	0.37%	510 BC ^[6]
Middle Kingdom of Egypt	0.5 ^[14]	0.19	0.37%	1850 BC ^[14]
Neo-Babylonian Empire	0.5 ^[14]	0.19	0.37%	562 BC ^[14]
Satavahana dynasty	0.5 ^[6]	0.19	0.37%	150 ^[6]
Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt	0.5 ^[14]	0.19	0.37%	715 BC ^[14]
Western Satraps	0.5 ^[6]	0.19	0.37%	100 ^[6]
Second Bulgarian Empire	0.477 ^[18]	0.18	0.35%	1241 ^[18]
New Hittite Kingdom	0.45 ^[14]	0.17	0.33%	1250 BC–1220 BC ^[14]
Xia dynasty	0.45 ^[14]	0.17	0.33%	1800 BC ^[14]
Middle Assyrian Empire	0.4 ^[14]	0.15	0.30%	1080 BC ^[14]
Old Kingdom of Egypt	0.4 ^[14]	0.15	0.30%	2400 BC ^[14]
Ancient Carthage	0.3 ^[6]	0.12	0.22%	220 BC ^[6]

Empire	Maximum land area			
	million km ²	million mi ²	% of world	Year
Indus Valley Civilisation	0.3 ^[17]	0.12	0.22%	1800 BC ^[17]
Mitanni	0.3 ^[14]	0.12	0.22%	1450 BC–1375 BC ^[14]
First Babylonian Empire	0.25 ^[14]	0.10	0.19%	1690 BC ^[14]
Aztec Empire	0.22 ^[3]	0.08	0.16%	1520 ^[3]
Elamite Empire	0.2 ^[14]	0.08	0.15%	1160 BC ^[14]
Phrygia	0.2 ^[14]	0.08	0.15%	750 BC ^[14]
Second Dynasty of Isin	0.2 ^[14]	0.08	0.15%	1130 BC ^[14]
Urartu	0.2 ^[14]	0.08	0.15%	800 BC ^[14]
Middle Hittite Kingdom	0.15 ^[14]	0.06	0.11%	1450 BC ^[14]
Old Assyrian Empire	0.15 ^[14]	0.06	0.11%	1730 BC ^[14]
Old Hittite Empire	0.15 ^[14]	0.06	0.11%	1530 BC ^[14]
Ashanti Empire	0.1 ^[19]	0.04	0.07%	1872 ^[19]
Larsa	0.1 ^[14]	0.04	0.07%	1750 BC–1700 BC ^[14]
Neo-Sumerian Empire	0.1 ^[14]	0.04	0.07%	2000 BC ^[14]
Lagash	0.05 ^[17]	0.02	0.04%	2400 BC ^[17]
Sumer	0.05 ^[14]	0.02	0.04%	2400 BC ^[14]

a. Its successor state the USSR and its successor in turn, Russia, reached maximum extents of 22.3 million km² in 1945 and 17.1 million km² in 1991, respectively.^[3]

Timeline of largest empires to date

The earliest empire which can with certainty be stated to have been larger than all previous empires was that of Upper and Lower Egypt, which tenfolded the area of the previous largest civilisation.^[20]

Empire	Land area (million km ²)	Year
Upper and Lower Egypt	0.1 ^[14]	3000 BC ^[14]
Old Kingdom of Egypt	0.25 ^[14]	2850 BC ^[14]
	0.4 ^[14]	2400 BC ^[14]
Akkadian Empire	0.65 ^[14]	2300 BC ^[14]
	0.8 ^[14]	2250 BC ^[14]
New Kingdom of Egypt	1.0 ^[14]	1450 BC ^[14]
Shang dynasty	1.25 ^[14]	1122 BC ^[14]
Assyria	1.4 ^[14]	670 BC ^[14]
Median Empire	2.8 ^[6]	585 BC ^[6]
Achaemenid Empire	3.6 ^[6]	539 BC ^[6]
	5.5 ^[6]	500 BC ^[6]
Xiongnu Empire	9.0 ^[6]	176 BC ^[6]
Umayyad Caliphate	11.1 ^[3]	720 ^[3]
Mongol Empire	13.5 ^[3]	1227 ^[3]
	24.0 ^[3]	1309 ^[3]
British Empire	24.5 ^[3]	1880 ^[3]
	35.5 ^[3]	1920 ^[3]

Timeline of largest empires at the time

Empire	Land area during time as largest empire (million km²)	Year
<u>Upper Egypt</u>	0.1 ^[17]	3000 BC ^[17]
<u>Old Kingdom of Egypt</u>	0.25–0.4 ^[17]	2800 BC–2400 BC ^[17]
<u>Akkadian Empire</u>	0.2–0.6 ^[17]	2300 BC–2200 BC ^[17]
<u>Indus Valley Civilisation</u>	0.15 ^[17]	2100 BC ^[17]
<u>Middle Kingdom of Egypt</u>	0.2–0.5 ^[17]	2000 BC–1800 BC ^[17]
<u>Xia dynasty</u>	0.4 ^[17]	1700 BC ^[17]
<u>Hyksos</u>	0.65 ^[17]	1600 BC ^[17]
<u>New Kingdom of Egypt</u>	0.65–1.0 ^[17]	1500 BC–1300 BC ^[17]
<u>Shang</u>	0.9–1.1 ^[17]	1250 BC–1150 BC ^[17]
<u>New Kingdom of Egypt</u>	0.5–0.6 ^[17]	1100 BC–1050 BC ^[17]
<u>Zhou dynasty</u>	0.35–0.45 ^[17]	1000 BC–900 BC ^[17]
<u>Assyria</u>	0.4–1.4 ^[17]	850 BC–650 BC ^[17]
<u>Median Empire</u>	3.0 ^[17]	600 BC ^[17]
<u>Achaemenid Empire</u>	2.5–5.5 ^[17]	550 BC–350 BC ^[17]
<u>Macedonian Empire</u>	5.2 ^[17]	323 BC ^[17]
<u>Seleucid Empire</u>	4.0 ^[17]	300 BC ^[17]
<u>Maurya Empire</u>	3.5 ^[17]	250 BC ^[17]
<u>Han dynasty</u>	2.5 ^[17]	200 BC ^[17]
<u>Xiongnu Empire</u>	5.7 ^[17]	150 BC ^[17]
<u>Han dynasty</u>	4.2–6.5 ^[17]	100 BC–200 ^[17]
<u>Roman Empire</u>	4.4 ^[17]	250–350 ^[17]
<u>Sasanian Empire</u>	3.5 ^[17]	400 ^[17]
<u>Hunnic Empire</u>	4.0 ^[17]	450 ^[17]
<u>Sasanian Empire</u>	3.5 ^[17]	500 ^[17]
<u>Göktürk Khaganate</u>	3.0–5.2 ^[17]	550–600 ^[17]
<u>Rashidun Caliphate</u>	5.2 ^[17]	650 ^[17]
<u>Umayyad Caliphate</u>	9.0–11.0 ^[17]	700–750 ^[17]
<u>Abbasid Caliphate</u>	8.3–11.0 ^[17]	750–800 ^[17]
<u>Tibetan Empire</u>	2.5–4.7 ^[17]	850–950 ^[17]
<u>Song dynasty</u>	3.0 ^[17]	1000 ^[17]
<u>Seljuk Empire</u>	3.0–4.0 ^[17]	1050–1100 ^[17]

Tibetan Empire	2.5 ^[17]	1150 ^[17]
Jin dynasty (1115–1234)	2.3 ^[17]	1200 ^[17]
Mongol Empire	18.0–24.0 ^[17]	1250–1300 ^[17]
Yuan dynasty	11.0 ^[17]	1350 ^[17]
Timurid Empire	4.0 ^[17]	1400 ^[17]
Ming dynasty	4.7–6.5 ^[17]	1450–1500 ^[17]
Ottoman Empire	4.3 ^[17]	1550 ^[17]
Tsardom of Russia	6.0–12.0 ^[17]	1600–1700 ^[17]
Russian Empire	14.0–17.0 ^[17]	1750–1800 ^[17]
British Empire	23.0–34.0 ^[17]	1850–1925 ^[17]
Soviet Union	22.5 ^[17]	1950–1975 ^[17]

See also

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Notes and references

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 - Kamerun: 495 000 km²
 - Togoland: 87 200
 - German East Africa: 995 000
 - German New Guinea: 240 000
 - Marshall Islands: 400
 - Kiautschou: 515
 - Caroline Islands, Palau, and Mariana Islands: 2 376
 - German Samoa: 2 570
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