

= Rwanda =

Rwanda (/ ruˈwɒndə / or / ruˈwændə / (listen) ; Kinyarwanda : U Rwanda [u.ʔwanda]) , officially the Republic of Rwanda (Kinyarwanda : Repubulika y'u Rwanda ; French : République du Rwanda) , is a sovereign state in central and east Africa and one of the smallest countries on the African mainland . Located a few degrees south of the Equator , Rwanda is bordered by Uganda , Tanzania , Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo . Rwanda is in the African Great Lakes region and is highly elevated ; its geography dominated by mountains in the west and savanna to the east , with numerous lakes throughout the country . The climate is temperate to subtropical , with two rainy seasons and two dry seasons each year .

The population is young and predominantly rural , with a density among the highest in Africa . Rwandans are drawn from just one cultural and linguistic group , the Banyarwanda , although within this group there are three subgroups : the Hutu , Tutsi and Twa . The Twa are a forest @-@ dwelling pygmy people descended from Rwanda 's earliest inhabitants . Scholars disagree on the origins of and differences between the Hutu and Tutsi ; some believe differences are derived from former social castes within a single people , while others believe the Hutu and Tutsi arrived in the country separately , and from different locations . Christianity is the largest religion in the country ; the principal language is Kinyarwanda , spoken by most Rwandans , with English and French serving as official languages . Rwanda has a presidential system of government . The president is Paul Kagame of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) , who took office in 2000 . Rwanda today has low corruption compared with neighbouring countries , although human rights organisations report suppression of opposition groups , intimidation and restrictions on freedom of speech though the government says its protecting its territories as any other country may do if its in it situation . The country has been governed by a ordered administrative hierarchy since pre @-@ colonial times ; there are five provinces delineated by borders drawn in 2006 . Rwanda is one of only two countries with a female majority in the national parliament .

Hunter gatherers settled the territory in the stone and iron ages , followed later by Bantu peoples . The population coalesced first into clans and then into kingdoms . The Kingdom of Rwanda dominated from the mid @-@ eighteenth century , with the Tutsi kings conquering others militarily , centralising power , and later enacting anti @-@ Hutu policies . Germany colonised Rwanda in 1884 as part of German East Africa , followed by Belgium , which invaded in 1916 during World War I. Both European nations ruled through the kings and perpetuated a pro @-@ Tutsi policy . The Hutu population revolted in 1959 . They massacred numerous Tutsi and ultimately established an independent , Hutu @-@ dominated state in 1962 . The Tutsi @-@ led Rwandan Patriotic Front launched a civil war in 1990 . Social tensions erupted in the 1994 genocide , in which Hutu extremists killed an estimated 500 @,@ 000 to 1 @.@ 3 million Tutsi and moderate Hutu . The RPF ended the genocide with a military victory .

Rwanda 's economy suffered heavily during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide , but has since strengthened . The economy is based mostly on subsistence agriculture . Coffee and tea are the major cash crops for export . Tourism is a fast @-@ growing sector and is now the country 's leading foreign exchange earner . Rwanda is one of only two countries in which mountain gorillas can be visited safely , and visitors are prepared to pay soft prices for gorilla tracking permits . Music and dance are an integral part of Rwandan culture , particularly drums and the highly choreographed intore dance . Traditional arts and crafts are produced throughout the country .

= = History = =

Modern human settlement of what is now Rwanda dates from , at the latest , the last glacial period , either in the Neolithic period around 8000 BC , or in the long humid period which followed , up to around 3000 BC . Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of sparse settlement by hunter gatherers in the late stone age , followed by a larger population of early Iron Age settlers , who produced dimpled pottery and iron tools . These early inhabitants were the ancestors of the Twa , aboriginal pygmy hunter @-@ gatherers who remain in Rwanda today . Between 700 BC and

1500 AD , a number of Bantu groups migrated into Rwanda , clearing forest land for agriculture . The forest @-@ dwelling Twa lost much of their habitat and moved to the mountain slopes . Historians have several theories regarding the nature of the Bantu migrations ; one theory is that the first settlers were Hutu , while the Tutsi migrated later to form a distinct racial group , possibly of Cushitic origin . An alternative theory is that the migration was slow and steady , with incoming groups integrating into rather than conquering the existing society . Under this theory , the Hutu and Tutsi distinction arose later and was a class distinction rather than a racial one .

The earliest form of social organisation in the area was the clan (ubwoko) . The clans were not limited to genealogical lineages or geographical area , and most included Hutu , Tutsi , and Twa . From the 15th century , the clans began to coalesce into kingdoms ; by 1700 around eight kingdoms existed in present @-@ day Rwanda . One of these , the Kingdom of Rwanda , ruled by the Tutsi Nyiginya clan , became increasingly dominant from the mid @-@ eighteenth century . The kingdom reached its greatest extent during the nineteenth century under the reign of King Kigeli Rwabugiri . Rwabugiri conquered several smaller states , expanded the kingdom west and north , and initiated administrative reforms ; these included ubuhake , in which Tutsi patrons ceded cattle , and therefore privileged status , to Hutu or Tutsi clients in exchange for economic and personal service , and uburetwa , a corvée system in which Hutu were forced to work for Tutsi chiefs . Rwabugiri 's changes caused a rift to grow between the Hutu and Tutsi populations . The Twa were better off than in pre @-@ Kingdom days , with some becoming dancers in the royal court , but their numbers continued to decline .

The Berlin Conference of 1884 assigned the territory to Germany as part of German East Africa , marking the beginning of the colonial era . The explorer Gustav Adolf von Götzen was the first European to significantly explore the country in 1894 ; he crossed from the south @-@ east to Lake Kivu and met the king . The Germans did not significantly alter the social structure of the country , but exerted influence by supporting the king and the existing hierarchy and delegating power to local chiefs . Belgian forces took control of Rwanda and Burundi during World War I , beginning a period of more direct colonial rule . Belgium simplified and centralised the power structure , and introduced large @-@ scale projects in education , health , public works , and agricultural supervision , including new crops and improved agricultural techniques to try to reduce the incidence of famine . Both the Germans and the Belgians promoted Tutsi supremacy , considering the Hutu and Tutsi different races . In 1935 , Belgium introduced identity cards labelling each individual as either Tutsi , Hutu , Twa or Naturalised . While it had previously been possible for particularly wealthy Hutu to become honorary Tutsi , the identity cards prevented any further movement between the classes .

Belgium continued to rule Rwanda as a UN Trust Territory after World War II , with a mandate to oversee independence . Tension escalated between the Tutsi , who favoured early independence , and the Hutu emancipation movement , culminating in the 1959 Rwandan Revolution : Hutu activists began killing Tutsi , forcing more than 100 @,@ 000 to seek refuge in neighbouring countries . In 1961 , the now pro @-@ Hutu Belgians held a referendum in which the country voted to abolish the monarchy . Rwanda was separated from Burundi and gained independence in 1962 . Cycles of violence followed , with exiled Tutsi attacking from neighbouring countries and the Hutu retaliating with large @-@ scale slaughter and repression of the Tutsi . In 1973 , Juvénal Habyarimana took power in a military coup . Pro @-@ Hutu discrimination continued , but there was greater economic prosperity and a reduced amount of violence against Tutsi . The Twa remained marginalised , and by 1990 were almost entirely forced out of the forests by the government ; many became beggars . Rwanda 's population had increased from 1 @.@ 6 million people in 1934 to 7 @.@ 1 million in 1989 , leading to competition for land .

In 1990 , the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) , a rebel group composed mostly of Tutsi refugees , invaded northern Rwanda , initiating the Rwandan Civil War . Neither side was able to gain a decisive advantage in the war , but by 1992 it had weakened Habyarimana 's authority ; mass demonstrations forced him into a coalition with the domestic opposition and eventually to sign the 1993 Arusha Accords with the RPF . The cease @-@ fire ended on 6 April 1994 when Habyarimana 's plane was shot down near Kigali Airport , killing him . The shooting down of the plane served as the catalyst for the Rwandan Genocide , which began within a few hours . Over the course of

approximately 100 days , between 500 @, @ 000 and 1 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu were killed in well @-@ planned attacks on the orders of the interim government . Many Twa were also killed , despite not being directly targeted . The Tutsi RPF restarted their offensive , and took control of the country methodically , gaining control of the whole country by mid @-@ July . The international response to the genocide was limited , with major powers reluctant to strengthen the already overstretched UN peacekeeping force . When the RPF took over , approximately two million Hutu fled to neighbouring countries , in particular Zaïre , fearing reprisals ; additionally , the RPF @-@ led army was a key belligerent in the First and Second Congo Wars . Within Rwanda , a period of reconciliation and justice began , with the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the reintroduction of Gacaca , a traditional village court system . Since 2000 Rwanda 's economy , tourist numbers , and Human Development Index have grown rapidly ; between 2006 and 2011 the poverty rate reduced from 57 % to 45 % , while life expectancy rose from 46 @. @ 6 years in 2000 to 59 @. @ 7 years in 2015 .

= = Politics and government = =

The President of Rwanda is the head of state , and has broad powers including creating policy in conjunction with the Cabinet , exercising the prerogative of mercy , commanding the armed forces , negotiating and ratifying treaties , signing presidential orders , and declaring war or a state of emergency . The President is elected by popular vote every seven years , and appoints the Prime Minister and all other members of Cabinet . The incumbent President is Paul Kagame , who took office upon the resignation of his predecessor , Pasteur Bizimungu , in 2000 . Kagame subsequently won elections in 2003 and 2010 , although human rights organisations have criticised these elections as being " marked by increasing political repression and a crackdown on free speech " . Article 101 of the current constitution limits presidents to two terms in office , but as of 2015 there is a motion underway in the Rwandan parliament to amend this and allow Kagame to run for a third term . The motion , which would require ratification by referendum , was brought following receipt of a petition signed by 3 @. @ 8 million Rwandans .

The constitution was adopted following a national referendum in 2003 , replacing the transitional constitution which had been in place since 1994 . The constitution mandates a multi @-@ party system of government , with politics based on democracy and elections . However , the constitution places conditions on how political parties may operate . Article 54 states that " political organizations are prohibited from basing themselves on race , ethnic group , tribe , clan , region , sex , religion or any other division which may give rise to discrimination " . The government has also enacted laws criminalising genocide ideology , which can include intimidation , defamatory speeches , genocide denial and mocking of victims . According to Human Rights Watch , these laws effectively make Rwanda a one @-@ party state , as " under the guise of preventing another genocide , the government displays a marked intolerance of the most basic forms of dissent " . Amnesty International is also critical ; in its 2014 / 15 report Amnesty said that laws against inciting insurrection or trouble among the population had been used to imprison people " for the legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of association or of expression " .

The Parliament consists of two chambers . It makes legislation and is empowered by the constitution to oversee the activities of the President and the Cabinet . The lower chamber is the Chamber of Deputies , which has 80 members serving five @-@ year terms . Twenty @-@ four of these seats are reserved for women , elected through a joint assembly of local government officials ; another three seats are reserved for youth and disabled members ; the remaining 53 are elected by universal suffrage under a proportional representation system . Following the 2013 election , there are 51 female deputies , up from 45 in 2008 ; as of 2015 , Rwanda is one of only two countries with a female majority in the national parliament . The upper chamber is the 26 @-@ seat Senate , whose members are selected by a variety of bodies . A mandatory minimum of 30 % of the senators are women . Senators serve eight @-@ year terms .

Rwanda 's legal system is largely based on German and Belgian civil law systems and customary law . The judiciary is independent of the executive branch , although the President and the Senate

are involved in the appointment of Supreme Court judges . Human Rights Watch have praised the Rwandan government for progress made in the delivery of justice including the abolition of the death penalty , but also allege interference in the judicial system by members of the government , such as the politically motivated appointment of judges , misuse of prosecutorial power , and pressure on judges to make particular decisions . The constitution provides for two types of courts : ordinary and specialised . Ordinary courts are the Supreme Court , the High Court , and regional courts , while specialised courts are military courts and a system of commercial courts created in 2011 to expedite commercial litigations . Between 2004 and 2012 , a system of Gacaca courts was in operation . Gacaca , a Rwandan traditional court operated by villages and communities , was revived to expedite the trials of genocide suspects . The court succeeded in clearing the backlog of genocide cases , but was criticised by human rights groups as not meeting legal fair standard .

Rwanda has low corruption levels relative to most other African countries ; in 2014 , Transparency International ranked Rwanda as the fifth cleanest out of 47 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and 55th cleanest out of 175 in the world . The constitution provides for an Ombudsman , whose duties include prevention and fighting of corruption . Public officials (including the President) are required by the constitution to declare their wealth to the Ombudsman and to the public ; those who do not comply are suspended from office .

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) has been the dominant political party in the country since 1994 . The RPF has maintained control of the presidency and the Parliament in national elections , with the party 's vote share consistently exceeding 70 % . The RPF is seen as a Tutsi dominated party but receives support from across the country , and is credited with ensuring continued peace , stability , and economic growth . Human rights organisation Freedom House claims that the government suppresses the freedoms of opposition groups ; in its 2015 report , Freedom House alleged that the RPF had " prevented new political parties from registering and arrested the leaders of several existing parties , effectively preventing them from fielding candidates " in elections . Amnesty International also claims that the RPF rules Rwanda " without any meaningful opposition " .

Rwanda is a member of the United Nations , African Union , Francophonie , East African Community , and the Commonwealth of Nations . For many years during the Habyarimana regime , the country maintained close ties with France , as well as Belgium , the former colonial power . Under the RPF government , however , Rwanda has sought closer ties with neighbouring countries in the East African Community and with the English speaking world . Diplomatic relations with France were suspended in 2006 following the indictment of Rwandan officials by a French judge , and despite their restoration in 2010 , as of 2015 relations between the countries remain strained . Relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were tense following Rwanda 's involvement in the First and Second Congo Wars ; the Congolese army alleged Rwandan attacks on their troops , while Rwanda blamed the Congolese government for failing to suppress Hutu rebels in North and South Kivu provinces . Relations soured further in 2012 , as Kinshasa accused Rwanda of supporting the M23 rebellion , an insurgency in the eastern Congo . As of 2015 , peace has been restored and relations are improving . Rwanda 's relationship with Uganda was also tense for much of the 2000s following a 1999 clash between the two countries ' armies as they backed opposing rebel groups in the Second Congo War , but improved significantly in the early 2010s ; as of 2015 , the two countries enjoy a good relationship .

The Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) is the national army of Rwanda . Largely composed of former Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) soldiers , it includes the Rwanda Land Force , Rwanda Air Force and specialised units . After the successful conquest of the country in 1994 in the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide , the Rwandan Patriotic Front decided to split the RPF into a political division (which retained the RPF name) and the RDF , a military division which was to serve as the official army of the Rwandan state . Defence spending continues to represent an important share of the national budget , largely due to continuing security problems along the frontiers with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi , and lingering concerns about Uganda 's intentions towards its former ally . In 2010 , the United Nations released a report accusing the Rwandan army of committing wide scale human rights violations and crimes against humanity in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo during the First and Second Congo Wars , charges denied by the Rwandan government .

= = Administrative divisions = =

Rwanda has been governed by a strict hierarchy since precolonial times . Before colonisation , the King (Mwami) exercised control through a system of provinces , districts , hills , and neighbourhoods . The current constitution divides Rwanda into provinces (intara) , districts (uturere) , cities , municipalities , towns , sectors (imirenge) , cells (utugari) , and villages (imidugudu) ; the larger divisions , and their borders , are established by Parliament .

The five provinces act as intermediaries between the national government and their constituent districts to ensure that national policies are implemented at the district level . The " Rwanda Decentralisation Strategic Framework " developed by the Ministry of Local Government assigns to provinces the responsibility for " coordinating governance issues in the Province , as well as monitoring and evaluation " . Each province is headed by a governor , appointed by the President and approved by the Senate . The districts are responsible for coordinating public service delivery and economic development . They are divided into sectors , which are responsible for the delivery of public services as mandated by the districts . Districts and sectors have directly elected councils , and are run by an executive committee selected by that council . The cells and villages are the smallest political units , providing a link between the people and the sectors . All adult resident citizens are members of their local cell council , from which an executive committee is elected . The city of Kigali is a provincial @-@ level authority , which coordinates urban planning within the city .

The present borders were drawn in 2006 with the aim of decentralising power and removing associations with the old system and the genocide . The previous structure of twelve provinces associated with the largest cities was replaced with five provinces based primarily on geography . These are Northern Province , Southern Province , Eastern Province , Western Province , and the Municipality of Kigali in the centre .

= = Geography = =

At 26 @, @ 338 square kilometres (10 @, @ 169 sq mi) , Rwanda is the world 's 149th @-@ largest country , and the fourth smallest on the African mainland after Gambia , Swaziland , and Djibouti . It is comparable in size to Burundi , Haiti and Albania . The entire country is at a high altitude : the lowest point is the Rusizi River at 950 metres (3 @, @ 117 ft) above sea level . Rwanda is located in Central / Eastern Africa , and is bordered by the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west , Uganda to the north , Tanzania to the east , and Burundi to the south . It lies a few degrees south of the equator and is landlocked . The capital , Kigali , is located near the centre of Rwanda .

The watershed between the major Congo and Nile drainage basins runs from north to south through Rwanda , with around 80 % of the country 's area draining into the Nile and 20 % into the Congo via the Rusizi River and Lake Tanganyika . The country 's longest river is the Nyabarongo , which rises in the south @-@ west , flows north , east , and southeast before merging with the Ruvubu to form the Kagera ; the Kagera then flows due north along the eastern border with Tanzania . The Nyabarongo @-@ Kagera eventually drains into Lake Victoria , and its source in Nyungwe Forest is a contender for the as @-@ yet undetermined overall source of the Nile . Rwanda has many lakes , the largest being Lake Kivu . This lake occupies the floor of the Albertine Rift along most of the length of Rwanda 's western border , and with a maximum depth of 480 metres (1 @, @ 575 ft) , it is one of the twenty deepest lakes in the world . Other sizeable lakes include Burera , Ruhondo , Muhazi , Rweru , and Ihema , the last being the largest of a string of lakes in the eastern plains of Akagera National Park .

Mountains dominate central and western Rwanda . They are part of the Albertine Rift Mountains that flank the Albertine branch of the East African Rift , which runs from north to south along Rwanda 's western border . The highest peaks are found in the Virunga volcano chain in the

northwest ; this includes Mount Karisimbi , Rwanda 's highest point , at 4 807 metres (14 807 ft) . This western section of the country lies within the Albertine Rift montane forests ecoregion . It has an elevation of 1 800 to 2 800 metres (4 800 to 8 800 ft) . The centre of the country is predominantly rolling hills , while the eastern border region consists of savanna , plains and swamps .

Rwanda has a temperate tropical highland climate , with lower temperatures than are typical for equatorial countries because of its high elevation . Kigali , in the centre of the country , has a typical daily temperature range between 12 and 27 ° C (54 and 81 ° F) , with little variation through the year . There are some temperature variations across the country ; the mountainous west and north are generally cooler than the lower @-@ lying east . There are two rainy seasons in the year ; the first runs from February to June and the second from September to December . These are separated by two dry seasons : the major one from June to September , during which there is often no rain at all , and a shorter and less severe one from December to February . Rainfall varies geographically , with the west and northwest of the country receiving more precipitation annually than the east and southeast . Global warming has caused a change in the pattern of the rainy seasons . According to a report by the Strategic Foresight Group , change in climate has reduced the number of rainy days experienced during a year , but has also caused an increase in frequency of torrential rains . Both changes have caused difficulty for farmers , decreasing their productivity . Strategic Foresight also characterise Rwanda as a fast warming country , with an increase in average temperature of between 0 @. 7 ° C to 0 @. 9 ° C over fifty years .

= = = Biodiversity = = =

In prehistoric times montane forest occupied one @-@ third of the territory of present @-@ day Rwanda . Naturally occurring vegetation is now mostly restricted to the three National Parks , with terraced agriculture dominating the rest of the country . Nyungwe , the largest remaining tract of forest , contains 200 species of tree as well as orchids and begonias . Vegetation in the Volcanoes National Park is mostly bamboo and moorland , with small areas of forest . By contrast , Akagera has a savanna ecosystem in which acacia dominates the flora . There are several rare or endangered plant species in Akagera , including *Markhamia lutea* and *Eulophia guineensis* .

The greatest diversity of large mammals is found in the three National Parks , which are designated conservation areas . Akagera contains typical savanna animals such as giraffes and elephants , while Volcanoes is home to an estimated one @-@ third of the worldwide mountain gorilla population . Nyungwe Forest boasts thirteen primate species including chimpanzees and Ruwenzori colobus arboreal monkeys ; the Ruwenzori colobus move in groups of up to 400 individuals , the largest troop size of any primate in Africa . Rwanda 's population of lions was destroyed in the aftermath of the genocide of 1994 , as national parks were turned into camps for displaced people and remaining animals were poisoned by cattle herders . In June 2015 , two South African parks donated seven lions to Akagera National Park , reestablishing a lion population in Rwanda . The lions were held initially in a fenced off area of the park , and then collared and released into the wild a month later .

There are 670 bird species in Rwanda , with variation between the east and the west . Nyungwe Forest , in the west , has 280 recorded species , of which 26 are endemic to the Albertine Rift ; endemic species include the Ruwenzori turaco and handsome francolin . Eastern Rwanda , by contrast , features savanna birds such as the black @-@ headed gonolek and those associated with swamps and lakes , including storks and cranes .

= = Economy = =

Rwanda 's economy suffered heavily during the 1994 genocide , with widespread loss of life , failure to maintain infrastructure , looting , and neglect of important cash crops . This caused a large drop in GDP and destroyed the country 's ability to attract private and external investment . The economy has since strengthened , with per @-@ capita GDP (PPP) estimated at \$ 1 @, 884 in 2015 ,

compared with \$ 416 in 1994 . Major export markets include China , Germany , and the United States . The economy is managed by the central National Bank of Rwanda and the currency is the Rwandan franc ; in August 2015 , the exchange rate was 755 francs to the United States dollar . Rwanda joined the East African Community in 2007 , and has ratified a plan for monetary union amongst the five member nations , which could eventually lead to a common East African shilling .

Rwanda is a country of few natural resources , and the economy is based mostly on subsistence agriculture by local farmers using simple tools . An estimated 90 % of the working population farms , and agriculture constituted an estimated 32 % of GDP in 2014 . Farming techniques are basic , with small plots of land and steep slopes . Since the mid 1980s , farm sizes and food production have been decreasing , due in part to the resettlement of displaced people . Despite Rwanda 's fertile ecosystem , food production often does not keep pace with population growth , and food imports are required .

Subsistence crops grown in the country include matoke (green bananas) , which occupy more than a third of the country 's farmland , potatoes , beans , sweet potatoes , cassava , wheat and maize . Coffee and tea are the major cash crops for export , with the high altitudes , steep slopes and volcanic soils providing favourable conditions . Reliance on agricultural exports makes Rwanda vulnerable to shifts in their prices . Animals raised in Rwanda include cows , goats , sheep , pigs , chicken , and rabbits , with geographical variation in the numbers of each . Production systems are mostly traditional , although there are a few intensive dairy farms around Kigali . Shortages of land and water , insufficient and poor quality feed , and regular disease epidemics with insufficient veterinary services are major constraints that restrict output . Fishing takes place on the country 's lakes , but stocks are very depleted , and live fish are being imported in an attempt to revive the industry .

The industrial sector is small , contributing 14 % of GDP in 2014 . Products manufactured include cement , agricultural products , small scale beverages , soap , furniture , shoes , plastic goods , textiles and cigarettes . Rwanda 's mining industry is an important contributor , generating US \$ 93 million in 2008 . Minerals mined include cassiterite , wolframite , gold , and coltan , which is used in the manufacture of electronic and communication devices such as mobile phones .

Rwanda 's service sector suffered during the late 2000s recession as bank lending , foreign aid projects and investment were reduced . The sector rebounded in 2010 , becoming the country 's largest sector by economic output and contributing 43 % of the country 's GDP . Key tertiary contributors include banking and finance , wholesale and retail trade , hotels and restaurants , transport , storage , communication , insurance , real estate , business services and public administration including education and health . Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic resources and became the country 's leading foreign exchange earner in 2007 . In spite of the genocide 's legacy , the country is increasingly perceived internationally as a safe destination . The number of tourist arrivals in 2013 was 864 ,000 people , up from 504 ,000 in 2010 . Revenue from tourism was US \$ 303 million in 2014 , up from just US \$ 62 million in 2000 . The largest contributor to this revenue was mountain gorilla tracking , in the Volcanoes National Park ; Rwanda is one of only two countries in which mountain gorillas can be visited safely ; the gorillas attract thousands of visitors per year , who are prepared to pay high prices for permits . Other attractions include Nyungwe Forest , home to chimpanzees , Ruwenzori colobus and other primates , the resorts of Lake Kivu , and Akagera , a small savanna reserve in the east of the country .

== Media and communications ==

The largest radio and television stations are state run , and the majority of newspapers are owned by the government . Most Rwandans have access to radio ; during the 1994 genocide , the radio station Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines broadcast across the country , and helped to fuel the killings through anti Tutsi propaganda . As of 2015 , the state run Radio Rwanda is the largest station and the main source of news throughout the country . Television access is limited , with most homes not having their own set . The government rolled out digital television in

2014 , and a year later there were seven national stations operating , up from just one in the pre @-@ 2014 analogue era . The press is tightly restricted , and newspapers routinely self @-@ censor to avoid government reprisals . Nonetheless , publications in Kinyarwanda , English , and French critical of the government are widely available in Kigali . Restrictions were increased in the run @-@ up to the Rwandan presidential election of 2010 , with two independent newspapers , Umuseso and Umuvugizi , being suspended for six months by the High Media Council .

The country 's oldest telecommunications group , Rwandatel , went into liquidation in 2011 , having been 80 % owned by Libyan company LAP Green . The company was acquired in 2013 by Liquid Telecom , a company providing telecommunications and fibre optic networks across eastern and southern Africa . As of 2015 , Liquid Telecom provides landline service to 30 @,@ 968 subscribers , with mobile operator MTN Rwanda serving an additional 15 @,@ 497 fixed line subscribers . Landlines are mostly used by government institutions , banks , NGOs and embassies , with private subscription levels low . As of 2015 , mobile phone penetration in the country is 72 @.@ 6 % , up from 41 @.@ 6 % in 2011 . MTN Rwanda is the leading provider , with 3 @,@ 957 @,@ 986 subscribers , followed by Tigo with 2 @,@ 887 @,@ 328 , and Bhati Airtel with 1 @,@ 336 @,@ 679 . Rwandatel has also previously operated a mobile phone network , but the industry regulator revoked its licence in April 2011 , following the company 's failure to meet agreed investment commitments . Internet penetration is low but rising rapidly ; in 2015 there were 12 @.@ 8 internet users per 100 people , up from 2 @.@ 1 in 2007 . In 2011 , a 2 @,@ 300 kilometres (1 @,@ 400 mi) fibre @-@ optic telecommunications network was completed , intended to provide broadband services and facilitate electronic commerce . This network is connected to SEACOM , a submarine fibre @-@ optic cable connecting communication carriers in southern and eastern Africa . Within Rwanda the cables run along major roads , linking towns around the country . Mobile provider MTN also runs a wireless internet service accessible in most areas of Kigali via pre @-@ paid subscription .

= = = Infrastructure = = =

The Rwandan government prioritised funding of water supply development during the 2000s , significantly increasing its share of the national budget . This funding , along with donor support , caused a rapid increase in access to safe water ; in 2015 , 74 % of the population had access to safe water , up from about 55 % in 2005 ; the government has committed to increasing this to 100 % by 2017 . The country 's water infrastructure consists of urban and rural systems that deliver water to the public , mainly through standpipes in rural areas and private connections in urban areas . In areas not served by these systems , hand pumps and managed springs are used . Despite rainfall exceeding 750 millimetres (30 in) annually in most of the country , little use is made of rainwater harvesting , and residents are forced to use water very sparingly , relative to usage in other African countries . Access to sanitation remains low ; the United Nations estimates that in 2006 , 34 % of urban and 20 % of rural dwellers had access to improved sanitation . Government policy measures to improve sanitation are limited , focusing only on urban areas . The majority of the population , both urban and rural , use public shared pit latrines .

Rwanda 's electricity supply was , until the early 2000s , generated almost entirely from hydroelectric sources ; power stations on Lakes Burera and Ruhondo provided 90 % of the country 's electricity . A combination of below average rainfall and human activity , including the draining of the Rugezi wetlands for cultivation and grazing , caused the two lakes ' water levels to fall from 1990 onwards ; by 2004 levels were reduced by 50 % , leading to a sharp drop in output from the power stations . This , coupled with increased demand as the economy grew , precipitated a shortfall in 2004 and widespread loadshedding . As an emergency measure , the government installed diesel generators north of Kigali ; by 2006 these were providing 56 % of the country 's electricity , but were very costly . The government enacted a number of measures to alleviate this problem , including rehabilitating the Rugezi wetlands , which supply water to Burera and Ruhondo and investing in a scheme to extract methane gas from Lake Kivu , expected in its first phase to increase the country 's power generation by 40 % . Only 18 % of the population had access to electricity in 2012 , though

this had risen from 10 @. @ 8 % in 2009 . The government 's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2013 ? 18 aims to increase access to electricity to 70 % of households by 2017 .

The government has increased investment in the transport infrastructure of Rwanda since the 1994 genocide , with aid from the United States , European Union , Japan , and others . The transport system consists primarily of the road network , with paved roads between Kigali and most other major cities and towns in the country . Rwanda is linked by road to other countries in the East African Community , namely Uganda , Tanzania , Burundi and Kenya , as well as to the eastern Congolese cities of Goma and Bukavu ; the country 's most important trade route is the road to the port of Mombasa via Kampala and Nairobi , which is known as the Northern Corridor . The principal form of public transport in the country is the minibus , accounting for more than half of all passenger carrying capacity . Some minibuses , particularly in Kigali , operate an unscheduled service , under a shared taxi system , while others run to a schedule , offering express routes between the major cities . There are a smaller number of large buses , which operate a scheduled service around the country . The principal private hire vehicle is the motorcycle taxi ; in 2013 there were 9 @, @ 609 registered motorcycle taxis in Rwanda , compared with just 579 taxicabs . Coach services are available to various destinations in neighbouring countries . The country has an international airport at Kigali that serves several international destinations , the busiest routes being those to Nairobi and Entebbe ; there is one domestic route , between Kigali and Kamembe Airport near Cyangugu . The national carrier is RwandAir , and the country is served by seven foreign airlines . As of 2015 the country has no railways , but there is a project underway , in conjunction with Burundi and Tanzania , to extend the Tanzanian Central Line into Rwanda ; the three countries have invited expressions of interest from private firms to form a public private partnership for the scheme . There is no public water transport between the port cities on Lake Kivu , although a limited private service exists and the government has initiated a programme to develop a full service . The Ministry of Infrastructure is also investigating the feasibility of linking Rwanda to Lake Victoria via shipping on the Akagera River .

= = Demographics = =

As of 2015 , the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda estimates Rwanda 's population to be 11 @, @ 262 @, @ 564 . The 2012 census recorded a population of 10 @, @ 515 @, @ 973 . The population is young : in the 2012 census , 43 @. @ 3 % of the population were aged 15 and under , and 53 @. @ 4 % were between 16 and 64 . According to the CIA World Factbook , the annual birth rate is estimated at 40 @. @ 2 births per 1 @, @ 000 inhabitants in 2015 , and the death rate at 14 @. @ 9 . The life expectancy is 59 @. @ 67 years (61 @. @ 27 years for females and 58 @. @ 11 years for males) , which is the 26th lowest out of 224 countries and territories . The sex ratio of the country is relatively even .

At 445 inhabitants per square kilometre (1 @, @ 150 / sq mi) , Rwanda 's population density is amongst the highest in Africa . Historians such as Gérard Prunier believe that the 1994 genocide can be partly attributed to the population density . The population is predominantly rural , with a few large towns ; dwellings are evenly spread throughout the country . The only sparsely populated area of the country is the savanna land in the former province of Umutara and Akagera National Park in the east . Kigali is the largest city , with a population of around one million . Its rapidly increasing population challenges its infrastructural development . According to the 2012 census , the second largest city is Gisenyi , which lies adjacent to Lake Kivu and the Congolese city of Goma , and has a population of 126 @, @ 000 . Other major towns include Ruhengeri , Butare , and Gitarama , all with populations below 100 @, @ 000 . The urban population rose from 6 % of the population in 1990 , to 16 @. @ 6 % in 2006 ; by 2011 , however , the proportion had dropped slightly , to 14 @. @ 8 % .

Rwanda has been a unified state since pre @- @ colonial times , and the population is drawn from just one cultural and linguistic group , the Banyarwanda ; this contrasts with most modern African states , whose borders were drawn by colonial powers and did not correspond to ethnic boundaries or pre @- @ colonial kingdoms . Within the Banyarwanda people , there are three separate groups ,

the Hutu , Tutsi and Twa . The CIA World Factbook gives estimates that the Hutu made up 84 % of the population in 2009 , the Tutsi 15 % and Twa 1 % . The Twa are a pygmy people who descend from Rwanda 's earliest inhabitants , but scholars do not agree on the origins of and differences between the Hutu and Tutsi . Anthropologist Jean Hiernaux contends that the Tutsi are a separate race , with a tendency towards " long and narrow heads , faces and noses " ; others , such as Villia Jefremovas , believe there is no discernible physical difference and the categories were not historically rigid . In precolonial Rwanda the Tutsi were the ruling class , from whom the kings and the majority of chiefs were derived , while the Hutu were agriculturalists . The current government discourages the Hutu / Tutsi / Twa distinction , and has removed such classification from identity cards . The 2002 census was the first since 1933 which did not categorise Rwandan population into the three groups .

== Religion ==

The largest faith in Rwanda is Roman Catholicism , but there have been significant changes in the nation 's religious demographics since the genocide , with many conversions to Evangelical Christian faiths and , to a lesser degree , Islam . According to the 2012 census , Roman Catholics represented 43 % of the population , Protestants (excluding Adventists and Jehovah 's Witnesses) 37 % , Seventh day Adventists 11 % , and Muslims 2 % ; 0 % claimed no religious beliefs and 1 % did not state a religion . Traditional religion , despite officially being followed by only 0 % of the population , retains an influence . Many Rwandans view the Christian God as synonymous with the traditional Rwandan God Imana .

== Language ==

The country 's principal language is Kinyarwanda , which is spoken by most Rwandans . The major European languages during the colonial era were German , and then French , which was introduced by Belgium and remained an official and widely spoken language after independence . The influx of former refugees from Uganda and elsewhere during the late 20th century has created a linguistic divide between the English speaking population and the French speaking remainder of the country . Kinyarwanda , English and French are all official languages . Kinyarwanda is the language of government and English is the primary educational medium . Swahili , the lingua franca of the African Great Lakes , and the official language of the East African Community , is also spoken by some as a second language , particularly returned refugees from Kenya and Tanzania . In 2015 , Swahili was introduced as a mandatory subject in secondary schools . Inhabitants of Rwanda 's Nkombo Island speak Amashi , a language closely related to Kinyarwanda .

== Culture ==

Music and dance are an integral part of Rwandan ceremonies , festivals , social gatherings and storytelling . The most famous traditional dance is a highly choreographed routine consisting of three components : the umushagiro , or cow dance , performed by women ; the intore , or dance of heroes , performed by men ; and the drumming , also traditionally performed by men , on drums known as ingoma . The best known dance group is the National Ballet . It was established by President Habyarimana in 1974 , and performs nationally and internationally . Traditionally , music is transmitted orally , with styles varying between the social groups . Drums are of great importance ; the royal drummers enjoyed high status within the court of the King (Mwami) . Drummers play together in groups of varying sizes , usually between seven and nine in number . The country has a growing popular music industry , influenced by African Great Lakes , Congolese , and American music . The most popular genre is hip hop , with a blend of rap , ragga , R & B and dance pop .

Traditional arts and crafts are produced throughout the country , although most originated as functional items rather than purely for decoration . Woven baskets and bowls are especially common

. Imigongo , a unique cow dung art , is produced in the southeast of Rwanda , with a history dating back to when the region was part of the independent Gisaka kingdom . The dung is mixed with natural soils of various colours and painted into patterned ridges to form geometric shapes . Other crafts include pottery and wood carving . Traditional housing styles make use of locally available materials ; circular or rectangular mud homes with grass @-@ thatched roofs (known as nyakatsi) are the most common . The government has initiated a programme to replace these with more modern materials such as corrugated iron .

Rwanda does not have a long history of written literature , but there is a strong oral tradition ranging from poetry to folk stories . Many of the country 's moral values and details of history have been passed down through the generations . The most famous Rwandan literary figure was Alexis Kagame (1912 ? 1981) , who carried out and published research into oral traditions as well as writing his own poetry . The Rwandan Genocide resulted in the emergence of a literature of witness accounts , essays and fiction by a new generation of writers such as Benjamin Sehene . A number of films have been produced about the Rwandan Genocide , including the Golden Globe @-@ nominated Hotel Rwanda , Shake Hands with the Devil , Sometimes in April , and Shooting Dogs , the last two having been filmed in Rwanda and having featured survivors as cast members .

Fourteen regular national holidays are observed throughout the year , with others occasionally inserted by the government . The week following Genocide Memorial Day on 7 April is designated an official week of mourning . The victory for the RPF over the Hutu extremists is celebrated as Liberation Day on 4 July . The last Saturday of each month is umuganda , a national morning of mandatory community service lasting from 8am to 11am , during which all able bodied people between 18 and 65 are expected to carry out community tasks such as cleaning streets or building homes for vulnerable people . Most normal services close down during umuganda , and public transportation is limited .

= = = Cuisine = = =

The cuisine of Rwanda is based on local staple foods produced by subsistence agriculture such as bananas , plantains (known as ibitoke) , pulses , sweet potatoes , beans , and cassava (manioc) . Many Rwandans do not eat meat more than a few times a month . For those who live near lakes and have access to fish , tilapia is popular . The potato , thought to have been introduced to Rwanda by German and Belgian colonialists , is very popular . Ubugari (or umutsima) is a paste made from cassava or maize and water to form a porridge @-@ like consistency that is eaten throughout the African Great Lakes . Isombe is made from mashed cassava leaves and served with dried fish . Lunch is usually a buffet known as mélange , consisting of the above staples and sometimes meat . Brochettes are the most popular food when eating out in the evening , usually made from goat but sometimes tripe , beef , or fish . In rural areas , many bars have a brochette seller responsible for tending and slaughtering the goats , skewering and barbecuing the meat , and serving it with grilled bananas . Milk , particularly in a fermented yoghurt form called ikivuguto , is a common drink throughout the country . Other drinks include a traditional beer called urwagwa , made from sorghum or bananas , which features in traditional rituals and ceremonies . The major drinks manufacturer in Rwanda is Bralirwa , which was established in the 1950s and is now listed on the Rwandan Stock Exchange . Bralirwa manufactures soft drink products from The Coca @-@ Cola Company , under license , including Coca @-@ Cola , Fanta , and Sprite , and a range of beers including Primus , Mützig , Amstel , and Turbo King . In 2009 a new brewery , Brasseries des Mille Collines (BMC) opened , manufacturing Skol beer and a local version known as Skol Gatanu ; BMC is now owned by Belgian company Unibra . East African Breweries also operate in the country , importing Guinness , Tusker , and Bell , as well as whisky and spirits .

= = = Sport = = =

The Rwandan government , through its Sports Development Policy , promotes sport as a strong avenue for " development and peace building " , and the government has made commitments to

advancing the use of sport for a variety of development objectives , including education . The most popular sports in Rwanda are association football , volleyball , basketball , athletics and Paralympic sports . Cricket has been growing in popularity , as a result of refugees returned from Kenya , where they had learned to play the game . Cycling , traditionally seen largely as a mode of transport in Rwanda , is also growing in popularity as a sport ; and Team Rwanda have been the subject of a book , *Land of Second Chances : The Impossible Rise of Rwanda 's Cycling Team* and a film , *Rising from Ashes* .

Rwandans have been competing at the Olympic Games since 1984 , and the Paralympic Games since 2004 . The country sent seven competitors to the 2012 Summer Olympics in London , representing it in athletics , swimming , mountain biking and judo , and 15 competitors to the London Summer Paralympics to compete in athletics , powerlifting and sitting volleyball . The country has also participated in the Commonwealth Games since joining the Commonwealth in 2009 . The country 's national basketball team has been growing in prominence since the mid @-@ 2000s , with the men 's team qualifying for the final stages of the African Basketball Championship four times in a row since 2007 . The country bid unsuccessfully to host the 2013 tournament . Rwanda 's national football team has appeared in the African Cup of Nations once , in the 2004 edition of the tournament , but narrowly failed to advance beyond the group stages . The team have failed to qualify for the competition since , and have never qualified for the World Cup . Rwanda 's highest domestic football competition is the Rwanda National Football League ; as of 2015 , the dominant team is APR FC of Kigali , having won 13 of the last 17 championships . Rwandan clubs participate in the Kagame Interclub Cup for Central and East African teams , sponsored since 2002 by President Kagame .

= = Education = =

Prior to 2012 , the Rwandan government provided free education in state @-@ run schools for nine years : six years in primary and three years following a common secondary programme . In 2012 , this started to be expanded to 12 years . A 2015 study suggests that while enrolment rates in primary schools are " near ubiquity " , rates of completion are low and repetition rates high . While schooling is fee @-@ free , there is an expectation that parents should contribute to the cost of their children 's education by providing them with materials , supporting teacher development and making a contribution to school construction . According to the government , these costs should not be a basis for the exclusion of children from education , however . There are many private schools across the country , some church @-@ run , which follow the same syllabus but charge fees . From 1994 until 2009 , secondary education was offered in either French or English ; because of the country 's increasing ties with the East African Community and the Commonwealth , only the English syllabi are now offered . The country has a number of institutions of tertiary education . In 2013 , the public University of Rwanda (UR) was created out of a merger of the former National University of Rwanda and the country 's other public higher education institutions . In 2013 , the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education in Rwanda was 7 @.@ 9 % , from 3 @.@ 6 % in 2006 . The country 's literacy rate , defined as those aged 15 or over who can read and write , was 71 % in 2009 , up from 38 % in 1978 and 58 % in 1991 .

= = Health = =

The quality of healthcare in Rwanda has historically been very low , both before and immediately after the 1994 genocide . In 1998 , more than one in five children died before their fifth birthday , often from malaria .

President Kagame has made healthcare one of the priorities for the Vision 2020 development programme , boosting spending on health care to 6 @.@ 5 % of the country 's gross domestic product in 2013 , compared with 1 @.@ 9 % in 1996 . The government has devolved the financing and management of healthcare to local communities , through a system of health insurance providers called *mutuelles de santé* . The *mutuelles* were piloted in 1999 , and were made available

nationwide by the mid @-@ 2000s , with the assistance of international development partners . Premiums under the scheme were initially US \$ 2 per annum ; since 2011 the rate has varied on a sliding scale , with the poorest paying nothing , and maximum premiums rising to US \$ 8 per adult . As of 2014 , more than 90 % of the population was covered by the scheme . The government has also set up training institutes including the Kigali Health Institute (KHI) , which was established in 1997 and is now part of the University of Rwanda . In 2005 , President Kagame also launched a program known as The Presidents ' Malaria Initiative . This initiative aimed to help get the most necessary materials for prevention of malaria to the most rural areas of Rwanda , such as mosquito nets and medication .

In recent years Rwanda has seen improvement on a number of key health indicators :

Between 2005 and 2013 , life expectancy increased from 55 @.@ 2 to 64 @.@ 0 @,@ under @-@ 5 mortality decreased from 106 @.@ 4 to 52 @.@ 0 per 1 @,@ 000 live births , incidence of tuberculosis has dropped from 101 to 69 per 100 @,@ 000 people .

The country 's progress in healthcare has been cited by the international media and charities . The Atlantic devoted an article to " Rwanda 's Historic Health Recovery " , . Partners In Health described the health gains " among the most dramatic the world has seen in the last 50 years " .

Despite these improvements , however , the country 's health profile remains dominated by communicable diseases , and the United States Agency for International Development has described " significant health challenges " , including the rate of maternal mortality , which it describes as " unacceptably high " , as well as the ongoing HIV / AIDS epidemic . According to the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention , travelers to Rwanda are highly recommended to take preventive malaria medication as well as make sure they are up to date with vaccines such as yellow fever .

Rwanda also has a shortage of medical professionals , with only 0 @.@ 84 physicians , nurses , and midwives per 1 @,@ 000 residents . The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is monitoring the country 's health progress towards Millennium Development Goals 4 ? 6 , which relate to healthcare . A mid @-@ 2015 UNDP report noted that the country was not on target to meet goal 4 on infant mortality , despite it having " fallen dramatically " ; the country is " making good progress " towards goal 5 , which is to reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio , while goal 6 is not yet met as HIV prevalence has not started falling .