[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:EngvarB](/wiki/Template:EngvarB) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country)

**Estonia** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en);[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[2]](#cite_note-2) [Template:Lang-et](/wiki/Template:Lang-et) [Template:IPA-et](/wiki/Template:IPA-et)), officially the **Republic of Estonia** ([Template:Lang-et](/wiki/Template:Lang-et)), is a country in the [Baltic region](/wiki/Baltic_region) of [Northern Europe](/wiki/Northern_Europe).[[3]](#cite_note-3) It is bordered to the north by the [Gulf of Finland](/wiki/Gulf_of_Finland), to the west by the [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea), to the south by [Latvia](/wiki/Latvia) (343 km), and to the east by [Lake Peipus](/wiki/Lake_Peipus) and [Russia](/wiki/Russia) (338.6 km).[[4]](#cite_note-4) Across the Baltic Sea lies [Sweden](/wiki/Sweden) in the west and [Finland](/wiki/Finland) in the north. The territory of Estonia consists of a mainland and 2,222 islands and islets in the Baltic Sea,[[5]](#cite_note-5) covering [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of land, and is influenced by a [humid continental climate](/wiki/Humid_continental_climate).

After centuries of successive [Danish](/wiki/Denmark), [Swedish](/wiki/Sweden) and [German](/wiki/Teutonic_Order) rule, Estonians experienced a [national awakening](/wiki/Estonian_national_awakening) that culminated in independence from the [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire) towards the end of [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I). During [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), Estonia was then [occupied](/wiki/Occupation_of_the_Baltic_states) by the [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union) in [1940](/wiki/Soviet_occupation_of_the_Baltic_states_(1940)), then [Nazi Germany](/wiki/Nazi_Germany) [a year later](/wiki/German_occupation_of_the_Baltic_states_during_World_War_II) and again in [1944](/wiki/Soviet_occupation_of_the_Baltic_states_(1944)) establishing the [Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic](/wiki/Estonian_Soviet_Socialist_Republic). In 1988, during the [Singing Revolution](/wiki/Singing_Revolution), the Estonian SSR issued the [Estonian Sovereignty Declaration](/wiki/Estonian_Sovereignty_Declaration) in defiance of the illegal Soviet rule. Estonia then restored its independence during the [1991 coup by the Soviets](/wiki/1991_Soviet_coup_d'état_attempt) on the night of 20 August 1991.

Estonia is a democratic [parliamentary republic](/wiki/Parliamentary_republic) divided into fifteen [counties](/wiki/Counties_of_Estonia), with its largest city and capital being [Tallinn](/wiki/Tallinn). With a population of 1.3 million, it is one of the least-populous member states of the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union), [Eurozone](/wiki/Eurozone), the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation](/wiki/NATO) ([NATO](/wiki/NATO)), the [OECD](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) and the [Schengen Area](/wiki/Schengen_Area).

Ethnic [Estonians](/wiki/Estonians) are [Finnic people](/wiki/Finnic_people), sharing close cultural ties with the Northern neighbour of [Finland](/wiki/Finland), and the official language, [Estonian](/wiki/Estonian_language), is a [Finno-Ugric language](/wiki/Finno-Ugric_languages) closely related to [Finnish](/wiki/Finnish_language) and the [Sami languages](/wiki/Sami_languages), and distantly to [Hungarian](/wiki/Hungarian_language).

A [developed country](/wiki/Developed_country) with an advanced, [high-income economy](/wiki/High-income_economy)[[6]](#cite_note-6) and high [living standards](/wiki/Living_standards), Estonia ranks very high in the [Human Development Index](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index),[[7]](#cite_note-7) and performs favourably in measurements of [economic freedom](/wiki/Index_of_Economic_Freedom), [civil liberties](/wiki/Freedom_in_the_World_(report)), [education](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment), and [press freedom](/wiki/Press_Freedom_Index) (fourteenth in the world in 2015).[[8]](#cite_note-8) Estonia has been among the fastest growing economies in the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) and is a part of the [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) and the [Nordic Investment Bank](/wiki/Nordic_Investment_Bank). Estonia is often described as one of the most [internet-focused](/wiki/Internet_access) countries in [Europe](/wiki/Europe).[[9]](#cite_note-9)[[10]](#cite_note-10)

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

One hypothesis is that the modern name of Estonia originated from the [Aesti](/wiki/Aesti) described by the [Roman](/wiki/Ancient_Rome) historian [Tacitus](/wiki/Tacitus) in his [*Germania*](/wiki/Germania_(book)) (ca. 98 AD).[[11]](#cite_note-11) Ancient [Scandinavian](/wiki/Scandinavia) [sagas](/wiki/Sagas) refer to a land called *Eistland*, as the country is still called in [Icelandic](/wiki/Icelandic_language), and close to the [Danish](/wiki/Danish_language), [German](/wiki/German_language), [Dutch](/wiki/Dutch_language), [Swedish](/wiki/Swedish_language) and [Norwegian](/wiki/Norwegian_language) term *Estland* for the country. Early [Latin](/wiki/Latin) and other ancient versions of the name are *Estia* and *Hestia*.[[12]](#cite_note-12) *Esthonia* was a common alternative English spelling prior to 1921.[[13]](#cite_note-13)[[14]](#cite_note-14)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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### Prehistory[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

Human settlement in Estonia became possible 11,000 to 13,000 years ago, when the ice from the last [glacial era](/wiki/Ice_age) melted. The oldest known settlement in Estonia is the [Pulli settlement](/wiki/Pulli_settlement), which was on the banks of the [river Pärnu](/wiki/Pärnu_River), near the town of [Sindi](/wiki/Sindi,_Estonia), in south-western Estonia. According to [radiocarbon dating](/wiki/Radiocarbon_dating) it was settled around 11,000 years ago at the beginning of the ninth millennium BC. [thumb|left|alt=Kunda culture bone tools|Tools made by Kunda culture,](/wiki/File:KundaCultureTools.jpg) [Estonian History Museum](/wiki/Estonian_History_Museum) Evidence has been found of hunting and fishing communities existing around 6500 BC near the town of [Kunda](/wiki/Kunda,_Estonia) in northern Estonia. Bone and stone artefacts similar to those found at Kunda have been discovered elsewhere in Estonia, as well as in Latvia, northern [Lithuania](/wiki/Lithuania) and in southern [Finland](/wiki/Finland). The [Kunda culture](/wiki/Kunda_culture) belongs to the middle stone age, or [Mesolithic](/wiki/Mesolithic) period.

The end of the [Bronze Age](/wiki/Bronze_Age) and the early [Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age) were marked by great cultural changes. The most significant was the transition to farming, which has remained at the core of the economy and culture. Between the first and fifth centuries AD resident farming was widely established, the population grew, and settlement expanded. Cultural influences from the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire) reached Estonia.

In his book [*Germania*](/wiki/Germania_(book)), the [Roman](/wiki/Ancient_Rome) historian [Tacitus](/wiki/Tacitus) (ca. AD 98) describes the [Aesti](/wiki/Aesti) tribe. Tacitus mentions their term for [amber](/wiki/Amber) in an apparently Latinised form, *glesum* (cf. [Latvian](/wiki/Latvian_language) *glīsas*). This is the only word of their language recorded from antiquity. Due to this point, the Aestii are generally considered the ancestors of the later [Baltic peoples](/wiki/Baltic_peoples).[[15]](#cite_note-15)[[16]](#cite_note-16)[[17]](#cite_note-17) [thumb|right|alt=Iron Age metal plates and buttons from a hoard|](/wiki/File:KumnaHoardArtfs.jpg)[Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age) artifacts of a hoard from [Kumna](/wiki/Kumna)[[18]](#cite_note-18) A more troubled and war-ridden middle Iron Age followed with external threats coming both from the [Baltic tribes](/wiki/Balts), who attacked across the southern land border, and from overseas. Several [Scandinavian](/wiki/Scandinavia) [sagas](/wiki/Sagas) refer to retaliatory campaigns against Estonia. [Estonian Vikings](/wiki/Oeselians) conducted similar raids against the [Scandinavian tribes](/wiki/Scandinavian_tribes), marking them as a dominant power in the Baltic region. The "pagan raiders" who sacked the [Swedish](/wiki/Sweden) town of [Sigtuna](/wiki/Sigtuna) during the early Middle Ages, in 1187, were Estonians.[[19]](#cite_note-19) In the first centuries AD, political and administrative subdivisions began to emerge in Estonia. Two larger subdivisions appeared: the province (Estonian: [*kihelkond*](/wiki/Parish)) and the land (Estonian: [*maakond*](/wiki/Maakond)). Several elderships or villages made up a province. Nearly all provinces had at least one [fortress](/wiki/Fortress). The king or other highest administrative official [elder](/wiki/Elder_(administrative_title)) directed the defense of the local area. By the thirteenth century Estonia consisted of the following provinces: [Revala](/wiki/Revala), [Harjumaa](/wiki/Harjumaa), [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saare_County), [Hiiumaa](/wiki/Hiiu_County), [Läänemaa](/wiki/Läänemaa), [Alempois](/wiki/Alempois), [Sakala](/wiki/Sakala_County), [Ugandi](/wiki/Ugandi), [Jogentagana](/wiki/Jogentagana), [Soopoolitse](/wiki/Soopoolitse), [Vaiga](/wiki/Vaiga), [Mõhu](/wiki/Mõhu), [Nurmekund](/wiki/Nurmekund), [Järvamaa](/wiki/Järvamaa) and [Virumaa](/wiki/Virumaa).[[20]](#cite_note-20) Early Estonians practiced a [pagan](/wiki/Paganism) religion centred on a deity called [Tharapita](/wiki/Tharapita). The [Chronicle of Henry of Livonia](/wiki/Chronicle_of_Henry_of_Livonia) mentions [Tharapita](/wiki/Tharapita) as the superior god of [Oeselians](/wiki/Oesel) (inhabitants of [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa) island). Therapita was also well known to [Vironian](/wiki/Vironian) tribes in northern Estonia.

### Viking Age[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|170px|alt=1 Kroon coil with viking ship sailing left|A stylised](/wiki/File:Estonia_1kr_a.jpg) [viking ship](/wiki/Viking_ships) on the Estonian 1 [Kroon](/wiki/Estonian_kroon) from 1934 [thumb|right|150px|alt=coat of arms, a white viking ship with sail unfurled facing left on blue ground with blue and wite wavy lines for water|The coat of arms of](/wiki/File:Saaremaa_vapp.svg) [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa) reflect the viking heritage The [Oeselians](/wiki/Oeselians) or [Osilians](/wiki/Osilians) ([Estonian](/wiki/Estonian_language) *saarlased*; singular: *saarlane*) were a historical subdivision of [Estonians](/wiki/Estonians) inhabiting [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa) ([Template:Lang-da](/wiki/Template:Lang-da); [Template:Lang-de](/wiki/Template:Lang-de); [Template:Lang-sv](/wiki/Template:Lang-sv)), an Estonian island in the [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea). They were first mentioned as early as the second century BC in [Ptolemy's](/wiki/Ptolemy) *Geography III*.[[21]](#cite_note-21) The Oeselians were known in the [Old Norse](/wiki/Old_Norse) [Icelandic Sagas](/wiki/Icelandic_Sagas) and in [Heimskringla](/wiki/Heimskringla) as *Víkingr frá Esthland* (*Estonian Vikings*).[[22]](#cite_note-22)[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[24]](#cite_note-24)[[25]](#cite_note-25) Their sailing vessels were called pirate ships by [Henry of Latvia](/wiki/Henry_of_Latvia) in his Latin chronicles written at the beginning of the 13th century.[[26]](#cite_note-26) Perhaps the most famous raid by Oeselian pirates occurred in 1187, with the attack on the Swedish town of [Sigtuna](/wiki/Sigtuna) by Finnic raiders from [Couronia](/wiki/Couronia) and [Oesel](/wiki/Oesel). Among the casualties of this raid was the Swedish archbishop [Johannes](/wiki/Johannes_(archbishop_of_Uppsala)). The city remained occupied for some time, contributing to its decline as a center of commerce in the 13th century and the rise of [Uppsala](/wiki/Uppsala), [Visby](/wiki/Visby), [Kalmar](/wiki/Kalmar) and [Stockholm](/wiki/Stockholm).[[27]](#cite_note-27) The [Livonian Chronicle](/wiki/Chronicle_of_Henry_of_Livonia) describes the Oeselians as using two kinds of ships, the *piratica* and the *liburna*. The former was a warship, the latter mainly a merchant ship. A *piratica* could carry approximately 30 men and had a high prow shaped like a dragon or a snakehead and a rectangular sail. [Viking-age](/wiki/Viking_age) treasures from Estonia mostly contain silver coins and bars. Saaremaa has the richest finds of Viking treasures after [Gotland](/wiki/Gotland) in Sweden. This strongly suggests that Estonia was an important transit country during the Viking era.

The superior god of Oeselians as described by Henry of Latvia was called [Tharapita](/wiki/Tharapita). According to the legend in the chronicle Tharapita was born on a forested mountain in [Virumaa](/wiki/Virumaa) ([Template:Lang-la](/wiki/Template:Lang-la)), mainland Estonia from where he flew to Oesel, Saaremaa[[28]](#cite_note-28) The name Taarapita has been interpreted as "Taara, help!"/"Thor, help!" (Taara a(v)ita in Estonian) or "Taara keeper"/"Thor keeper" (Taara pidaja) Taara is associated with the Scandinavian god [Thor](/wiki/Thor). The story of Tharapita's or Taara's flight from Vironia to Saaremaa has been associated with a major [meteor](/wiki/Meteor) [disaster](/wiki/Kaali_crater) estimated to have happened in 660 ± 85 BC that formed [Kaali crater](/wiki/Kaali_crater) in Saaremaa.

### Danish Estonia[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|alt=painting 1219 Battle of Lyndanisse with knights motioning to Danish flag in the sky|](/wiki/File:Danmarks_flag_1219_Lorentzen.jpg)[The Danish flag](/wiki/Flag_of_Denmark) falling from the sky in the 1219 [Battle of Lyndanisse](/wiki/Battle_of_Lyndanisse) [thumb|right|alt=color historical map of Estonia from 1219 to 1572|Territories part of the](/wiki/File:Danish_Estonia.png) [Kingdom of Denmark](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Denmark) during 1219–1645 Denmark rose as a great military and mercantile power in the 12th century. It fought to end the frequent [Estonian Viking](/wiki/Oeselians) attacks that threatened its Baltic trade. Danish fleets attacked Estonia in 1170, 1194 and 1197. In 1206, King [Valdemar II](/wiki/Valdemar_II) and archbishop [Andreas Sunonis](/wiki/Andreas_Sunonis) led a raid on Ösel island ([Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa)). The [Kings of Denmark](/wiki/Kings_of_Denmark) laid claim to Estonia as their possession, which was recognised by the Pope.

The capital of Danish Estonia ([Template:Lang-da](/wiki/Template:Lang-da)[[29]](#cite_note-29)) was [Reval](/wiki/Reval) (Tallinn), founded at the place of [Lyndanisse](/wiki/Lyndanisse) after the invasion of 1219. The Danes built the fortress of [Castrum Danorum](/wiki/Castrum_Danorum) at [Toompea Hill](/wiki/Toompea_Hill).[[30]](#cite_note-30) Estonians still call their capital "Tallinn", which according to legend derives from *Taani linna* (meaning Danish town or castle). Reval was granted [Lübeck](/wiki/Lübeck) [city rights](/wiki/City_rights) (1248) and joined the [Hanseatic League](/wiki/Hanseatic_League). Even today, Danish influence can be seen in heraldic symbols. The Danish cross is on the city of Tallinn's coat of arms, and Estonia's coat of arms displays three lions similar to those found on the Danish coat of arms.

On [St. George's Night](/wiki/St._George's_Day) ([Template:Lang-et](/wiki/Template:Lang-et)) 23 April 1343, the indigenous Estonian population in the [Duchy of Estonia](/wiki/Danish_Estonia#Duchy_of_Estonia), the [Bishopric of Ösel-Wiek](/wiki/Bishopric_of_Ösel-Wiek) and the insular territories of the [State of the Teutonic Order](/wiki/State_of_the_Teutonic_Order) tried to rid themselves of the Danish and German rulers and landlords, who had conquered the country in the 13th century during the [Livonian crusade](/wiki/Livonian_crusade), and to eradicate the non-indigenous Christian religion. After initial success the revolt was ended by the invasion of the [Teutonic Order](/wiki/Teutonic_Order). In 1346 the Duchy of Estonia was sold for 19,000 Köln [marks](/wiki/Mark_(weight)) to the Teutonic Order by the King of Denmark. The shift of sovereignty from Denmark to the [State of the Teutonic Order](/wiki/State_of_the_Teutonic_Order) took place on 1 November 1346.

In 1559 during the [Livonian War](/wiki/Livonian_War) the [Bishop of Ösel-Wiek](/wiki/Bishopric_of_Ösel-Wiek) in [Old Livonia](/wiki/Old_Livonia) sold his lands to King [Frederick II of Denmark](/wiki/Frederick_II_of_Denmark) for 30,000 [thalers](/wiki/Thaler). The Danish king gave the territory to his younger brother Magnus, who landed on [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa) with an army in 1560.[[31]](#cite_note-31) The whole of Saaremaa became a Danish possession in 1573, and remained so until it was transferred to Sweden in 1645.[[32]](#cite_note-32)

### Middle Ages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|alt=color historical map of Livonia|Terra Mariana was the official name for Medieval Livonia](/wiki/File:Medieval_Livonia_1260.svg) [thumb|left|alt=Kuressaare Castle, square stone keep with one square corner tower and red tile roof|](/wiki/File:Kuressaare_loss_2013.jpg)[Kuressaare Castle](/wiki/Kuressaare_Castle) in [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa) At the beginning of the 13th century, [Lembitu of Lehola](/wiki/Lembitu_of_Lehola), a chieftain of [Sakala](/wiki/Sakala_County), sought to unify the Estonian people and thwart Danish and Germanic conquest during the [Livonian Crusade](/wiki/Livonian_Crusade). He managed to assemble an army of 6,000 Estonian men from different counties, but he was killed during the [Battle of St. Matthew's Day](/wiki/Battle_of_St._Matthew's_Day) in September 1217.[[33]](#cite_note-33) From 1228, after of the Livonian Crusade, through the 1560s, Estonia was part of [Terra Mariana](/wiki/Terra_Mariana), established on 2 February 1207[[34]](#cite_note-34) as a principality of the [Holy Roman Empire](/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire)[[35]](#cite_note-35) and proclaimed by [Pope Innocent III](/wiki/Pope_Innocent_III) in 1215 as subject to the [Holy See](/wiki/Holy_See).[[36]](#cite_note-36) The southern parts of the country were conquered by [Livonian Brothers of the Sword](/wiki/Livonian_Brothers_of_the_Sword) who joined the [Teutonic Order](/wiki/Teutonic_Order) in 1237 and became its branch known as the [Livonian Order](/wiki/Livonian_Order). The [Duchy of Estonia](/wiki/Danish_Estonia#Duchy_of_Estonia) was created out of the northern parts of the country[[37]](#cite_note-37) and was a [direct dominion](/wiki/Dominum_directum) of the [King of Denmark](/wiki/King_of_Denmark) from 1219 until 1346, when it was sold to the [Teutonic Order](/wiki/Teutonic_Order) and became part of the [Ordenstaat](/wiki/State_of_the_Teutonic_Order).[[38]](#cite_note-38) In 1343, the people of northern Estonia and [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa) rebelled against German rule in the [St. George's Night Uprising](/wiki/St._George's_Night_Uprising), which was put down by 1345. The unsuccessful rebellion led to a consolidation of power for the [Baltic German](/wiki/Baltic_Germans) minority.[[39]](#cite_note-39) For the subsequent centuries they remained the ruling elite in both cities and in the countryside.[[40]](#cite_note-40) Reval (known as Tallinn since 1918) gained [Lübeck Rights](/wiki/Lübeck_law) in 1248 and joined an alliance of trading guilds called the [Hanseatic League](/wiki/Hanseatic_League) at the end of the 13th century.

After the decline of the Teutonic Order following its defeat in the [Battle of Grunwald](/wiki/Battle_of_Grunwald) in 1410, and the defeat of the Livonian Order in the [Battle of Swienta](/wiki/Battle_of_Swienta) on 1 September 1435, the [Livonian Confederation](/wiki/Livonian_Confederation) Agreement was signed on 4 December 1435.[[41]](#cite_note-41) The Livonian Confederation ceased to exist during the [Livonian War](/wiki/Livonian_War) (1558–82). The wars had reduced the Estonian population from about 250–300,000 people before the Livonian War to 120–140,000 in the 1620s.<ref name=Pop/> The [Grand Duchy of Moscow](/wiki/Grand_Duchy_of_Moscow) and [Tsardom of Russia](/wiki/Tsardom_of_Russia) also attempted invasions in 1481 and 1558, both of which were unsuccessful .

### Swedish Estonia[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|250px|alt=historical map of the Swedish Empire|Estonian territory as part of the](/wiki/File:Swedish_Empire_(1560-1815)_en2.png) [Swedish Empire](/wiki/Swedish_Empire) (1561–1721) [thumb|right|290px|alt=walled city of Reval and castle on hill|Estonian capital](/wiki/File:Tallinn_Olearius.jpg) [Reval](/wiki/Reval) (now [Tallinn](/wiki/Tallinn)) in the first half of the 17th century.

The [Reformation](/wiki/Protestant_Reformation) in Europe officially began in 1517 with [Martin Luther](/wiki/Martin_Luther) (1483–1546) and his [95 Theses](/wiki/95_Theses). The Reformation greatly changed the [Baltic region](/wiki/Baltic_region). Its ideas came quickly to the [Livonian Confederation](/wiki/Livonian_Confederation) and by the 1520s were widespread. Language, education, religion and politics were transformed. [Church](/wiki/Ecclesia_(Church)) services were now conducted in the vernacular instead of in [Latin](/wiki/Latin), previously used.[[42]](#cite_note-42) During the [Livonian War](/wiki/Livonian_War) in 1561, northern Estonia submitted to Swedish control. In the 1560s two [voivodeships](/wiki/Voivodeship) of present-day southern Estonia, [Dorpat Voivodeship](/wiki/Dorpat_Voivodeship) ([Tartu](/wiki/Tartu) region) and [Parnawa Voivodeship](/wiki/Parnawa_Voivodeship) ([Pärnu](/wiki/Pärnu) region), became the autonomous [Duchy of Livonia](/wiki/Duchy_of_Livonia) within the [Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth](/wiki/Polish-Lithuanian_Commonwealth), under joint control of the [Polish Crown](/wiki/Polish_Crown) and [the Grand Duchy](/wiki/Grand_Duchy_of_Lithuania). In 1629, mainland Estonia [came entirely](/wiki/Polish–Swedish_War_(1626–1629)) under Swedish rule. Estonia was administratively divided between the provinces of [Estonia](/wiki/Swedish_Estonia) in the north and [Livonia](/wiki/Livonia) in southern Estonia and northern [Latvia](/wiki/Latvia). This division persisted until the early twentieth century.

In 1631, the Swedish king [Gustaf II Adolf](/wiki/Gustavus_Adolphus_of_Sweden) forced the nobility to grant the peasantry greater rights, although serfdom was retained. Under King [Charles XI](/wiki/Charles_XI) large noble estates reverted to the Swedish Crown, effectively turning serfs into taxpaying farmers. In 1632, a printing press and [university](/wiki/Tartu_University) were established in the city of [Dorpat](/wiki/Dorpat) (known as [Tartu](/wiki/Tartu) since 1918). This period is known in Estonian history as *"the Good Old Swedish Time."*

The population of Estonia increased steadily until the outbreak of the [plague](/wiki/Black_Death) in 1657. During the [Great Famine](/wiki/Great_Famine_of_Estonia_(1695–1697)) of 1695–97 some 70,000 people perished – almost 20% of the population.<ref name=Pop>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

### National awakening and Russian Empire[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|alt=red stone manor house in neo-gothic style|Estonia has a legacy of manor houses (here:](/wiki/File:Sangaste_mõisa_peahoone1.jpg) [Sangaste](/wiki/Sangaste) manor, built in 1874–1881) which used to house the ruling [German](/wiki/Baltic_Germans) landowning upper classes.

Following the [capitulation of Estonia and Livonia](/wiki/Capitulation_of_Estonia_and_Livonia) during the [Great Northern War](/wiki/Great_Northern_War) (1700–21), the Swedish empire lost Estonia to Russia by the [Treaty of Nystad](/wiki/Treaty_of_Nystad). However, the upper classes and the higher middle class remained primarily [Baltic German](/wiki/Baltic_German). The war devastated the population of Estonia, but it recovered quickly.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Although the rights of peasants were initially weakened, serfdom was abolished in 1816 in the province of Estonia and in 1819 in [Livonia](/wiki/Livonia).[[43]](#cite_note-43)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

As a result of the abolition of [serfdom](/wiki/Serfdom) and the availability of education to the native Estonian-speaking population, an active Estonian nationalist movement developed in the 19th century.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) It began on a cultural level, resulting in the establishment of Estonian language literature, theatre and professional music and led on to the formation of the Estonian national identity and the [Age of Awakening](/wiki/Estonian_Age_of_Awakening). Among the leaders of the movement were [Johann Voldemar Jannsen](/wiki/Johann_Voldemar_Jannsen), [Jakob Hurt](/wiki/Jakob_Hurt) and [Carl Robert Jakobson](/wiki/Carl_Robert_Jakobson).

Significant accomplishments were the publication of the [national epic](/wiki/National_epic), [*Kalevipoeg*](/wiki/Kalevipoeg), in 1862 and the organisation of the first [national song festival](/wiki/Estonian_Song_Festival) in 1869. In response to a period of [Russification](/wiki/Russification) initiated by the [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire) in the 1890s, Estonian nationalism took on more political tones[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed), with intellectuals first calling for greater autonomy and, later, complete independence from the [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire).

### Independence[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|upright|alt=newspaper clipping of Estonian Declaration of Independence|](/wiki/File:Estonian_Declaration_of_Independence.jpg)[Estonian Declaration of Independence](/wiki/Estonian_Declaration_of_Independence) [thumb|left|alt=photograph of crowd around flag raising|Declaration of independence in](/wiki/File:Declaration_of_Estonian_independence_in_Pärnu.jpg) [Pärnu](/wiki/Pärnu) on 23 February in 1918. One of the first images of the Republic.

Following the [Bolshevik](/wiki/Bolshevik) takeover of power in Russia after the [October Revolution](/wiki/October_Revolution) of 1917 and [German](/wiki/German_Empire) victories against the Russian army, between the Russian [Red Army's](/wiki/Red_Army) retreat and the arrival of advancing German troops, the [Committee of Elders](/wiki/Salvation_Committee) of the [Maapäev](/wiki/Maapäev) issued the [Estonian Declaration of Independence](/wiki/Estonian_Declaration_of_Independence)[[44]](#cite_note-44) The provisions in the Estonian constitution requiring a popular referendum to decide on joining a supra-national body were ignored. Instead the vote to join the Soviet Union was taken by those elected in the elections held the previous month. Additionally those who had failed to do their "political duty" of voting Estonia into the USSR, specifically those who had failed to have their passports stamped for voting, were condemned to death by Soviet tribunals.[[63]](#cite_note-63) The repressions followed with the [mass deportations](/wiki/June_deportation) carried out by the Soviets in Estonia on 14 June 1941. Many of the country's political and intellectual leaders were killed or deported to remote areas of the USSR by the Soviet authorities in 1940–1941. Repressive actions were also taken against thousands of ordinary people.

When the German [Operation Barbarossa](/wiki/Operation_Barbarossa) started against the Soviet Union, about 34,000 young Estonian men were forcibly drafted into the [Red Army](/wiki/Red_Army), fewer than 30% of whom survived the war. Political prisoners who could not be evacuated were executed by the [NKVD](/wiki/NKVD).[[64]](#cite_note-64) Many countries, including the UK and US, did not recognise the annexation of Estonia by the USSR [*de jure*](/wiki/De_jure). Such countries recognised Estonian diplomats and consuls who still functioned in the name of their former governments.[[65]](#cite_note-65) These diplomats persisted in this anomalous situation until the ultimate [restoration of Baltic independence](/wiki/Singing_revolution).[[66]](#cite_note-66) The official Soviet and current Russian version claims that Estonians voluntarily gave up their statehood. [Anti-communist partisans](/wiki/Forest_brothers) of 1944–1976 are labelled "bandits" or "Nazis", though the Russian position is not recognised internationally.[[67]](#cite_note-67)

#### German occupation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|alt=head shot of facing left Jüri Uluots|](/wiki/File:Jüri_Uluots.jpg)[Jüri Uluots](/wiki/Jüri_Uluots)

After Germany [invaded](/wiki/Operation_Barbarossa) the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the [Wehrmacht](/wiki/Wehrmacht) crossed the Estonian southern border on 7 July. The [Red Army](/wiki/Red_Army) retreated behind the [Pärnu River](/wiki/Pärnu_River) – [Emajõgi](/wiki/Emajõgi) line on 12 July. At the end of July the Germans resumed their advance in Estonia working in tandem with the Estonian Forest Brothers. Both German troops and Estonian partisans took Narva on 17 August and the Estonian capital Tallinn on 28 August. After the Soviets were driven out from Estonia, German troops disarmed all the partisan groups.[[68]](#cite_note-68) Although initially the Germans were welcomed by most Estonians as liberators from the USSR and its oppressions, and hopes were raised for the restoration of the country's independence, it was soon realised that the Nazis were but another occupying power. The Germans used Estonia's resources for their war effort; for the duration of the occupation Estonia was incorporated into the German province of [Ostland](/wiki/Reichskommissariat_Ostland). The Germans and their collaborators also carried out [The Holocaust in Estonia](/wiki/The_Holocaust_in_Estonia) in which they established a network of [concentration camps](/wiki/The_Holocaust_in_Estonia#Concentration_camps) and murdered thousands of Estonian [Jews](/wiki/Jews) and [Estonian Gypsies](/wiki/Romani_people), other Estonians, non-Estonian Jews, and [Soviet prisoners of war](/wiki/German_mistreatment_of_Soviet_prisoners_of_war).[[69]](#cite_note-69) Some Estonians, unwilling to side directly with the Nazis, joined the [Finnish Army](/wiki/Finnish_Army) (which was allied with the Nazis) to fight against the Soviet Union. The [Finnish Infantry Regiment 200](/wiki/Finnish_Infantry_Regiment_200) (Estonian: *soomepoisid*) was formed out of Estonian volunteers in Finland. Although many Estonians were recruited into the German armed forces (including [Estonian Waffen-SS](/wiki/20th_Waffen_Grenadier_Division_of_the_SS_(1st_Estonian))), the majority of them did so only in 1944 when the threat of a new invasion of Estonia by the Red Army had become imminent.[[70]](#cite_note-70) In January 1944 Estonia was again facing the prospect of invasion from the Red Army and the last legitimate prime minister of the Republic of Estonia (according to the [Constitution of the Republic of Estonia](/wiki/Constitution_of_Estonia)) delivered a radio address asking all able-bodied men born from 1904 through 1923 to report for military service. The call resulted in around 38,000 new enlistments[[71]](#cite_note-71) and several thousand Estonians who had joined the Finnish Army came back to join the newly formed Territorial Defense Force, assigned to defend Estonia against the Soviet advance. It was hoped[Template:By whom](/wiki/Template:By_whom) that by engaging in such a war Estonia would be able to attract Western support for Estonian independence.[[72]](#cite_note-72)

### Soviet Estonia[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|alt=sailing ship filled with refugees|](/wiki/File:Estlandssvenska_flyktingar.jpg)[Estonian Swedes](/wiki/Estonian_Swedes) fleeing the Soviet occupation to Sweden (1944) The [Soviet forces](/wiki/Soviet_forces) reconquered Estonia in the autumn of 1944 after battles in the northeast of the country on the [Narva river](/wiki/Battle_for_Narva_Bridgehead), on the [Tannenberg Line](/wiki/Battle_of_Tannenberg_Line) ([Sinimäed](/wiki/Sinimäed)), in [Southeast Estonia](/wiki/Tartu_Offensive), on the [Emajõgi river](/wiki/Tallinn_Offensive), and in the [West Estonian Archipelago](/wiki/Moonsund_Landing_Operation).

In the face of the country being re-occupied by the [Red Army](/wiki/Red_Army), tens of thousands of Estonians (including a majority of the education, culture, science, political and social specialists) chose to either retreat with the Germans or flee to Finland or Sweden where they sought refuge in other western countries, often by refugee ships such as the [SS Walnut](/wiki/SS_Walnut). On 12 January 1949, the [Soviet Council of Ministers](/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_of_the_USSR) issued a decree "on the expulsion and deportation" from [Baltic states](/wiki/Baltic_states) of "all [kulaks](/wiki/Kulaks) and their families, the families of bandits and nationalists", and others.[[73]](#cite_note-73)[thumb|right|alt=memorial wall plaque of Estonian government members|Plaque memorializing members of the Estonian government who were killed during the Soviet occupation, on](/wiki/File:PlaqueMemorizingEstonianGovernment.jpg) [Stenbock House](/wiki/Stenbock_House) in Tallinn More than 10% of the entire adult Baltic population was deported or sent to Soviet labour camps.[[73]](#cite_note-73) In response to the continuing insurgency against Soviet rule,[[74]](#cite_note-74) more than 20,000 [Estonians were forcibly deported](/wiki/Soviet_deportations_from_Estonia) either to labour camps or [Siberia](/wiki/Siberia).[[75]](#cite_note-75) Almost all of the remaining rural households were [collectivised](/wiki/Collectivization_in_the_USSR).

After the [Second World War](/wiki/Second_World_War), as part of the goal to more fully integrate Baltic countries into the [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union), mass deportations were conducted in the Baltic countries and the policy of encouraging Soviet [immigration](/wiki/Immigration) to the Baltic states continued.[[76]](#cite_note-76) Half the deported perished, and the other half were not allowed to return until the early 1960s (years after Stalin's death).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The activities of [Soviet forces](/wiki/Soviet_forces) in 1940–41 and after reoccupation sparked a [guerrilla war](/wiki/Guerrilla_war) against Soviet authorities in Estonia by the [Forest Brothers](/wiki/Forest_Brothers), who consisted mostly of Estonian veterans of the [German](/wiki/Wehrmacht) and [Finnish](/wiki/Finnish_Army) armies and some civilians. This conflict continued into the early 1950s.[[77]](#cite_note-77) Material damage caused by the world war and the following Soviet era significantly slowed Estonia's economic growth, resulting in a wide [wealth gap](/wiki/Wealth_gap) in comparison with neighbouring [Finland](/wiki/Finland) and [Sweden](/wiki/Sweden).[[78]](#cite_note-78) [Militarization](/wiki/Militarization) was another aspect of the [Soviet state](/wiki/Soviet_state). Large parts of the country, especially the coastal areas, were closed to all but the Soviet military. Most of the sea shore and all sea islands (including [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa) and [Hiiumaa](/wiki/Hiiumaa)) were declared "border zones". People not actually residing there were restricted from travelling to them without a permit. A notable closed military installation was the city of [Paldiski](/wiki/Paldiski), which was entirely closed to all public access. The city had a support base for the [Soviet Baltic Fleet's](/wiki/Soviet_Baltic_Fleet) submarines and several large military bases, including a nuclear submarine training centre complete with a full-scale model of a [nuclear submarine](/wiki/Nuclear_submarine) with working [nuclear reactors](/wiki/Nuclear_reactors). The [Paldiski](/wiki/Paldiski) reactors building passed into Estonian control in 1994 after the last Russian troops left the country.[[79]](#cite_note-79)[[80]](#cite_note-80) [Immigration](/wiki/Population_transfer_in_the_Soviet_Union) was another effect of Soviet occupation. Hundreds of thousands of migrants were relocated to Estonia from other parts of the [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union) to assist industrialisation and militarisation, contributing an increase of about half a million people within 45 years.[[81]](#cite_note-81)

### Return to independence[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|alt=crowd in front of cathedral celebration joining the EU in 2007|Estonia joined the European Union in 2004 and signed the](/wiki/File:Tratado_de_Lisboa_13_12_2007_(081).jpg) [Lisbon Treaty](/wiki/Lisbon_Treaty) in 2007. [thumb|right|alt=Barack Obama left sitting with Toomas Hendrik Ilves right in the White House Monday, 15 June 2009|](/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_and_Toomas_Hendrik_Ilves_2009-06-15.jpg)[Toomas Hendrik Ilves](/wiki/Toomas_Hendrik_Ilves) (right) is the current president of Estonia.

The United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy and the majority of other Western countries [considered](/wiki/Stimson_Doctrine) the [annexation of Estonia](/wiki/Occupation_of_the_Baltic_states) by the [USSR](/wiki/USSR) illegal. They retained diplomatic relations with the representatives of the independent Republic of Estonia, never [*de jure*](/wiki/De_jure) recognised the existence of the Estonian SSR, and never recognised Estonia as a legal constituent part of the Soviet Union.[[82]](#cite_note-82) Estonia's return to independence became possible as the Soviet Union faced internal regime challenges, loosening its hold on the outer empire. As the 1980s progressed, a movement for Estonian autonomy started. In the initial period of 1987–1989, this was partially for more economic independence, but as the Soviet Union weakened and it became increasingly obvious that nothing short of full independence would do, Estonia began a course towards self-determination.

In 1989, during the "[Singing Revolution](/wiki/Singing_Revolution)", in a landmark demonstration for more independence, more than two million people formed a human chain stretching through Lithuania, [Latvia](/wiki/Latvia) and Estonia, called [the Baltic Way](/wiki/The_Baltic_Way). All three nations had similar experiences of occupation and similar aspirations for regaining independence. The [Estonian Sovereignty Declaration](/wiki/Estonian_Sovereignty_Declaration) was issued on 16 November 1988.[[83]](#cite_note-83) On 20 August 1991, Estonia declared formal independence during the [Soviet military coup attempt](/wiki/Soviet_coup_attempt_of_1991) in [Moscow](/wiki/Moscow), reconstituting the pre-1940 state. The Soviet Union recognised the independence of Estonia on 6 September 1991. The first country to diplomatically recognise Estonia's reclaimed independence was [Iceland](/wiki/Iceland). The last units of the [Russian army](/wiki/Russian_army) left on 31 August 1994.

Estonia joined [NATO](/wiki/NATO) on 29 March 2004.[[84]](#cite_note-84) After signing [a treaty](/wiki/Treaty_of_Accession_2003) on 16 April 2003, Estonia was among the group of ten countries [admitted to the European Union on 1 May 2004](/wiki/2004_enlargement_of_the_European_Union).

Estonia celebrated its [90th anniversary](/wiki/90th_Anniversary_of_the_Estonian_Republic) over the period 28 November 2007 to 28 November 2008.

### Territorial history timeline[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:History Timeline of Estonia](/wiki/Template:History_Timeline_of_Estonia)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|right|180px|alt=limestone cliffs at the shore with clouds|The northern coast of Estonia consists mainly of](/wiki/File:Panga_pank-2-mauricedb.jpg) [limestone](/wiki/Limestone) cliffs. Estonia's land border with Latvia runs 267 kilometers; the Russian border runs 290 kilometers. From 1920 to 1945, Estonia's border with Russia, set by the 1920 [Tartu Peace Treaty](/wiki/Treaty_of_Tartu_(Russian–Estonian)), extended beyond the [Narva River](/wiki/Narva_River) in the northeast and beyond the town of [Pechory](/wiki/Pechory) (Petseri) in the southeast. This territory, amounting to some [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), was incorporated into Russia by Stalin at the end of World War II. For this reason the borders between Estonia and Russia are still not defined.

Estonia lies on the eastern shores of the [Baltic Sea](/wiki/Baltic_Sea) immediately across the Gulf of Finland from Finland on the level northwestern part of the rising [East European platform](/wiki/East_European_platform) between 57.3° and 59.5° N and 21.5° and 28.1° E. Average elevation reaches only [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) and the country's highest point is the [Suur Munamägi](/wiki/Suur_Munamägi) in the southeast at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). There is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of coastline marked by numerous bays, straits, and inlets. The number of islands and islets is estimated at some 2,355 (including those in lakes). Two of them are large enough to constitute separate counties: [Saaremaa](/wiki/Saaremaa) and [Hiiumaa](/wiki/Hiiumaa).[[85]](#cite_note-85)[[86]](#cite_note-86) A small, recent cluster of meteorite craters, the largest of which is called [Kaali](/wiki/Kaali_crater) is found on Saaremaa, Estonia.

Estonia is situated in the northern part of the [temperate climate zone](/wiki/Temperate) and in the transition zone between [maritime](/wiki/Maritime_climate) and [continental climate](/wiki/Köppen_climate_classification#Group_D:_Continental.2Fmicrothermal_climates). Estonia has four seasons of near-equal length. Average temperatures range from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) on the Baltic islands to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) inland in July, the warmest month, and from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) on the Baltic islands to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) inland in February, the coldest month. The average annual temperature in Estonia is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[87]](#cite_note-87) The average precipitation in 1961–1990 ranged from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) per year.<ref name=emhi2>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Snow cover, which is deepest in the south-eastern part of Estonia, usually lasts from mid-December to late March. Estonia has over [1,400 lakes](/wiki/List_of_lakes_in_Estonia). Most are very small, with the largest, [Lake Peipus](/wiki/Lake_Peipus), being [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). There are many rivers in the country. The longest of them are Võhandu ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)), Pärnu ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)), and Põltsamaa ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)).[[85]](#cite_note-85) Estonia has numerous [fens](/wiki/Fen) and [bogs](/wiki/Bogs). Forests cover 61% of Estonia. The most common tree species are pine, spruce and birch.[[88]](#cite_note-88) [Phytogeographically](/wiki/Phytogeography), Estonia is shared between the Central European and Eastern European provinces of the [Circumboreal Region](/wiki/Circumboreal_Region) within the [Boreal Kingdom](/wiki/Boreal_Kingdom). According to the [WWF](/wiki/World_Wide_Fund_for_Nature), the territory of Estonia belongs to the [ecoregion](/wiki/Ecoregion) of [Sarmatic mixed forests](/wiki/Sarmatic_mixed_forests). [Template:Gallery](/wiki/Template:Gallery)

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) <imagemap> File:Eesti maakonnad 2006 blue.svg|350px|right|Counties of Estonia poly 149 174 230 291 137 327 40 263 [Hiiu County](/wiki/Hiiu_County) poly 197 110 338 228 338 319 263 375 203 242 [Lääne County](/wiki/Lääne_County) poly 225 294 271 387 233 585 38 511 21 363 [Saare County](/wiki/Saare_County) poly 534 33 567 172 515 174 492 245 421 185 342 240 246 141 [Harju County](/wiki/Harju_County) poly 531 35 567 168 514 176 572 197 569 221 594 244 597 263 666 247 693 192 670 170 666 85 [Lääne-Viru County](/wiki/Lääne-Viru_County) poly 669 77 667 170 693 192 665 246 704 273 805 244 874 107 [Ida-Viru County](/wiki/Ida-Viru_County) poly 340 240 422 185 490 246 475 314 443 318 433 308 374 323 338 322 [Rapla County](/wiki/Rapla_County) poly 270 375 337 318 373 327 433 307 486 314 477 352 453 361 449 408 484 421 446 495 345 546 [Pärnu County](/wiki/Pärnu_County) poly 476 309 515 173 573 197 569 223 594 243 596 275 546 317 505 340 484 335 491 313 [Järva County](/wiki/Järva_County) poly 454 365 479 348 482 334 505 338 545 319 597 366 602 479 591 454 560 462 527 507 458 486 487 418 445 401 [Viljandi County](/wiki/Viljandi_County) poly 597 367 546 316 597 265 665 246 707 274 735 310 684 344 [Jõgeva County](/wiki/Jõgeva_County) poly 600 365 676 347 748 300 809 443 731 412 662 452 637 439 591 461 [Tartu County](/wiki/Tartu_County) poly 525 512 556 461 637 442 662 453 658 495 632 501 652 588 622 598 [Valga County](/wiki/Valga_County) poly 656 492 660 452 732 412 806 445 840 514 756 522 753 501 [Põlva County](/wiki/Põlva_County) poly 634 502 659 493 756 502 756 521 816 524 765 612 654 619 [Võru County](/wiki/Võru_County) </imagemap> [thumb|right|alt=Tartu Town Hall and square, three story stone building with red hip roof|](/wiki/File:Tartu_Raekoda_2012.jpg)[Tartu](/wiki/Tartu), the [Town Hall](/wiki/Tartu_Town_Hall)

The Republic of Estonia is divided into fifteen [counties](/wiki/Counties_of_Estonia) *(Maakonnad)*, which are the administrative subdivisions of the country. The first documented reference to Estonian political and administrative subdivisions comes from the [Chronicle of Henry of Livonia](/wiki/Chronicle_of_Henry_of_Livonia), written in the thirteenth century during the [Northern Crusades](/wiki/Northern_Crusades).[[89]](#cite_note-89) A [*maakond*](/wiki/County) (county) is the biggest administrative subdivision. The county government *(Maavalitsus)* of each county is led by a county governor *(Maavanem)*, who represents the national government at the regional level. Governors are appointed by the [Government of Estonia](/wiki/Government_of_Estonia) for a term of five years. Several changes were made to the borders of counties after Estonia became independent, most notably the formation of [Valga County](/wiki/Valga_County) (from parts of [Võru](/wiki/Võru_County), [Tartu](/wiki/Tartu_County) and [Viljandi](/wiki/Viljandi_County) counties) and [Petseri County](/wiki/Petseri_County) (area acquired from Russia with the 1920 [Tartu Peace Treaty](/wiki/Treaty_of_Tartu_(Russian–Estonian))).

During the [Soviet rule](/wiki/Estonian_SSR), Petseri County was annexed and ceded to the [Russian SFSR](/wiki/Russian_SFSR) in 1945 where it became [Pechorsky District](/wiki/Pechorsky_District) of [Pskov Oblast](/wiki/Pskov_Oblast). Counties were again re-established on 1 January 1990 in the borders of the Soviet-era [districts](/wiki/Raion). Because of the numerous differences between the current and historical (pre-1940, and sometimes pre-1918) layouts, the historical borders are still used in ethnology, representing cultural and linguistic differences better.

Each county is further divided into municipalities (*omavalitsus*), which is also the smallest administrative subdivision of Estonia. There are two types of municipalities: an urban municipality – *linn* (town), and a [rural municipality](/wiki/Rural_municipality) – *vald* (parish). There is no other status distinction between them. Each municipality is a unit of [self-government](/wiki/Self-government) with its [representative](/wiki/Representation_(politics)) and executive bodies. The municipalities in Estonia cover the entire territory of the country.

A municipality may contain one or more populated places. [Tallinn](/wiki/Tallinn) is divided into eight districts (*linnaosa*) with limited self-government ([Haabersti](/wiki/Haabersti), [Kesklinn](/wiki/Kesklinn,_Tallinn) (centre), [Kristiine](/wiki/Kristiine), [Lasnamäe](/wiki/Lasnamäe), [Mustamäe](/wiki/Mustamäe), [Nõmme](/wiki/Nõmme), [Pirita](/wiki/Pirita) and [Põhja-Tallinn](/wiki/Põhja-Tallinn)).

Municipalities range in size from Tallinn with 400,000 inhabitants to [Ruhnu](/wiki/Ruhnu) with as few as sixty. As over two-thirds of the municipalities have a population of under 3,000, many of them have found it advantageous to co-operate in providing services and carrying out administrative functions. There have also been calls for an administrative reform to merge smaller municipalities together.

As of March 2013, there are a total of 226 municipalities in Estonia, 33 of them being urban and 193 rural.[[90]](#cite_note-90)

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Politics of Estonia](/wiki/Template:Politics_of_Estonia) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Estonia is a [parliamentary](/wiki/Parliamentary_system) [representative democratic](/wiki/Representative_democracy) republic in which the [Prime Minister of Estonia](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Estonia) is the [head of government](/wiki/Head_of_government) and which includes a [multi-party system](/wiki/Multi-party_system). The political culture is stable in Estonia, where power is held between two and three parties that have been in politics for a long time. This situation is similar to other countries in Northern Europe. The former Prime Minister of Estonia, [Andrus Ansip](/wiki/Andrus_Ansip), is also Europe's longest-serving Prime Minister (from 2005 until 2014). The current Estonian Prime Minister is [Taavi Rõivas](/wiki/Taavi_Rõivas), who is the former Minister of Social Affairs and the head of the Estonian Reform Party.

### Parliament[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|alt=Toompea Castle pink stucco three story building with red hip roof|The seat of the Parliament of Estonia in](/wiki/File:Estland_parliament.jpg) [Toompea Castle](/wiki/Toompea_Castle)

The Parliament of Estonia ([Template:Lang-et](/wiki/Template:Lang-et)) or the [legislative branch](/wiki/Legislative_power) is elected by people for a four-year term by [proportional representation](/wiki/Proportional_representation). The Estonian political system operates under a framework laid out in the 1992 [constitutional document](/wiki/Constitution). The Estonian parliament has 101 members and influences the governing of the state primarily by determining the income and the expenses of the state (establishing taxes and adopting the budget). At the same time the parliament has the right to present statements, declarations and appeals to the people of Estonia, ratify and denounce international treaties with other states and international organisations and decide on the Government loans.[[91]](#cite_note-91) The Riigikogu elects and appoints several high officials of the state, including the President of the Republic. In addition to that, the Riigikogu appoints, on the proposal of the [President of Estonia](/wiki/President_of_Estonia), the Chairman of the National Court, the chairman of the board of the Bank of Estonia, the Auditor General, the Legal Chancellor and the Commander-in-Chief of the [Defence Forces](/wiki/Estonian_Defence_Forces). A member of the Riigikogu has the right to demand explanations from the Government of the Republic and its members. This enables the members of the parliament to observe the activities of the executive power and the above-mentioned high officials of the state.

### Government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

The Government of Estonia ([Template:Lang-et](/wiki/Template:Lang-et)) or the [executive branch](/wiki/Executive_branch) is formed by the [Prime Minister of Estonia](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Estonia), nominated by the president and approved by the parliament. The government exercises executive power pursuant to the [Constitution of Estonia](/wiki/Constitution_of_Estonia) and the laws of the Republic of Estonia and consists of twelve ministers, including the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister also has the right to appoint other ministers and assign them a subject to deal with. These are *ministers without portfolio* — they don't have a ministry to control. [thumb|left|alt=Stenbock House gray stucco three story building with pediment and portico and red hip roof|](/wiki/File:Stenbock_House.jpg)[Stenbock House](/wiki/Stenbock_House), the seat of the Government of Estonia on [Toompea](/wiki/Toompea) Hill

The Prime Minister has the right to appoint a maximum of three such ministers, as the limit of ministers in one government is fifteen. It is also known as the cabinet. The cabinet carries out the country's domestic and foreign policy, shaped by parliament; it directs and co-ordinates the work of government institutions and bears full responsibility for everything occurring within the authority of executive power. The government, headed by the Prime Minister, thus represents the political leadership of the country and makes decisions in the name of the whole executive power.

Estonia has pursued the development of the e-state and [e-government](/wiki/E-government). [Internet voting](/wiki/Electronic_voting) is used in elections in Estonia.[[92]](#cite_note-92) The first internet voting took place in the 2005 local elections and the first in a parliamentary election was made available for the [2007 elections](/wiki/Estonian_parliamentary_election,_2007), in which 30,275 individuals voted over the internet. Voters have a chance to invalidate their electronic vote in traditional elections, if they wish to. In 2009 in its eighth Worldwide Press Freedom Index, [Reporters Without Borders](/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders) ranked Estonia sixth out of 175 countries.[[93]](#cite_note-93) In the first ever [State of World Liberty Index](/wiki/State_of_World_Liberty_Index) report, Estonia was ranked first out of 159 countries. [Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

### Law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|alt=Huey helicopter landing on a pad next to a wetland|](/wiki/File:Piirivalve_helikopter,_ES-PWA.jpg)[Estonian Border Guard](/wiki/Estonian_Border_Guard) According to the [Constitution of Estonia](/wiki/Constitution_of_Estonia) ([Template:Lang-et](/wiki/Template:Lang-et)) the supreme power of the state is vested in the people. The people exercise their supreme power of the state on the elections of the Riigikogu through citizens who have the right to vote.[[94]](#cite_note-94) The supreme [judicial power](/wiki/Judicial_power) is vested in the [Supreme Court](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Estonia) or [Riigikohus](/wiki/Riigikohus), with nineteen justices.[[95]](#cite_note-95) The Chief Justice is appointed by the parliament for nine years on nomination by the president. The official [Head of State](/wiki/Head_of_State) is the [President of Estonia](/wiki/President_of_Estonia), who gives assent to the laws passed by [Riigikogu](/wiki/Riigikogu), also having the right of [sending them back](/wiki/President_of_Estonia#Veto_power) and proposing new laws.

The President, however, does not use these rights very often, having a largely ceremonial role.[[96]](#cite_note-96) He or she is elected by Riigikogu, with two-thirds of the votes required. If the candidate does not gain the amount of votes required, the right to elect the President goes over to an electoral body, consisting of the 101 members of Riigikogu and representatives from local councils. As in other spheres, Estonian law-making has been successfully integrated with the [Information Age](/wiki/Information_Age).

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|alt=turret of Estonian Embassy Washington, D.C. by Florida Avenue and Massachusetts avenue|](/wiki/File:EmbassyEstoniaUS.jpg)[Embassy of Estonia](/wiki/Embassy_of_Estonia_in_Washington,_D.C.) in Washington, D.C.. Estonia has maintained continuous consular representation in United States since 1920, including the period of [Soviet Occupation](/wiki/Occupation_of_the_Baltic_states).

Estonia was a member of the [League of Nations](/wiki/League_of_Nations) from 22 September 1921,[[97]](#cite_note-97) has been a member of the United Nations since 17 September 1991,[[98]](#cite_note-98) and of [NATO](/wiki/NATO) since 29 March 2004,[[99]](#cite_note-99) as well as the European Union since 1 May 2004.[[100]](#cite_note-100) Estonia is also a member of the [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe](/wiki/Organization_for_Security_and_Cooperation_in_Europe) (OSCE), [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) (OECD), [Council of the Baltic Sea States](/wiki/Council_of_the_Baltic_Sea_States) (CBSS) and the [Nordic Investment Bank](/wiki/Nordic_Investment_Bank) (NIB). As an OSCE participating State, Estonia's international commitments are subject to monitoring under the mandate of the [U.S. Helsinki Commission](/wiki/U.S._Helsinki_Commission). Estonia has also signed the [Kyoto Protocol](/wiki/Kyoto_Protocol).

Since regaining independence, Estonia has pursued a foreign policy of close co-operation with its Western European partners. The two most important policy objectives in this regard have been accession into NATO and the European Union, achieved in March and May 2004 respectively. Estonia's international realignment toward the West has been accompanied by a general deterioration in relations with Russia, most recently demonstrated by the protest triggered by the controversial relocation of the [Bronze Soldier](/wiki/Bronze_Soldier) World War II memorial in Tallinn.[[101]](#cite_note-101) Since the early 1990s, Estonia is involved in active trilateral [Baltic states](/wiki/Baltic_states) co-operation with [Latvia](/wiki/Latvia) and [Lithuania](/wiki/Lithuania), and Nordic-Baltic co-operation with the [Nordic countries](/wiki/Nordic_countries). The Baltic Council is the joint forum of the interparliamentary [Baltic Assembly](/wiki/Baltic_Assembly) *(BA)* and the intergovernmental Baltic Council of Ministers *(BCM)*.[[102]](#cite_note-102) [Nordic-Baltic Eight *(NB-8)*](/wiki/NB8) is the joint co-operation of the governments of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden.[[103]](#cite_note-103) Nordic-Baltic Six *(NB-6)*, comprising Nordic-Baltic countries that are [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) member states, is a framework for meetings on EU related issues. Parliamentary co-operation between the Baltic Assembly and Nordic Council began in 1989. Annual summits take place, and in addition meetings are organised on all possible levels: speakers, presidiums, commissions, and individual members.[[103]](#cite_note-103) The [Nordic Council of Ministers](/wiki/Nordic_Council_of_Ministers) has an office in [Tallinn](/wiki/Tallinn) with a subsidiary in [Tartu](/wiki/Tartu) and information points in [Narva](/wiki/Narva), [Valga](/wiki/Valga,_Estonia) and [Pärnu](/wiki/Pärnu).[[104]](#cite_note-104)[[105]](#cite_note-105) Joint Nordic-Baltic projects include the education programme Nordplus[[106]](#cite_note-106) and mobility programmes for business and industry[[107]](#cite_note-107) and for public administration.[[108]](#cite_note-108) [thumb|right|alt=Foreign ministers standing in arc around microphones 2011|Foreign ministers of the Nordic and Baltic countries in Helsinki, 2011](/wiki/File:Foreign_Ministers_of_Nordic_and_Baltic_countries_met_in_Helsinki,_30.08.2011_(Photographer_Eero_Kuosmanen).jpg) An important element in Estonia's post-independence reorientation has been closer ties with the Nordic countries, especially Finland and Sweden. Estonians consider themselves a Nordic people rather than Balts,[[109]](#cite_note-109)[[110]](#cite_note-110) based on their historical ties with Sweden, Denmark and particularly Finland. In December 1999, then Estonian foreign minister (and since 2006, [President of Estonia](/wiki/President_of_Estonia)) [Toomas Hendrik Ilves](/wiki/Toomas_Hendrik_Ilves) delivered a speech entitled "Estonia as a Nordic Country" to the [Swedish Institute for International Affairs](/wiki/Swedish_Institute_for_International_Affairs).[[111]](#cite_note-111) In 2003, the [foreign ministry](/wiki/Foreign_ministry) also hosted an exhibit called "Estonia: Nordic with a Twist".[[112]](#cite_note-112) In 2005, Estonia joined the European Union's [Nordic Battle Group](/wiki/Nordic_Battle_Group). It has also shown continued interest in joining the [Nordic Council](/wiki/Nordic_Council). Whereas in 1992 Russia accounted for 92% of Estonia's international trade,[[113]](#cite_note-113) today there is extensive economic interdependence between Estonia and its Nordic neighbours: three quarters of [foreign investment](/wiki/Foreign_investment) in Estonia originates in the Nordic countries (principally Finland and Sweden), to which Estonia sends 42% of its exports (as compared to 6.5% going to Russia, 8.8% to Latvia, and 4.7% to Lithuania). On the other hand, the Estonian political system, its [flat rate](/wiki/Flat_tax) of income tax, and its non-welfare-state model distinguish it from the Nordic countries and their [Nordic model](/wiki/Nordic_model), and from many other European countries.[[114]](#cite_note-114) The [European Union Agency](/wiki/Agency_of_the_European_Union) for large-scale IT systems is based in Tallinn, which started operations at the end of 2012.[[115]](#cite_note-115) Estonia will hold the [Presidency of the Council of the European Union](/wiki/Presidency_of_the_Council_of_the_European_Union) in the first half of 2018.

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|alt=Estonian armored car in desert camouflage Afghanistan|An Estonian](/wiki/File:XA-180EST_in_Afghanistan.jpg) [Patria Pasi](/wiki/Patria_Pasi) XA-180 in Afghanistan [thumb|right|alt=Nordic Battlegroup countries of 2015 outlined in blue on a European map|](/wiki/Image:EU_Nordic_Battlegroup_2015.svg)[Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend)

The military of Estonia is based upon the Estonian Defence Forces ([Template:Lang-et](/wiki/Template:Lang-et)), which is the name of the unified armed forces of the republic with [*Maavägi*](/wiki/Maavägi) (Army), [*Merevägi*](/wiki/Estonian_Navy) (Navy), [*Õhuvägi*](/wiki/Estonian_Air_Force) (Air Force) and a paramilitary national guard organisation [*Kaitseliit*](/wiki/Estonian_Defence_League) (Defence League). The Estonian National Defence Policy aim is to guarantee the preservation of the independence and [sovereignty](/wiki/Sovereignty) of the state, the [integrity](/wiki/Integrity) of its land, territorial waters, airspace and its constitutional order.[[116]](#cite_note-116) Current strategic goals are to defend the country's interests, develop the armed forces for [interoperability](/wiki/Interoperability) with other [NATO](/wiki/NATO) and EU member forces, and participation in NATO missions.

The current national [military service](/wiki/Military_service) ([Template:Lang-et](/wiki/Template:Lang-et)) is compulsory for men between 18 and 28, and conscripts serve eight-month to eleven-month tours of duty depending on the army branch they serve in. Estonia has retained [conscription](/wiki/Conscription) unlike Latvia and Lithuania and has no plan to transition to a [professional army](/wiki/Standing_army).[[117]](#cite_note-117) In 2008, annual military spending reached 1.85% of GDP, or 5 billion [kroons](/wiki/Estonian_kroon), and was expected to continue to increase until 2010, when a 2.0% level was anticipated.[[118]](#cite_note-118) Estonia co-operates with Latvia and Lithuania in several trilateral Baltic defence co-operation initiatives, including Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT), Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET) and joint military educational institutions such as the [Baltic Defence College](/wiki/Baltic_Defence_College) in [Tartu](/wiki/Tartu).[[119]](#cite_note-119) Future co-operation will include sharing of national infrastructures for training purposes and specialisation of training areas (BALTTRAIN) and collective formation of battalion-sized contingents for use in the NATO rapid-response force.[[120]](#cite_note-120) In January 2011 the Baltic states were invited to join [NORDEFCO](/wiki/NORDEFCO), the defence framework of the Nordic countries.[[121]](#cite_note-121) [left|thumb|Estonian troops training at San Gregorio, Spain during Trident Juncture](/wiki/File:Baltic_Battalion_Soldiers,_Trident_Juncture_15_(22200204329).jpg) In January 2008, the Estonian military had almost 300 troops stationed in foreign countries as part of various international peacekeeping forces, including 35 Defence League troops stationed in Kosovo; 120 [Ground Forces](/wiki/Estonian_Army) soldiers in the NATO-led [ISAF](/wiki/International_Security_Assistance_Force) force in Afghanistan; 80 soldiers stationed as a part of MNF in Iraq; and 2 Estonian officers in Bosnia-Herzegovina and 2 Estonian military agents in Israeli occupied [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights).[[122]](#cite_note-122) The Estonian Defence Forces have also previously had military missions in Croatia from March until October 1995, in [Lebanon](/wiki/Lebanon) from December 1996 until June 1997 and in Macedonia from May until December 2003.[[123]](#cite_note-123) Estonia participates in the [Nordic Battlegroup](/wiki/Nordic_Battlegroup) and has announced readiness to send soldiers also to Sudan to [Darfur](/wiki/Darfur) if necessary, creating the first African [peacekeeping](/wiki/Peacekeeping) mission for the armed forces of Estonia.[[124]](#cite_note-124) The [Ministry of Defence](/wiki/Estonian_Ministry_of_Defence) and the Defence Forces have been working on a [cyberwarfare](/wiki/Cyberwarfare) and [defence](/wiki/Defense_(military)) [formation](/wiki/Formation_(military)) for some years now. In 2007, a [military doctrine](/wiki/Military_doctrine) of an [e-military of Estonia](/wiki/Military_of_Estonia) was officially introduced as the country was under [massive cyberattacks in 2007](/wiki/2007_cyberattacks_on_Estonia).[[125]](#cite_note-125) The proposed aim of the e-military is to secure the vital infrastructure and [e-infrastructure](/wiki/Internet) of Estonia. The main cyber warfare facility is the Computer Emergency Response Team of Estonia (CERT), founded in 2006. The organisation operates on security issues in local networks.[[126]](#cite_note-126) The former President of the US, [George W. Bush](/wiki/George_W._Bush), announced his support of Estonia as the location of a NATO [Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence](/wiki/Cooperative_Cyber_Defence_Centre_of_Excellence) (CCDCOE).[[127]](#cite_note-127) In the aftermath of the 2007 cyberattacks, plans to combine network defence with Estonian military doctrine have been nicknamed as the Tiger's Defence, in reference to Tiigrihüpe.[[128]](#cite_note-128) The CCDCOE started its operations in November 2008.[[129]](#cite_note-129)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|alt=map of European Union eurozone|Estonia is part of a monetary union, the](/wiki/File:BlueEurozone.svg) [eurozone](/wiki/Eurozone) (dark blue), and of the [EU single market](/wiki/Internal_Market_(European_Union)). [thumb|left|alt=aerial view of high rises at sunset|The central business district of](/wiki/File:Tln1.jpg) [Tallinn](/wiki/Tallinn)

As a member of the European Union, Estonia is considered a high-income economy by the [World Bank](/wiki/World_Bank_Group). The [GDP (PPP) per capita](/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity) of the country, a good indicator of wealth, was in 2015 $28,781 according to the IMF,[[130]](#cite_note-130) between that of [Slovak Republic](/wiki/Slovak_Republic) and Lithuania, but below that of other long-time EU members such as [Italy](/wiki/Italy) or [Spain](/wiki/Spain). The country is ranked 8th in the 2015 [Index of Economic Freedom](/wiki/Index_of_Economic_Freedom), and the 4th freest economy in Europe.[[131]](#cite_note-131) Because of its rapid growth, Estonia has often been described as a [Baltic Tiger](/wiki/Baltic_Tiger) beside Lithuania and Latvia. Beginning 1 January 2011, Estonia adopted the euro and became the 17th [eurozone](/wiki/Eurozone) member state.[[132]](#cite_note-132) According to [Eurostat](/wiki/Eurostat), Estonia had the lowest ratio of government debt to GDP among EU countries at 6.7% at the end of 2010.[[133]](#cite_note-133) [thumb|right|alt=logo of skype white letters on blue background|The IT sector's share in GDP has sharply increased since 2004.](/wiki/File:Skype_logo.svg) [Skype](/wiki/Skype) was created by Estonian developers and is mainly developed in Estonia.

A balanced budget, almost non-existent [public debt](/wiki/Public_debt), flat-rate income tax, free trade regime, competitive commercial banking sector, innovative [e-Services](/wiki/E-Services) and even mobile-based services are all hallmarks of Estonia's market economy.

Estonia produces about 75% of its consumed electricity.[[134]](#cite_note-134) In 2011 about 85% of it was generated with locally mined [oil shale](/wiki/Oil_shale).[[135]](#cite_note-135) Alternative energy sources such as wood, peat, and biomass make up approximately 9% of primary energy production. Renewable wind energy was about 6% of total consumption in 2009.[[136]](#cite_note-136) Estonia imports petroleum products from western Europe and Russia. Oil shale energy, telecommunications, textiles, chemical products, banking, services, food and fishing, timber, shipbuilding, electronics, and transportation are key sectors of the economy.[[137]](#cite_note-137) The [ice-free port](/wiki/Ice-free_port) of [Muuga](/wiki/Port_of_Muuga), near Tallinn, is a modern facility featuring good transshipment capability, a high-capacity grain elevator, chill/frozen storage, and new oil tanker off-loading capabilities.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The railroad serves as a conduit between the West, Russia, and other points to the East.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Because of the [global economic recession that began in 2007](/wiki/Financial_crisis_of_2007–2010), the GDP of Estonia decreased by 1.4% in the 2nd quarter of 2008, over 3% in the 3rd quarter of 2008, and over 9% in the 4th quarter of 2008. The Estonian government made a supplementary negative budget, which was passed by [Riigikogu](/wiki/Riigikogu). The revenue of the budget was decreased for 2008 by EEK 6.1 billion and the expenditure by EEK 3.2 billion.[[138]](#cite_note-138) In 2010, the economic situation stabilized and started a growth based on strong exports. In the fourth quarter of 2010, Estonian industrial output increased by 23% compared to the year before. The country has been experiencing economic growth ever since.[[139]](#cite_note-139) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Nordica_Canadair_CRJ-900ER.jpg)[Nordica](/wiki/Nordica_(airline)) is the national airline of Estonia. According to Eurostat data, Estonian PPS GDP per capita stood at 67% of the EU average in 2008.[[140]](#cite_note-140) In March 2016, the average monthly gross salary in Estonia was €1105.<ref name=StatisticsEstonia>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

However, there are vast disparities in GDP between different areas of Estonia; currently, over half of the country's GDP is created in Tallinn.[[141]](#cite_note-141) In 2008, the GDP per capita of Tallinn stood at 172% of the Estonian average,[[142]](#cite_note-142) which makes the per capita GDP of Tallinn as high as 115% of the European Union average, exceeding the average levels of other counties.

The unemployment rate in March 2016 was 6.4%, which is below the EU average,<ref name=StatisticsEstonia/> while real GDP growth in 2011 was 8.0%,[[143]](#cite_note-143) five times the euro-zone average. In 2012, Estonia remained the only euro member with a budget surplus, and with a national debt of only 6%, it is one of the least indebted countries in Europe.[[144]](#cite_note-144)[Template:Br](/wiki/Template:Br)

### Historic development[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[thumb|right|Estonia's GDP growth from 2000 till 2012](/wiki/File:Estonia_real_gdp_growth.jpeg) By 1929, a stable currency, the [*kroon*](/wiki/Estonian_kroon), was established. It is issued by the [Bank of Estonia](/wiki/Bank_of_Estonia), the country's [central bank](/wiki/Central_bank).

Since [re-establishing independence](/wiki/History_of_Estonia#Regaining_independence), Estonia has styled itself as the gateway between East and West and aggressively pursued economic reform and integration with the West. Estonia's market reforms put it among the economic leaders in the former [COMECON](/wiki/COMECON) area.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) In 1994, based on the economic theories of [Milton Friedman](/wiki/Milton_Friedman), Estonia became one of the first countries to adopt a [flat tax](/wiki/Flat_tax), with a uniform rate of 26% regardless of personal income. This rate has since been reduced three times, to 24% in January 2005, 23% in January 2006, and finally to 21% by January 2008.[[145]](#cite_note-145) The [Government of Estonia](/wiki/Government_of_Estonia) finalised the design of [Estonian euro coins](/wiki/Estonian_euro_coins) in late 2004, and adopted the euro as the country's currency on 1 January 2011, later than planned due to continued high inflation.[[132]](#cite_note-132)[[146]](#cite_note-146) A [Land Value Tax](/wiki/Land_Value_Tax) is levied which is used to fund local municipalities. It is a state level tax, however 100% of the revenue is used to fund Local Councils. The rate is set by the Local Council within the limits of 0.1–2.5%. It is one of the most important sources of funding for municipalities.[[147]](#cite_note-147) The Land Value Tax is levied on the value of the land only with improvements and buildings not considered. Very few exemptions are considered on the land value tax and even public institutions are subject to the tax.[[147]](#cite_note-147) The tax has contributed to a high rate (~90%)[[147]](#cite_note-147) of owner-occupied residences within Estonia, compared to a rate of 67.4% in the United States.[[148]](#cite_note-148) In 1999, Estonia experienced its worst year economically since it regained independence in 1991, largely because of the impact of the [1998 Russian financial crisis](/wiki/1998_Russian_financial_crisis).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Estonia joined the [WTO](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) in November 1999. With assistance from the European Union, the [World Bank](/wiki/World_Bank) and the [Nordic Investment Bank](/wiki/Nordic_Investment_Bank), Estonia completed most of its preparations for European Union membership by the end of 2002 and now has one of the strongest economies of the new member states of the European Union.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Estonia joined the [OECD](/wiki/OECD) in 2010.

### Resources[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[thumb|right|The](/wiki/File:Estonian_shale.JPG) [oil shale industry](/wiki/Oil_shale_in_Estonia) in Estonia is one of the most developed in the world.[[149]](#cite_note-149) In 2012, oil shale supplied 70% of Estonia's [total primary energy](/wiki/Total_primary_energy_supply) and accounted for 4% of Estonia's [gross domestic product](/wiki/Gross_domestic_product).<ref name=audit> [Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web) </ref>[[150]](#cite_note-150) Although Estonia is in general resource-poor, the land still offers a large variety of smaller resources. The country has large [oil shale](/wiki/Oil_shale) and [limestone](/wiki/Limestone) deposits, along with forests that cover 48% of the land.[[151]](#cite_note-151) In addition to oil shale and limestone, Estonia also has large reserves of [phosphorite](/wiki/Phosphorite), [pitchblende](/wiki/Uraninite), and [granite](/wiki/Granite) that currently are not mined, or not mined extensively.[[152]](#cite_note-152) Significant quantities of [rare earth](/wiki/Rare_earth_element) oxides are found in tailings accumulated from 50 years of [uranium ore](/wiki/Uranium_ore), [shale](/wiki/Shale) and [loparite](/wiki/Loparite) mining at [Sillamäe](/wiki/Sillamäe).[[153]](#cite_note-153) Because of the rising prices of rare earths, extraction of these oxides has become economically viable. The country currently exports around 3000 tonnes per annum, representing around 2% of world production.[[154]](#cite_note-154) In recent years,[Template:When](/wiki/Template:When) public debate has discussed whether Estonia should build a nuclear power plant to secure energy production after closure of old units in the [Narva Power Plants](/wiki/Narva_Power_Plants), if they are not reconstructed by the year 2016.[[155]](#cite_note-155)

### Industry and environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|left|alt=Rõuste wind turbines next to wetland|Rõuste wind farm in](/wiki/File:Hanila_tuulepark_2.JPG) [Hanila Parish](/wiki/Hanila_Parish). Food, construction, and electronic industries are currently among the most important branches of Estonia's industry.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) In 2007, the construction industry employed more than 80,000 people, around 12% of the entire country's workforce.[[156]](#cite_note-156) Another important industrial sector is the machinery and chemical industry, which is mainly located in [Ida-Viru County](/wiki/Ida-Viru_County) and around Tallinn.

The oil shale based [mining industry](/wiki/Mining_industry), which is also concentrated in [East-Estonia](/wiki/Virumaa), produces around 90% of the entire country's electricity.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Although the amount of pollutants emitted to the air have been falling since the 1980s,<ref name=Auer>M. Auer (2004). Estonian Environmental Reforms: A Small Nation's Outsized Accomplishments. In: *Restoring Cursed Earth: Appraising Environmental Policy Reforms in Eastern Europe and Russia.* Rowman & Littlefield. pp 117–144.</ref> the air is still polluted with [sulphur dioxide](/wiki/Sulphur_dioxide) from the mining industry that the Soviet Union rapidly developed in the early 1950s. In some areas the coastal seawater is polluted, mainly around the [Sillamäe](/wiki/Sillamäe) industrial complex.[[157]](#cite_note-157) Estonia is a dependent country in the terms of energy and energy production. In recent years many local and foreign companies have been investing in renewable energy sources.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The importance of wind power has been increasing steadily in Estonia and currently the total amount of energy production from wind is nearly 60 [MW](/wiki/Megawatt) while at the same time roughly 399 MW worth of projects are currently being developed and more than 2800 MW worth of projects are being proposed in the [Lake Peipus](/wiki/Lake_Peipus) area and the coastal areas of [Hiiumaa](/wiki/Hiiumaa).[[158]](#cite_note-158)[[159]](#cite_note-159)[[160]](#cite_note-160) Currently[Template:When](/wiki/Template:When), there are plans to renovate some older units of the Narva Power Plants, establish new power stations, and provide higher efficiency in oil shale based energy production.[[161]](#cite_note-161) Estonia liberalised 35% of its electricity market in April 2010. The electricity market as whole will be liberalised by 2013. [[162]](#cite_note-162) Together with Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia, the country considered participating in constructing the [Visaginas nuclear power plant](/wiki/Visaginas_nuclear_power_plant) in Lithuania to replace the [Ignalina](/wiki/Ignalina_Nuclear_Power_Plant).<ref name=wnn-lt>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news) </ref>[[163]](#cite_note-163) However, due to the slow pace of the project and problems with the sector (like [Fukushima disaster](/wiki/Fukushima_Daiichi_nuclear_disaster) and bad example of [Olkiluoto plant](/wiki/Olkiluoto_Nuclear_Power_Plant)), [Eesti Energia](/wiki/Eesti_Energia) has shifted its main focus to [shale oil](/wiki/Shale_oil) production that is seen as much more profitable business.[[164]](#cite_note-164) Estonia has a strong information technology [sector](/wiki/Quaternary_sector_of_the_economy), partly owing to the [Tiigrihüpe](/wiki/Tiigrihüpe) project undertaken in mid-1990s, and has been mentioned as the most "wired" and advanced country in Europe in the terms of [e-Government of Estonia](http://www.valitsus.ee/).[[165]](#cite_note-165) New direction is to offer those services present in Estonia to the non-residents via [e-residency program](/wiki/E-residency_of_Estonia).

[Skype](/wiki/Skype) was written by Estonia-based developers [Ahti Heinla](/wiki/Ahti_Heinla), Priit Kasesalu, and [Jaan Tallinn](/wiki/Jaan_Tallinn), who had also originally developed [Kazaa](/wiki/Kazaa).[[166]](#cite_note-166) Other notable tech startups include [GrabCAD](/wiki/GrabCAD), [Fortumo](/wiki/Fortumo) and [TransferWise](/wiki/TransferWise). It is even claimed that Estonia has the most startups per person in world.[[167]](#cite_note-167) [[File:Ahja jõe ürgorg.jpg|thumb|center|900px|alt=Ahja River, forest landscape, on the left side of the image on the riverbank there is outcrop of Devonian sandstone.|

A view of the [natural environment](/wiki/Natural_environment) in Estonia

]]

### Trade[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|right|alt=graph of exports in 2010 showing $10,345,000,000 2.8 percent cars, 12 percent lubricating oil, 3.8 percent telephone|Graphical depiction of Estonia's product exports in 28 color-coded categories](/wiki/File:Tree_map_exports_2010_Estonia.svg) {| class="sortable wikitable" style="float:right; text-align:left; font-size:90%; margin-right:0; margin-top:6px; margin-left:7px; margin-bottom:2px;" |- style="font-size:100%; text-align:left" !Estonia (2016[[168]](#cite_note-168))!! Export !!Import |- | [Template:SWE](/wiki/Template:SWE)||style="text-align:right"|20%||style="text-align:right"|9% |- | [Template:FIN](/wiki/Template:FIN)||style="text-align:right"|16%||style="text-align:right"|13% |- | [Template:LVA](/wiki/Template:LVA)||style="text-align:right"|9%||style="text-align:right"|9% |- | [Template:LTU](/wiki/Template:LTU)||style="text-align:right"|6%||style="text-align:right"|8% |- | [Template:DEU](/wiki/Template:DEU)||style="text-align:right"|5%||style="text-align:right"|-% |- | [Template:RUS](/wiki/Template:RUS)||style="text-align:right"|5%||style="text-align:right"|5% |- | [Template:NOR](/wiki/Template:NOR)||style="text-align:right"|4%||style="text-align:right"|-% |- | NOWRAP| [Template:DEN](/wiki/Template:DEN)||style="text-align:right"|4%||style="text-align:right"|-% |- | [Template:USA](/wiki/Template:USA)||style="text-align:right"|3%||style="text-align:right"|-% |- | [Template:UK](/wiki/Template:UK)||style="text-align:right"|3%||style="text-align:right"|4% |- | [Template:POL](/wiki/Template:POL)||style="text-align:right"|-%||style="text-align:right"|8% |- | [Template:NED](/wiki/Template:NED)||style="text-align:right"|-%||style="text-align:right"|6% |- | [Template:CHN](/wiki/Template:CHN)||style="text-align:right"|-%||style="text-align:right"|4% |- | [Template:HUN](/wiki/Template:HUN)||style="text-align:right"|-%||style="text-align:right"|3%

|} Estonia has had a [market economy](/wiki/Market_economy) since the end of the 1990s and one of the highest per capita income levels in Eastern Europe.[[169]](#cite_note-169) Proximity to the Scandinavian markets, its location between the East and West, competitive cost structure and a highly skilled labour force have been the major Estonian comparative advantages in the beginning of the 2000s (decade). As the largest city, Tallinn has emerged as a [financial centre](/wiki/Financial_centre) and the [Tallinn Stock Exchange](/wiki/Tallinn_Stock_Exchange) joined recently with the [OMX](/wiki/OMX) system. The current government has pursued tight [fiscal](/wiki/Finance) policies, resulting in balanced budgets and low [public debt](/wiki/Public_debt).

In 2007, however, a large current account deficit and rising inflation put pressure on [Estonia's currency](/wiki/Estonian_kroon), which was pegged to the Euro, highlighting the need for growth in export-generating industries. Estonia exports mainly machinery and equipment, wood and paper, textiles, food products, furniture, and metals and chemical products.[[170]](#cite_note-170) Estonia also exports 1.562 billion kilowatt hours of electricity annually.[[170]](#cite_note-170) At the same time Estonia imports machinery and equipment, chemical products, textiles, food products and transportation equipment.[[170]](#cite_note-170) Estonia imports 200 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually.[[170]](#cite_note-170) Between 2007 and 2013, Estonia received 53.3 billion [kroons](/wiki/Estonian_kroon) (3.4 billion euros) from various European Union Structural Funds as direct supports, creating the largest foreign investments into Estonia.[[171]](#cite_note-171) Majority of the European Union financial aid will be invested into to the following fields: energy economies, entrepreneurship, administrative capability, education, information society, environment protection, regional and local development, research and development activities, healthcare and welfare, transportation and labour market.[[172]](#cite_note-172)

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box) [thumb|270px|alt=The population of Estonia, from 1970 to 2009, with a peak in 1990|Population of Estonia 1970–2009](/wiki/File:Eesti_rahvaarv_1970-2009.png)

Before World War II, ethnic [Estonians](/wiki/Estonians) constituted 88% of the population, with national minorities constituting the remaining 12%.[[173]](#cite_note-173) The largest minority groups in 1934 were [Russians](/wiki/Russians), [Germans](/wiki/Germans), [Swedes](/wiki/Swedish_people), [Latvians](/wiki/Latvian_people), [Jews](/wiki/Jewish_people), [Poles](/wiki/Poles), [Finns](/wiki/Finns) and [Ingrians](/wiki/Izhorians).

The share of [Baltic Germans](/wiki/Baltic_Germans) in Estonia had fallen from 5.3% (~46,700) in 1881 to 1.3% (16,346) by the year 1934,[[173]](#cite_note-173)[[174]](#cite_note-174) which was mainly due to emigration to Germany in the light of general Russification in the end of the 19th century and the independence of Estonia in the 20th century.

Between 1945 and 1989, the share of ethnic Estonians in the population resident within the currently defined boundaries of Estonia dropped to 61%, caused primarily by the Soviet programme promoting mass immigration of urban industrial workers from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, as well as by wartime emigration and [Joseph Stalin's](/wiki/Joseph_Stalin) mass deportations and executions. [Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) By 1989, minorities constituted more than one-third of the population, as the number of non-Estonians had grown almost fivefold.

At the end of the 1980s, Estonians perceived their demographic change as a [national catastrophe](/wiki/Disaster). This was a result of the [migration](/wiki/Human_migration) policies essential to the [Soviet Nationalisation Programme](/wiki/Estonian_SSR) aiming to [russify](/wiki/Russify) Estonia – administrative and military immigration of non-Estonians from the USSR coupled with the deportation of Estonians to the USSR. In the decade following the reconstitution of independence, large-scale emigration by ethnic Russians and the removal of the Russian military bases in 1994 caused the proportion of ethnic Estonians in Estonia to increase from 61% to 69% in 2006.

Modern Estonia is a fairly ethnically heterogeneous country, but this heterogeneity is not a feature of much of the country as the non-Estonian population is concentrated in two of Estonia's counties. Thirteen of Estonia's 15 counties are over 80% ethnic Estonian, the most homogeneous being [Hiiumaa](/wiki/Hiiumaa), where Estonians account for 98.4% of the population. In the counties of [Harju](/wiki/Harju_County) (including the capital city, [Tallinn](/wiki/Tallinn)) and [Ida-Viru](/wiki/Ida-Viru_County), however, ethnic Estonians make up 60% and 20% of the population, respectively. [Russians](/wiki/History_of_Russians_in_Estonia) make up 25.6% of the total population but account for 36% of the population in Harju county and 70% of the population in Ida-Viru county.

The Estonian Cultural Autonomy law that was passed in 1925 was unique in Europe at that time.[[175]](#cite_note-175) Cultural autonomies could be granted to [minorities](/wiki/Minorities) numbering more than 3,000 people with longstanding ties to the Republic of Estonia. Before the [Soviet occupation](/wiki/Estonian_SSR), the Germans and Jewish minorities managed to elect a cultural council. The Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities was reinstated in 1993. Historically, large parts of Estonia's northwestern coast and islands have been populated by indigenous ethnically [Rannarootslased](/wiki/Estonian_Swedes) (Coastal Swedes).

In recent years the numbers of Coastal Swedes has risen again, numbering in 2008 almost 500 people, owing to the property reforms in the beginning of the 1990s. In 2005, the [Ingrian Finnish](/wiki/Ingrian_Finnish) minority in Estonia elected a cultural council and was granted cultural autonomy. The [Estonian Swedish](/wiki/Estonian_Swedes) minority similarly received cultural autonomy in 2007.

### Society[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|left|alt=Jewish Synagogue in Tallinn with a red cylindrical rook and glass wall|The](/wiki/File:New_Tallinn_Synagogue.JPG) [Jewish Synagogue](/wiki/Jewish_Synagogue) in Tallinn [thumb|right|alt=color map showing same-sex partnerships legalization in Europe|Estonia legalized same-sex partnerships in January 2016](/wiki/File:Same-sex_marriage_map_Europe_detailed.svg)

Estonian society has undergone considerable changes over the last twenty years, one of the most notable being the increasing level of stratification, and the distribution of family income. The [Gini coefficient](/wiki/Gini_coefficient) has been steadily higher than the European Union average (31 in 2009),[[176]](#cite_note-176) although it has clearly dropped. The registered unemployment rate in January 2012 was 7.7%.[[177]](#cite_note-177) Modern Estonia is a multinational country in which 109 languages are spoken, according to a 2000 census. 67.3% of Estonian citizens speak [Estonian](/wiki/Estonian_language) as their native language, 29.7% Russian, and 3% speak other languages.[[178]](#cite_note-178) As of 2 July 2010, 84.1% of Estonian residents are Estonian citizens, 8.6% are citizens of other countries and 7.3% are "citizens with undetermined citizenship".[[179]](#cite_note-179) Since 1992 roughly 140,000 people have acquired Estonian citizenship by passing [naturalisation](/wiki/Naturalisation) exams.[[180]](#cite_note-180) The ethnic distribution in Estonia is very homogeneous, where in most counties over 90% of the people are ethnic [Estonians](/wiki/Estonians). This is in contrast to large urban centres like [Tallinn](/wiki/Tallinn), where Estonians account for 60% of the population, and the remainder is composed mostly of Russian and other Slavic inhabitants, who arrived in Estonia during the Soviet period.

The 2008 [United Nations Human Rights Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Human_Rights_Council) report called "extremely credible" the description of the [citizenship policy of Estonia](/wiki/Estonian_nationality_law) as "discriminatory".[[181]](#cite_note-181) According to surveys, only 5% of the Russian community have considered returning to Russia in the near future. Estonian Russians have developed their own identity – more than half of the respondents recognised that Estonian Russians differ noticeably from the Russians in Russia. When comparing the result with a survey from 2000, then Russians' attitude toward the future is much more positive.[[182]](#cite_note-182) Estonia has been the first post-soviet republic that has recognized and given some civil rights to families formed by same-sex couples. The law was approved in October 2014 and came into effect 1 January 2016.

### Urbanization[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Tallinn is the capital and the largest city of Estonia. It lies on the northern coast of Estonia, along the [Gulf of Finland](/wiki/Gulf_of_Finland). There are 33 cities and several town-parish towns in the country. In total, there are 47 *linn*a, with "linn" in English meaning both "cities" and "towns". More than 70% of the population lives in towns. The 20 largest cities are listed below: [Template:Estonian cities](/wiki/Template:Estonian_cities) [Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Religion** | **2000 Census**[**[183]**](#cite_note-183) | | [**2011 Census**](/wiki/2011_Estonia_Census)**<ref name=stat2011>**[**Template:Cite web**](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)**</ref>** | |
| **Number** | **%** | **Number** | **%** |
| [Orthodox Christians](/wiki/Orthodox_Christians) | align=right| 143,554 | align=right| 12.80 | align=right| 176,773 | align=right| 16.15 |
| [Lutheran Christians](/wiki/Lutheran_Christian) | align=right| 152,237 | align=right| 13.57 | align=right| 108,513 | align=right| 9.91 |
| [Baptists](/wiki/Baptists) | align=right| 6,009 | align=right| 0.54 | align=right| 4,507 | align=right| 0.41 |
| [Roman Catholics](/wiki/Roman_Catholic) | align=right| 5,745 | align=right| 0.51 | align=right| 4,501 | align=right| 0.41 |
| [Jehovah's Witnesses](/wiki/Jehovah's_Witnesses) | align=right| 3,823 | align=right| 0.34 | align=right| 3,938 | align=right| 0.36 |
| [Old Believers](/wiki/Old_Believers) | align=right| 2,515 | align=right| 0.22 | align=right| 2,605 | align=right| 0.24 |
| [Christian Free Congregations](/wiki/Congregational_church) | align=right| 223 | align=right| 0.02 | align=right| 2,189 | align=right| 0.20 |
| [Earth Believers](/wiki/Estonian_neopaganism) | 1,058 | 0.09 | align=right| 1,925 | align=right| 0.18 |
| [Taara Believers](/wiki/Estonian_neopaganism) | align=right|1,047 | align=right| 0.10 |
| [Pentecostals](/wiki/Pentecostals) | align=right| 2,648 | align=right| 0.24 | align=right| 1,855 | align=right| 0.17 |
| [Muslims](/wiki/Muslims) | align=right| 1,387 | align=right| 0.12 | align=right| 1,508 | align=right| 0.14 |
| [Adventists](/wiki/Adventists) | align=right| 1,561 | align=right| 0.14 | align=right| 1,194 | align=right| 0.11 |
| [Buddhists](/wiki/Buddhists) | align=right| 622 | align=right| 0.06 | align=right| 1,145 | align=right| 0.10 |
| [Methodists](/wiki/Methodists) | align=right| 1,455 | align=right| 0.13 | align=right| 1,098 | align=right| 0.10 |
| Other religion | align=right| 4,995 | align=right| 0.45 | align=right| 8,074 | align=right| 0.74 |
| [No religion](/wiki/Irreligion) | align=right| 450,458 | align=right| 40.16 | align=right| 592,588 | align=right| 54.14 |
| Undeclared | align=right| 343,292 | align=right| 30.61 | align=right| 181,104 | align=right| 16.55 |
| **Total1** | align=right| 1,121,582 | align=right| 100.00 | align=right| 1,094,564 | align=right| 100.00 |

1Population, persons aged 15 and older.

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Ruhnu_puukirik.jpg)[Ruhnu](/wiki/Ruhnu) stave church, built in 1644, is the oldest surviving wooden building in Estonia

Estonia was Christianised by the [Teutonic Knights](/wiki/Teutonic_Knights) in the 13th century. During the [Reformation](/wiki/Protestant_Reformation), Protestantism spread, and the Lutheran church was officially established in Estonia in 1686. Many Estonians profess not to be particularly religious, because religion through the 19th century was associated with German feudal rule.[[184]](#cite_note-184)[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Historically, there has been another minority religion, [Russian Old-believers](/wiki/Old_Believers), near [Lake Peipus](/wiki/Lake_Peipus) area in [Tartu County](/wiki/Tartu_County).

Today, Estonia's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, separation of church and state, and individual rights to privacy of belief and religion.[[185]](#cite_note-185) According to the Dentsu Communication Institute Inc, Estonia is one of the [least religious](/wiki/Irreligion_by_country) countries in the world, with 75.7% of the population claiming to be [irreligious](/wiki/Irreligion). The [Eurobarometer](/wiki/Eurobarometer) Poll 2005 found that only 16% of Estonians profess a belief in a god, the lowest belief of all countries studied.[[186]](#cite_note-186) According to the Lutheran World Federation, the historic Lutheran denomination remains a large presence with 180,000 registered members.[[187]](#cite_note-187) According to new polls about religiosity in the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) in 2012 by [Eurobarometer](/wiki/Eurobarometer) found that [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) is the largest religion in Estonia accounting 28.06% of [Estonians](/wiki/Estonians).<ref name=EUROBAROMETER>[Template:Citation](/wiki/Template:Citation) The question asked was "Do you consider yourself to be...?" With a card showing: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Other Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Atheist, and Non-believer/Agnostic. Space was given for Other (SPONTANEOUS) and DK. Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu did not reach the 1% threshold.</ref> [Eastern Orthodox](/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox) are the largest [Christian](/wiki/Christian) group in Estonia, accounting for 17% of Estonia citizens,[[188]](#cite_note-188) while [Protestants](/wiki/Protestant) make up 6%, and Other Christian make up 22%. [Non believer/Agnostic](/wiki/Agnostic) account 22%, [Atheist](/wiki/Atheist) accounts for 15%, and undeclared accounts for 15%.[[188]](#cite_note-188) [thumb|right|alt=St. Olaf's church, Tallinn spire look over city and river|](/wiki/File:korghoone.PNG)[St. Olaf's church](/wiki/St._Olaf's_church,_Tallinn) was possibly the tallest building in the world from 1549 to 1625[[189]](#cite_note-189) The one largest religious denomination in the country is [Evangelical Lutheranism](/wiki/Lutheranism), adhered to by 160,000 Estonians (or 13% of the population), principally ethnic Estonians. Other organizations, such as the World Council of Churches, report that there are as many as 265,700 Estonian Lutherans.[[190]](#cite_note-190) Additionally, there are between 8,000–9,000 members abroad.

Another major group, inhabitants who follow [Eastern Orthodox](/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox) Christianity, practised chiefly by the Russian minority, and the Russian Orthodox Church is the second largest denomination with 150,000 members. The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, under the Greek-Orthodox [Ecumenical Patriarchate](/wiki/Ecumenical_Patriarchate), claims another 20,000 members. Thus, the number of adherents of Lutheranism and Orthodoxy, without regard to citizenship or ethnicity, is roughly equal. Refer to the Table below. The Catholics have their Latin [Apostolic Administration of Estonia](/wiki/Apostolic_Administration_of_Estonia).

According to the census of 2000 (data in table to the right), there were about 1,000 adherents of the [Taara faith](/wiki/Taaraism)[[191]](#cite_note-191)[[192]](#cite_note-192)[[193]](#cite_note-193) or [Maausk](/wiki/Maausk) in Estonia (see [Maavalla Koda](/wiki/Maavalla_Koda)). The Jewish community has an estimated population of about 1,900 (see [History of the Jews in Estonia](/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Estonia)). Around 68,000 people consider themselves [atheists](/wiki/Atheists).[[194]](#cite_note-194)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|100px|alt=The four distinct characters in the Estonian alphabet. Ö, Ä, Ü, and Õ|The four distinct characters in the Estonian alphabet](/wiki/File:Estonian-Alphabet-Characters.jpg) The official language, [Estonian](/wiki/Estonian_language), belongs to the [Finnic](/wiki/Finnic_languages) branch of the [Uralic languages](/wiki/Uralic_languages). Estonian is closely related to Finnish, spoken on the other side of the [Gulf of Finland](/wiki/Gulf_of_Finland), and is one of the few languages of Europe that is not of an [Indo-European](/wiki/Indo-European_languages) origin. Despite some overlaps in the vocabulary due to borrowings, in terms of its origin, Estonian and Finnish are not related to their nearest geographical neighbours, Swedish, [Latvian](/wiki/Latvian_language), and Russian, which are all Indo-European languages.

Although the Estonian and [Germanic languages](/wiki/Germanic_language) are of very different origins, one can identify many similar words in Estonian and German, for example. This is primarily because the Estonian language has borrowed nearly one third of its vocabulary from [Germanic languages](/wiki/Germanic_languages), mainly from Low Saxon ([Middle Low German](/wiki/Middle_Low_German)) during the period of [German rule](/wiki/History_of_Estonia#Estonian_Crusade:_The_Middle_Ages), and [High German](/wiki/High_German) (including [standard German](/wiki/Standard_German)). The percentage of Low Saxon and High German loanwords can be estimated at 22–25 percent, with Low Saxon making up about 15 percent.

Russian is still spoken as a secondary language by forty- to seventy-year-old ethnic Estonians, because Russian was the unofficial language of the [Estonian SSR](/wiki/Estonian_SSR) from 1944 to 1991 and taught as a compulsory second language during the Soviet era. In 1998, most first- and second-generation industrial immigrants from the former Soviet Union (mainly the [Russian SFSR](/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic)) did not speak Estonian.[[195]](#cite_note-195) However, by 2010, 64.1% of non-ethnic Estonians spoke Estonian.[[196]](#cite_note-196) The latter, mostly Russian-speaking ethnic minorities, reside predominantly in the capital city of Tallinn and the industrial urban areas in [Ida-Virumaa](/wiki/Ida-Viru_County).

From the 13th to 20th century, there were Swedish-speaking communities in Estonia, particularly in the coastal areas and on the islands (e.g., Hiiumaa, Vormsi, Ruhnu; in Swedish, known as Dagö, Ormsö, Runö, respectively) along the Baltic sea, communities which today have all but disappeared. The Swedish-speaking minority was represented in parliament, and entitled to use their native language in parliamentary debates.

From 1918–1940, when Estonia was independent, the small Swedish community was well treated. Municipalities with a Swedish majority, mainly found along the coast, used Swedish as the administrative language and Swedish-Estonian culture saw an upswing. However, most Swedish-speaking people fled to Sweden before the end of World War II, that is, before the invasion of Estonia by the Soviet army in 1944. Only a handful of older speakers remain. Apart from many other areas the influence of Swedish is especially distinct in the [Noarootsi Parish](/wiki/Noarootsi_Parish) in [Läänemaa](/wiki/Lääne_County) (known as *Nuckö kommun* in [Swedish](/wiki/Swedish_language) and *Noarootsi vald* in Estonian) where there are many villages with bilingual Estonian and/or Swedish names and street signs.[[197]](#cite_note-197)[[198]](#cite_note-198) The most common foreign languages learned by Estonian students are English, Russian, German and French. Other popular languages include Finnish, Spanish and Swedish.[[199]](#cite_note-199)

### Education and science[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[thumb|alt=gray stucco building three story building with gray slate hip roof, central portico and pediment|The](/wiki/File:Tartu_Ülikooli_peahoone_2012.jpg) [University of Tartu](/wiki/University_of_Tartu) is one of the oldest universities in Northern Europe and the highest-ranked university in Estonia. [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

The history of formal education in Estonia dates back to the 13th and 14th centuries when the first [monastic](/wiki/Monastic) and [cathedral schools](/wiki/Cathedral_schools) were founded.[[200]](#cite_note-200) The first primer in the Estonian language was published in 1575. The oldest university is the [University of Tartu](/wiki/University_of_Tartu), established by the Swedish king [Gustav II Adolf](/wiki/Gustavus_Adolphus_of_Sweden) in 1632. In 1919, university courses were first taught in the Estonian language.

Today's education in Estonia is divided into general, vocational, and hobby. The education system is based on four levels: pre-school, basic, secondary, and higher education.[[201]](#cite_note-201) A wide network of schools and supporting educational institutions have been established. The Estonian education system consists of state, municipal, public, and private institutions. There are currently 589 schools in Estonia.[[202]](#cite_note-202) According to the [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment), the performance levels of gymnasium-age pupils in Estonia is among the highest in the world: in 2010, the country was ranked 13th for the quality of its education system, well above the OECD average.[[203]](#cite_note-203) Additionally, around 89% of Estonian adults aged 25–64 have earned the equivalent of a high-school degree, one of the highest rates in the industrialised world.[[204]](#cite_note-204) [thumb|left|alt=Building of Estonian Students' Society in Tartu. In August 2008 a Georgian flag was hoisted besides Estonian to support Georgia in the South Ossetia war.|Building of the](/wiki/File:Building_of_Estonian_Students'_Society.jpg) [Estonian Students' Society](/wiki/Estonian_Students'_Society) in [Tartu](/wiki/Tartu). It is considered to be the first example of Estonian national architecture.[[205]](#cite_note-205) [Treaty of Tartu](/wiki/Treaty_of_Tartu_(Russian–Finnish)) between Finland and Soviet Russia was signed in that building in 1920. [thumb|alt=ESTCube-1 micro satellite orbiting globe and beaming light to Estonia|](/wiki/File:ESTCube_orbiidil_2.jpg)[ESTCube-1](/wiki/ESTCube-1) is the first Estonian satellite. Academic higher education in Estonia is divided into three levels: bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies. In some specialties (basic medical studies, veterinary, pharmacy, dentistry, architect-engineer, and a classroom teacher programme) the bachelor's and master's levels are integrated into one unit.[[206]](#cite_note-206) Estonian public universities have significantly more autonomy than applied higher education institutions. In addition to organising the academic life of the university, universities can create new curricula, establish admission terms and conditions, approve the budget, approve the development plan, elect the rector, and make restricted decisions in matters concerning assets.[[207]](#cite_note-207) Estonia has a moderate number of public and private universities. The largest public universities are the [University of Tartu](/wiki/University_of_Tartu), [Tallinn University of Technology](/wiki/Tallinn_University_of_Technology), [Tallinn University](/wiki/Tallinn_University), [Estonian University of Life Sciences](/wiki/Estonian_University_of_Life_Sciences), [Estonian Academy of Arts](/wiki/Estonian_Academy_of_Arts); the largest private university is [Estonian Business School](/wiki/Estonian_Business_School).

The [Estonian Academy of Sciences](/wiki/Estonian_Academy_of_Sciences) is the [national academy](/wiki/National_academy) of science. The strongest public non-profit research institute that carries out fundamental and applied research is the [National Institute of Chemical Physics and Biophysics](/wiki/National_Institute_of_Chemical_Physics_and_Biophysics) (NICPB; Estonian *KBFI*). The first computer centres were established in the late 1950s in Tartu and Tallinn. Estonian specialists contributed in the development of software engineering standards for ministries of the Soviet Union during the 1980s.<ref name=Kalja>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref><ref name=Jaakkola> [Template:Cite journal](/wiki/Template:Cite_journal)</ref> [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), Estonia spends around 2.38% of its GDP on [Research and Development](/wiki/Research_and_Development), compared to an EU average of around 2.0%.[[208]](#cite_note-208) Some of the best known scientists related to Estonia include astronomers [Friedrich Georg Wilhelm von Struve](/wiki/Friedrich_Georg_Wilhelm_von_Struve), [Ernst Öpik](/wiki/Ernst_Öpik) and [Jaan Einasto](/wiki/Jaan_Einasto), biologist [Karl Ernst von Baer](/wiki/Karl_Ernst_von_Baer), [Jakob von Uexküll](/wiki/Jakob_von_Uexküll), chemists [Wilhelm Ostwald](/wiki/Wilhelm_Ostwald) and [Carl Schmidt](/wiki/Carl_Schmidt_(chemist)), economist [Ragnar Nurkse](/wiki/Ragnar_Nurkse), matematician [Edgar Krahn](/wiki/Edgar_Krahn), medical researchers [Ludvig Puusepp](/wiki/Ludvig_Puusepp) and [Nikolay Pirogov](/wiki/Nikolay_Pirogov), physicist [Thomas Johann Seebeck](/wiki/Thomas_Johann_Seebeck), political scientist [Rein Taagepera](/wiki/Rein_Taagepera), psychologist [Endel Tulving](/wiki/Endel_Tulving) and [Risto Näätänen](/wiki/Risto_Näätänen), semiotician [Yuri Lotman](/wiki/Yuri_Lotman).

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image) The [culture of Estonia](/wiki/Culture_of_Estonia) incorporates indigenous heritage, as represented by the Estonian language and the [sauna](/wiki/Sauna), with mainstream [Nordic](/wiki/Nordic_countries) and European cultural aspects. Because of its history and geography, Estonia's culture has been influenced by the traditions of the adjacent area's various Finnic, Baltic, Slavic and Germanic peoples as well as the cultural developments in the former dominant powers Sweden and Russia.

Today, Estonian society encourages liberty and liberalism, with popular commitment to the ideals of the limited government, discouraging centralised power and corruption. The [Protestant work ethic](/wiki/Protestant_work_ethic) remains a significant cultural staple, and free education is a highly prized institution. Like the mainstream culture in the other Nordic countries, Estonian culture can be seen to build upon the ascetic environmental realities and traditional livelihoods, a heritage of comparatively widespread [egalitarianism](/wiki/Egalitarianism) out of practical reasons (see: [Everyman's right](/wiki/Everyman's_right) and [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage)), and the ideals of closeness to nature and [self-sufficiency](/wiki/Self-sufficiency) (see: [summer cottage](/wiki/Summer_cottage)).

The [Estonian Academy of Arts](/wiki/Estonian_Academy_of_Arts) (Estonian: *Eesti Kunstiakadeemia*, EKA) is providing higher education in art, design, architecture, media, art history and conservation while Viljandi Culture Academy of [University of Tartu](/wiki/University_of_Tartu) has an approach to popularise native culture through such curricula as native construction, native blacksmithing, native textile design, traditional handicraft and traditional music, but also jazz and church music. In 2010, there were 245 museums in Estonia whose combined collections contain more than 10 million objects.[[209]](#cite_note-209)

### Customs and etiquette[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|left|The 26th](/wiki/File:Tallinna_laululava_ansambel,_1960.a.*.JPG) [Estonian Song Festival](/wiki/Estonian_Song_Festival) (2014) at the [Tallinn Song Festival Grounds](/wiki/Tallinn_Song_Festival_Grounds).

The earliest mention of Estonian singing dates back to [Saxo Grammaticus](/wiki/Saxo_Grammaticus) *Gesta Danorum* (ca. 1179).[[210]](#cite_note-210) Saxo speaks of Estonian warriors who sang at night while waiting for a battle. The older folksongs are also referred to as *regilaulud*, songs in the poetic metre *regivärss* the tradition shared by all [Baltic Finns](/wiki/Baltic_Finns). Runic singing was widespread among Estonians until the 18th century, when rhythmic folk songs began to replace them.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Traditional wind instruments derived from those used by [shepherds](/wiki/Shepherd) were once widespread, but are now becoming again more commonly played. Other instruments, including the [fiddle](/wiki/Fiddle), [zither](/wiki/Zither), [concertina](/wiki/Concertina), and [accordion](/wiki/Accordion) are used to play [polka](/wiki/Polka) or other dance music. The [kannel](/wiki/Kannel_(instrument)) is a native instrument that is now again becoming more popular in Estonia. A Native Music Preserving Centre was opened in 2008 in [Viljandi](/wiki/Viljandi).[[211]](#cite_note-211)[thumb|right|alt=Arvo Pärt bearded balding man facing left|](/wiki/File:Arvo_Pärt.jpg)[Arvo Pärt](/wiki/Arvo_Pärt) was the world's most performed living composer from 2010 to 2014.

The tradition of [Estonian Song Festivals](/wiki/Estonian_Song_Festival) (*Laulupidu*) started at the height of the [Estonian national awakening](/wiki/Estonian_national_awakening) in 1869. Today, it is one of the largest amateur [choral](/wiki/Choral) events in the world. In 2004, about 100,000 people participated in the Song Festival. Since 1928, [the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds](/wiki/The_Tallinn_Song_Festival_Grounds) (*Lauluväljak*) have hosted the event every five years in July. The last festival took place in July 2014. In addition, Youth Song Festivals are also held every four or five years, the last of them in 2011, and the next is scheduled for 2017.[[212]](#cite_note-212) Professional Estonian musicians and composers such as [Rudolf Tobias](/wiki/Rudolf_Tobias), [Miina Härma](/wiki/Miina_Härma), [Mart Saar](/wiki/Mart_Saar), [Artur Kapp](/wiki/Artur_Kapp), [Juhan Aavik](/wiki/Juhan_Aavik) and [Heino Eller](/wiki/Heino_Eller) emerged in the late 19th century. At the time of this writing, the most known Estonian composers are [Arvo Pärt](/wiki/Arvo_Pärt), [Eduard Tubin](/wiki/Eduard_Tubin), and [Veljo Tormis](/wiki/Veljo_Tormis).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) In 2014, Arvo Pärt was the world's most performed living composer for the fourth year in a row.[[213]](#cite_note-213) In the 1950s, Estonian [baritone](/wiki/Baritone) [Georg Ots](/wiki/Georg_Ots) rose to worldwide prominence as an opera singer.

In popular music, Estonian artist [Kerli Kõiv](/wiki/Kerli_Kõiv) has become popular in Europe, as well as gaining moderate popularity in North America. She has provided music for the 2010 [Disney](/wiki/The_Walt_Disney_Company) film [*Alice in Wonderland*](/wiki/Alice_in_Wonderland_(2010_film)) and the television series [*Smallville*](/wiki/Smallville) in the United States of America.

Estonia won the [Eurovision Song Contest](/wiki/Eurovision_Song_Contest) in 2001 with the song "[Everybody](/wiki/Everybody_(Eurovision_song))" performed by [Tanel Padar](/wiki/Tanel_Padar) and [Dave Benton](/wiki/Dave_Benton). In 2002, Estonia hosted the event. [Maarja-Liis Ilus](/wiki/Maarja-Liis_Ilus) has competed for Estonia on two occasions (1996 and 1997), while [Eda-Ines Etti](/wiki/Eda-Ines_Etti), [Koit Toome](/wiki/Koit_Toome) and [Evelin Samuel](/wiki/Evelin_Samuel) owe their popularity partly to the Eurovision Song Contest. [Lenna Kuurmaa](/wiki/Lenna_Kuurmaa) is a very popular singer in Europe[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed), with her band [Vanilla Ninja](/wiki/Vanilla_Ninja). "[Rändajad](/wiki/Rändajad)" by [Urban Symphony](/wiki/Urban_Symphony), was the first ever song in Estonian to chart in the UK, Belgium, and Switzerland.

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [right|thumb|alt=pastel drawing of Kalevipoeg carrying boards by Oskar Kallis |](/wiki/File:OKallis-Kalevipoeg.jpg)[Kalevipoeg](/wiki/Kalevipoeg) is the national epic of Estonia, composed by [Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald](/wiki/Friedrich_Reinhold_Kreutzwald).

The [Estonian literature](/wiki/Estonian_literature) refers to literature written in the [Estonian language](/wiki/Estonian_language) (ca. 1 million speakers).[[214]](#cite_note-214) The domination of Estonia after the [Northern Crusades](/wiki/Northern_Crusades), from the 13th century to 1918 by Germany, Sweden, and Russia resulted in few early written literary works in the Estonian language. The oldest records of written Estonian date from the 13th century. *Originates Livoniae* in [Chronicle of Henry of Livonia](/wiki/Chronicle_of_Henry_of_Livonia) contains Estonian place names, words and fragments of sentences. The [*Liber Census Daniae*](/wiki/Liber_Census_Daniae) (1241) contains Estonian place and family names.[[215]](#cite_note-215) The cultural stratum of Estonian was originally characterised by a largely lyrical form of folk poetry based on syllabic quantity. Apart from a few albeit remarkable exceptions, this archaic form has not been much employed in later times. One of the most outstanding achievements in this field is the national epic [Kalevipoeg](/wiki/Kalevipoeg). At a professional level, traditional folk song reached its new heyday during the last quarter of the 20th century, primarily thanks to the work of composer [Veljo Tormis](/wiki/Veljo_Tormis).

[Oskar Luts](/wiki/Oskar_Luts) was the most prominent prose writer of the early Estonian literature, who is still widely read today, especially his lyrical school novel *Kevade* (Spring).[[216]](#cite_note-216) [Anton Hansen Tammsaare's](/wiki/Anton_Hansen_Tammsaare) social epic and psychological realist [pentalogy](/wiki/Pentalogy) [*Truth and Justice*](/wiki/Truth_and_Justice) captured the evolution of Estonian society from a peasant community to an independent nation.[[217]](#cite_note-217)[[218]](#cite_note-218) In modern times, [Jaan Kross](/wiki/Jaan_Kross) and [Jaan Kaplinski](/wiki/Jaan_Kaplinski) are Estonia's best known and most translated writers.[[219]](#cite_note-219) Among the most popular writers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries are [Tõnu Õnnepalu](/wiki/Tõnu_Õnnepalu) and [Andrus Kivirähk](/wiki/Andrus_Kivirähk), who uses elements of Estonian folklore and mythology, deforming them into absurd and [grotesque](/wiki/Grotesque).[[220]](#cite_note-220)

### Media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

The [cinema of Estonia](/wiki/Cinema_of_Estonia) started in 1908 with the production of a newsreel about Swedish King [Gustav V's](/wiki/Gustav_V_of_Sweden) visit to Tallinn.[[221]](#cite_note-221) The first public TV broadcast in Estonia was in July 1955. Regular, live radio broadcasts began in December 1926. Deregulation in the field of electronic media has brought radical changes compared to the beginning of the 1990s. The first licenses for private TV broadcasters were issued in 1992. The first private radio station went on the air in 1990.

Today the media is a vibrant and competitive sector. There is a plethora of weekly newspapers and magazines, and Estonians have a choice of 9 domestic TV channels and a host of radio stations. The Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, and Estonia has been internationally recognised for its high rate of press freedom, having been ranked 3rd in the 2012 [Press Freedom Index](/wiki/Press_Freedom_Index) by [Reporters Without Borders](/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders).[[222]](#cite_note-222) Estonia has two news agencies. The [Baltic News Service](/wiki/Baltic_News_Service) (BNS), founded in 1990, is a private regional news agency covering Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The ETV24 is an agency owned by [Eesti Rahvusringhääling](/wiki/Eesti_Rahvusringhääling) who is a publicly funded radio and television organisation created on 30 June 2007 to take over the functions of the formerly separate [Eesti Raadio](/wiki/Eesti_Raadio) and [Eesti Televisioon](/wiki/Eesti_Televisioon) under the terms of the Estonian National Broadcasting Act.[[223]](#cite_note-223)[[224]](#cite_note-224)

### Architecture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|A traditional farmhouse built in the](/wiki/File:Musée_de_plein_air_(Tallinn)_(7644656256).jpg) [Estonian vernacular style](/wiki/Estonian_vernacular_architecture). The architectural history of Estonia mainly reflects its contemporary development in northern Europe. Worth mentioning is especially the architectural ensemble that makes out the medieval old town of Tallinn, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In addition, the country has several unique, more or less preserved [hill forts](/wiki/Hill_fort) dating from pre-Christian times, a large number of still intact medieval castles and churches, while the countryside is still shaped by the presence of a vast number of manor houses from earlier centuries.

### Holidays[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The Estonian [National Day](/wiki/National_Day) is the [Independence Day](/wiki/Independence_Day) celebrated on 24 February, the day the [Estonian Declaration of Independence](/wiki/Estonian_Declaration_of_Independence) was issued. [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), there are 12 public holidays (which come with a day off) and 12 national holidays celebrated annually.[[225]](#cite_note-225)[[226]](#cite_note-226)[Template:Holidays of Estonia](/wiki/Template:Holidays_of_Estonia)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|right|alt=Lingonberry jam. left and traditional blood sausage from Tampere, Finland|Similar to](/wiki/File:Mustamakkara1.jpg) [Finland](/wiki/Finland), blood sausage with lingonberry sauce is considered a national delicacy

Historically, the cuisine of Estonia has been heavily dependent on seasons and simple peasant food, which today is influenced by many countries. Today, it includes many typical international foods.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The most typical foods in Estonia are black bread, pork, potatoes, and dairy products.[[227]](#cite_note-227) Traditionally in summer and spring, Estonians like to eat everything fresh – berries, herbs, vegetables, and everything else that comes straight from the garden. Hunting and fishing have also been very common, although currently hunting and fishing are enjoyed mostly as hobbies. Today, it is also very popular to grill outside in summer.

Traditionally in winter, jams, preserves, and pickles are brought to the table. Gathering and conserving fruits, mushrooms, and vegetables for winter has always been popular, but today gathering and conserving is becoming less common because everything can be bought from stores. However, preparing food for winter is still very popular in the countryside.

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=43)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|alt=Estonian delegation in 2010 Winter Olympics, opening ceremony white jackets and blue trousers |Estonian delegation in](/wiki/File:2010_Opening_Ceremony_-_Estonia_entering.jpg) [Vancouver](/wiki/2010_Winter_Olympics), 2010. Sport plays an important role in Estonian culture. After declaring independence from Russia in 1918, Estonia first competed as a nation at the [1920 Summer Olympics](/wiki/1920_Summer_Olympics), although the National Olympic Committee was established in 1923. Estonian athletes took part of the Olympic Games until the country was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. The [1980 Summer Olympics](/wiki/1980_Summer_Olympics) [Sailing regatta](/wiki/Sailing) was held in the capital city [Tallinn](/wiki/Tallinn). After regaining independence in 1991, Estonia has participated in all Olympics. Estonia has won most of its medals in athletics, [weightlifting](/wiki/Olympic_weightlifting), [wrestling](/wiki/Wrestling) and [cross-country skiing](/wiki/Cross-country_skiing). Estonia has had very good success at the Olympic games given the country's small population. Estonia's best results were being ranked 13th in the medal table at the [1936 Summer Olympics](/wiki/1936_Summer_Olympics_medal_table), and 12th at the [2006 Winter Olympics](/wiki/2006_Winter_Olympics_medal_table).

[thumb|right|alt=Torsten Siem Ice yachting at the DN European Championship 2011, in Nasva, Estonia|](/wiki/File:Dn_nasva_0854.jpg)[Ice yachting](/wiki/Ice_yachting) DN European Championship 2011, Nasva, Estonia. Torsten Siems. The list of notable Estonian athletes include wrestlers [Kristjan Palusalu](/wiki/Kristjan_Palusalu), [Voldemar Väli](/wiki/Voldemar_Väli), and [Georg Lurich](/wiki/Georg_Lurich), skiers [Andrus Veerpalu](/wiki/Andrus_Veerpalu) and [Kristina Šmigun-Vähi](/wiki/Kristina_Šmigun-Vähi), decathlete [Erki Nool](/wiki/Erki_Nool), tennis player [Kaia Kanepi](/wiki/Kaia_Kanepi), cyclists [Jaan Kirsipuu](/wiki/Jaan_Kirsipuu) and [Erika Salumäe](/wiki/Erika_Salumäe) and discus throwers [Gerd Kanter](/wiki/Gerd_Kanter) and [Aleksander Tammert](/wiki/Aleksander_Tammert).

[Kiiking](/wiki/Kiiking), a relatively new sport, was invented in 1996 by Ado Kosk in Estonia. Kiiking involves a modified swing in which the rider of the swing tries to go around 360 degrees.

[Paul Keres](/wiki/Paul_Keres), Estonian and Soviet chess grandmaster, was among the world's top players from the mid-1930s to the mid-1960s. He narrowly missed a chance at a World Chess Championship match on five occasions.

Basketball is also a notable sport in Estonia. [Estonia national basketball team](/wiki/Estonia_national_basketball_team) previously participated in [1936 Summer Olympics](/wiki/Basketball_at_the_1936_Summer_Olympics), appeared in [EuroBasket](/wiki/EuroBasket) four times. Estonia national team also qualified for [EuroBasket 2015](/wiki/EuroBasket_2015), which was held in [Ukraine](/wiki/Ukraine). [BC Kalev/Cramo](/wiki/BC_Kalev/Cramo), which participates in [EuroCup](/wiki/Eurocup_Basketball), is the most recent [Korvpalli Meistriliiga](/wiki/Korvpalli_Meistriliiga) winner after becoming champion of the league for the 6th time. [Tartu Ülikool/Rock](/wiki/Tartu_Ülikool/Rock), which participates in [EuroChallenge](/wiki/EuroChallenge), is the second strongest Estonian basketball club, previously winning [Korvpalli Meistriliiga](/wiki/Korvpalli_Meistriliiga) 22 times. Six Estonian basketball clubs participates in [Baltic Basketball League](/wiki/Baltic_Basketball_League).

At the [2016 Bandy World Championship](/wiki/2016_Bandy_World_Championship) [the national team](/wiki/Estonia_national_bandy_team) will play in Division A for the first time.

[Kelly Sildaru](/wiki/Kelly_Sildaru), an Estonian freestyle skier, won the gold medal in the slopestyle event in the 2016 [Winter X Games](/wiki/Winter_X_Games). At age 13, she became the youngest gold medalist to date at a [Winter X Games](/wiki/Winter_X_Games) event, and the first person to win a [Winter X Games](/wiki/Winter_X_Games) medal for Estonia. She has also won the women's slopestyle at 2015 [Winter Dew Tour](/wiki/Winter_Dew_Tour).

## International rankings[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=44)]

The following are links to international rankings of Estonia.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Index** | **Rank** | **Countries reviewed** |
| [Freedom House](/wiki/Freedom_House) Internet Freedom 2012 | 1st | 47 |
| [Global Gender Gap Report](/wiki/Global_Gender_Gap_Report) Global Gender Gap Index 2015 | 21st | 136 |
| [Index of Economic Freedom](/wiki/Index_of_Economic_Freedom) 2015 | 8th | 178 |
| [Reporters Without Borders](/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders) Press Freedom Index 2011–2012 | 11th | 187 |
| [State of World Liberty Index](/wiki/State_of_World_Liberty_Index) 2006 | 1st | 159 |
| [Human Development Index](/wiki/Human_Development_Index) 2015[[7]](#cite_note-7)| 30th | 169 |  |
| [Corruption Perceptions Index](/wiki/Corruption_Perceptions_Index) 2015 | 23rd | 176 |
| [Networked Readiness Index](/wiki/Networked_Readiness_Index) 2014 | 21st | 133 |
| [Ease of Doing Business Index](/wiki/Ease_of_Doing_Business_Index) 2016 | 16th | 185 |
| State of The World's Children's Index 2012[[228]](#cite_note-228)| 10th | 165 |  |
| State of The World's Women's Index 2012 | 18th | 165 |
| World Freedom Index 2014[[229]](#cite_note-229)| 8th | 165 |  |
| [Legatum Prosperity Index](/wiki/Legatum_Prosperity_Index) 2015 | 31st | 110 |
| [EF English Proficiency Index](/wiki/EF_English_Proficiency_Index) 2013 | 4th | 60 |
| [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment) 2012 (Maths) | 11th | 65 |
| [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment) 2012 (Science) | 6th | 65 |
| [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment) 2012 (Reading) | 11th | 65 |

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=45)]

* [Outline of Estonia](/wiki/Outline_of_Estonia)
* [Taxation in Estonia](/wiki/Taxation_in_Estonia)
* [Index of Estonia-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Estonia-related_articles)
* [Template:Books-inline](/wiki/Template:Books-inline)
* [List of presidents of Estonia](/wiki/List_of_presidents_of_Estonia)
* [List of twin towns and sister cities in Estonia](/wiki/List_of_twin_towns_and_sister_cities_in_Estonia)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=46)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## Bibliography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=47)]

* Jaak Kangilaski *et al.* (2005) [Valge raamat (1940–1991)](http://www.riigikogu.ee/public/Riigikogu/ValgeRaamat.pdf), Justiitsministeerium, ISBN 9985-70-194-1.
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)

## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=48)]

[Template:Refbegin](/wiki/Template:Refbegin)

* [Giuseppe D'Amato](/wiki/Giuseppe_D'Amato) [*Travel to the Baltic Hansa*](http://www.europarussia.com/books/viaggio_nellhansa_baltica/travel-to-the-baltic-hansa). The European Union and its enlargement to the East. Book in Italian. *Viaggio nell'Hansa baltica*. L'Unione europea e l'allargamento ad Est. Greco&Greco editori, Milano, 2004. ISBN 88-7980-355-7
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=49)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links) [Template:Cookbook](/wiki/Template:Cookbook)

Government

* [The President of Estonia](http://www.president.ee/en/index.html)
* [The Parliament of Estonia](http://www.riigikogu.ee/?lang=en)
* [Estonian Government](http://www.valitsus.ee/en/)
* [Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs](http://www.vm.ee/?q=en)
* [Statistical Office of Estonia](http://www.stat.ee/?lang=en)
* [Chief of State and Cabinet Members](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/EN.html)

Travel

* [Official gateway to Estonia](http://www.estonia.eu/)
* [E-Estonia Portal](http://www.eesti.ee/eng/)
* [VisitEstonia Portal](http://www.visitestonia.com/)
* [Template:Wikivoyage-inline](/wiki/Template:Wikivoyage-inline)

Maps

* [google.com map of Estonia](http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?q=estonia+map&ll=58.608334,25.004883&spn=13.048165,32.915039&gl=uk&t=p&z=5)
* [Template:Osmrelation-inline](/wiki/Template:Osmrelation-inline)

General information

* [Encyclopedia Estonica](http://www.estonica.org/)
* [Estonian Institute](http://www.estinst.ee/)
* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [BBC News – Estonia country profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17220810)
* [Estonia](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/estonia.htm) at *UCB Libraries GovPubs*
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)

News

* [Estonian Public Broadcasting](http://otse.err.ee/etv/)
* [Postimees](http://www.postimees.ee/)
* [Eesti Päevaleht](http://epl.delfi.ee/)
* [Õhtuleht](http://www.ohtuleht.ee/)
* [aripaev.ee](http://www.aripaev.ee/)
* [Delfi](http://www.delfi.ee/)

Weather and time

The average temperature ranges between −10C and 20C (14F and 68F). [link <http://www.emhi.ee/index.php?ide=6&g_vaade=param&id=1>]

* [Estonian Weather Service](http://www.ilmateenistus.ee/)

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[Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord)

[Template:Authority control](/wiki/Template:Authority_control)

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