



# Solomon Islands



**Background** Settlers from Papua arrived on the Solomon Islands around 30,000 years ago. About 6,000 years ago, Austronesian settlers came to the islands, and the two groups mixed extensively. Despite significant inter-island trade, no attempts were made to unite the islands into a single political entity. In 1568, a Spanish explorer became the first European to spot the islands. After a failed Spanish attempt at creating a permanent European settlement in the late 1500s, the Solomon Islands remained free of European contact until a British explorer arrived in 1767. European explorers and US and British whaling ships regularly visited the islands into the 1800s.

Germany declared a protectorate over the northern Solomon Islands in 1885, and the UK established a protectorate over the southern islands in 1893. In 1899, Germany transferred its islands to the UK in exchange for the UK relinquishing all claims in Samoa. In 1942, Japan invaded the islands, and the Guadalcanal Campaign (August 1942-February 1943) proved a turning point in the Pacific theater of WWII. The fighting destroyed large parts of the Solomon Islands, and a nationalist movement emerged near the end of the war. By 1960, the British allowed some local autonomy. The islands were granted self-government in 1976 and independence two years later under Prime Minister Sir Peter KENILOREA.

In 1999, longstanding tensions between ethnic Guale in Honiara and ethnic Malaitans in Honiara's suburbs erupted in civil war, leading thousands of Malaitans to take refuge in Honiara and prompting Guale to flee the city. In 2000, newly elected Prime Minister Manasseh SOGAVARE focused on peace agreements and distributing resources equally among groups, but his actions bankrupted the government in 2001 and led to his ouster. In 2003, the Solomon Islands requested international assistance to reestablish law and order; the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, which ended in 2017, improved the security situation. In 2006, however, riots broke out in Honiara, and the city's Chinatown was burned amid allegations that the prime minister took money from China. SOGAVARE was reelected prime minister for a fourth time in 2019. When a small group of protestors, mostly from the island of Malaita, approached parliament to lodge a petition calling for SOGAVARE's removal and more development in Malaita in 2021, police fired tear gas into the crowd which sparked rioting and looting in Honiara.

<b>Capital</b>	name: Honiara
<b>Government type</b>	parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy; a Commonwealth realm
<b>Area</b>	total : 28,896 sq km land: 27,986 sq km water: 910 sq km
<b>Climate</b>	tropical monsoon; few temperature and weather extremes
<b>Natural resources</b>	fish, forests, gold, bauxite, phosphates, lead, zinc, nickel
<b>Population</b>	total: 726,799 (2024 est.)
<b>Population growth rate</b>	1.65% (2024 est.)
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	Melanesian 95.3%, Polynesian 3.1%, Micronesian 1.2%, other 0.3% (2009 est.)
<b>Religions</b>	Protestant 73.4% (Church of Melanesia 31.9%, South Sea Evangelical 17.1%, Seventh Day Adventist 11.7%, United Church 10.1%, Christian Fellowship Church 2.5%), Roman Catholic 19.6%, other Christian 2.9%, other 4%, unspecified 0.1% (2009 est.)
<b>Languages</b>	Melanesian pidgin (lingua franca in much of the country), English (official but spoken by only 1%-2% of the population), 120 indigenous languages

Executive branch	chief of state: King CHARLES III (since 8 September 2022); represented by Governor General David Tiva KAPU (since 7 July 2024) head of government: Prime Minister Jeremiah MANELE (since 2 May 2024)
Legislative branch	legislature name: National Parliament
Diplomatic representation in the US	chief of mission: Ambassador Jane Mugafalu Kabui WAETARA (since 16 September 2022); note - also Permanent Representative to the UN
Diplomatic representation from the US	chief of mission: Ambassador Ann Marie YASTISHOCK (since 14 March 2024); note - also accredited to the Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, based in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
Economic overview	lower middle-income Pacific island economy; natural resource rich but environmentally fragile; key agrarian sector; growing Chinese economic relationship; infrastructure damage due to social unrest; metal mining operations
Real GDP (purchasing power parity)	\$2.07 billion (2024 est.) \$2.019 billion (2023 est.) \$1.967 billion (2022 est.)
Real GDP per capita	\$2,500 (2024 est.) \$2,500 (2023 est.) \$2,500 (2022 est.)
Exports	\$642.877 million (2024 est.) \$546.025 million (2023 est.) \$411.359 million (2022 est.)
Exports - partners	China 56%, Australia 11%, Italy 10%, Spain 5%, Netherlands 4% (2023)
Exports - commodities	wood, fish, gold, precious metal ore, palm oil (2023)
Imports	\$857.128 million (2024 est.) \$883.611 million (2023 est.) \$764.641 million (2022 est.)
Imports - partners	China 42%, Singapore 13%, Australia 13%, Taiwan 5%, Malaysia 5% (2023)
Imports - commodities	refined petroleum, plastic products, fish, broadcasting equipment, iron structures (2023)

Population Pyramid

