



# Zimbabwe



**Background** The hunter-gatherer San people first inhabited the area that eventually became Zimbabwe. Farming communities migrated to the area around A.D. 500 during the Bantu expansion, and Shona-speaking societies began to develop in the Limpopo valley and Zimbabwean highlands around the 9th century. These societies traded with Arab merchants on the Indian Ocean coast and organized under the Kingdom of Mapungubwe in the 11th century. A series of powerful trade-oriented Shona states succeeded Mapungubwe, including the Kingdom of Zimbabwe (ca. 1220-1450), Kingdom of Mutapa (ca. 1450-1760), and the Rozwi Empire. The Rozwi Empire expelled Portuguese colonists from the Zimbabwean plateau, but the Ndebele clan of Zulu King MZILIKAZI eventually conquered the area in 1838 during the era of conflict and population displacement known as the Mfecane.

In the 1880s, colonists arrived with the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and obtained a written concession for mining rights from Ndebele King LOBENGULA. The king later disavowed the concession and accused the BSAC agents of deceit. The BSAC annexed Mashonaland and then conquered Matabeleland during the First Matabele War of 1893-1894, establishing company rule over the territory. In 1923, the UK annexed BSAC holdings south of the Zambezi River, which became the British colony of Southern Rhodesia. The 1930 Land Apportionment Act restricted Black land ownership and established rules that would favor the White minority for decades. A new constitution in 1961 further cemented White minority rule.

In 1965, the government under White Prime Minister Ian SMITH unilaterally declared its independence from the UK. London did not recognize Rhodesia's independence and demanded more voting rights for the Black majority in the country. International diplomacy and an uprising by Black Zimbabweans led to biracial elections in 1979 and independence (as Zimbabwe) in 1980. Robert MUGABE, who led the uprising and became the nation's first prime minister, was the country's only ruler (as president since 1987) from independence until 2017. In the mid-1980s, the government tortured and killed thousands of civilians in a crackdown on dissent known as the Gukuruhundi campaign. Economic mismanagement and chaotic implementation of land redistribution policies periodically crippled the economy. General elections in 2002, 2008, and 2013 were severely flawed and widely condemned but allowed MUGABE to remain president. In 2017, Vice President Emmerson MNANGAGWA became president after a military intervention that forced MUGABE to resign, and MNANGAGWA cemented power by sidelining rival Grace MUGABE (Robert MUGABE's wife). In 2018, MNANGAGWA won the presidential election, and he has maintained the government's longstanding practice of violently disrupting protests and politicizing institutions. Economic conditions remain dire under MNANGAGWA.

<b>Capital</b>	name: Harare
<b>Government type</b>	presidential republic
<b>Area</b>	total : 390,757 sq km land: 386,847 sq km water: 3,910 sq km
<b>Climate</b>	tropical; moderated by altitude; rainy season (November to March)
<b>Natural resources</b>	coal, chromium ore, asbestos, gold, nickel, copper, iron ore, vanadium, lithium, tin, platinum group metals
<b>Population</b>	total: 17,150,352 (2024 est.)
<b>Population growth rate</b>	1.91% (2024 est.)
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	African 99.6% (predominantly Shona; Ndebele is the second largest ethnic group), other (includes Caucasian, Asiatic, mixed race) 0.4% (2022 est.)
<b>Religions</b>	Apostolic Sect 40.3%, Pentecostal 17%, Protestant 13.8%, other Christian 7.8%, Roman Catholic 6.4%, African traditionalist 5%, other 1.5% (includes Muslim, Jewish, Hindu), none 8.3% (2022 est.)
<b>Languages</b>	Shona (official, most widely spoken) 80.9%, Ndebele (official, second most widely spoken) 11.5%, English (official, traditionally used for official business) 0.3%, 13 minority languages (official; includes Chewa, Chibarwe, Kalanga, Koisian, Nambya, Ndau, Shangani, sign language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda, and Xhosa) 7%, other 0.3% (2022 est.)
<b>Executive branch</b>	chief of state: President Emmerson Dambudzo MNANGAGWA (since 4 September 2023) head of government: Vice President Constantino CHIWENGA (since 11 September 2023)
<b>Legislative branch</b>	legislature name: Parliament
<b>Diplomatic representation in the US</b>	chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); Chargé d'Affaires Sarah BHOROMA (since 12 November 2024)
<b>Diplomatic representation from the US</b>	chief of mission: Ambassador Pamela M. TREMONT (since August 2024)
<b>Economic overview</b>	low income Sub-Saharan economy; political instability and endemic corruption have prevented reforms and stalled debt restructuring; new Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG) currency latest effort to combat ongoing hyperinflation; reliant on natural resource extraction, agriculture and remittances
<b>Real GDP (purchasing power parity)</b>	\$57.391 billion (2024 est.) \$56.249 billion (2023 est.) \$53.399 billion (2022 est.)
<b>Real GDP per capita</b>	\$3,500 (2024 est.) \$3,400 (2023 est.) \$3,300 (2022 est.)

Exports	\$7.603 billion (2023 est.) \$7.453 billion (2022 est.) \$6.575 billion (2021 est.)
Exports - partners	UAE 45%, China 18%, South Africa 15%, Mozambique 4%, Hong Kong 2% (2023)
Exports - commodities	gold, tobacco, nickel, minerals, diamonds (2023)
Imports	\$10.293 billion (2023 est.) \$9.569 billion (2022 est.) \$8.104 billion (2021 est.)
Imports - partners	South Africa 37%, China 15%, Bahamas, The 5%, Singapore 5%, UAE 4% (2023)
Imports - commodities	refined petroleum, fertilizers, trucks, soybean oil, stone processing machines (2023)

Population Pyramid

