



Samoa



Background The first Austronesian settlers arrived in Samoa around 1000 B.C., and early Samoans traded and intermarried with Fijian and Tongan nobility. The fa'amatai system of titles and nobility developed, which dominates Samoan politics to this day; all but two seats in the legislature are reserved for matai, or heads of families. A Dutch explorer was the first European to spot the islands in 1722. Christian missionaries arrived in the 1830s and were followed by an influx of American and European settlers and influence. By the 1880s, Germany, the UK, and the US had trading posts and claimed parts of the kingdom. In 1886, an eight-year civil war broke out, with rival matai factions fighting over royal succession and the three foreign powers providing support to the factions. Germany, the UK, and the US all sent warships to Apia in 1889 and came close to conflict, but a cyclone damaged or destroyed the ships of all three navies.

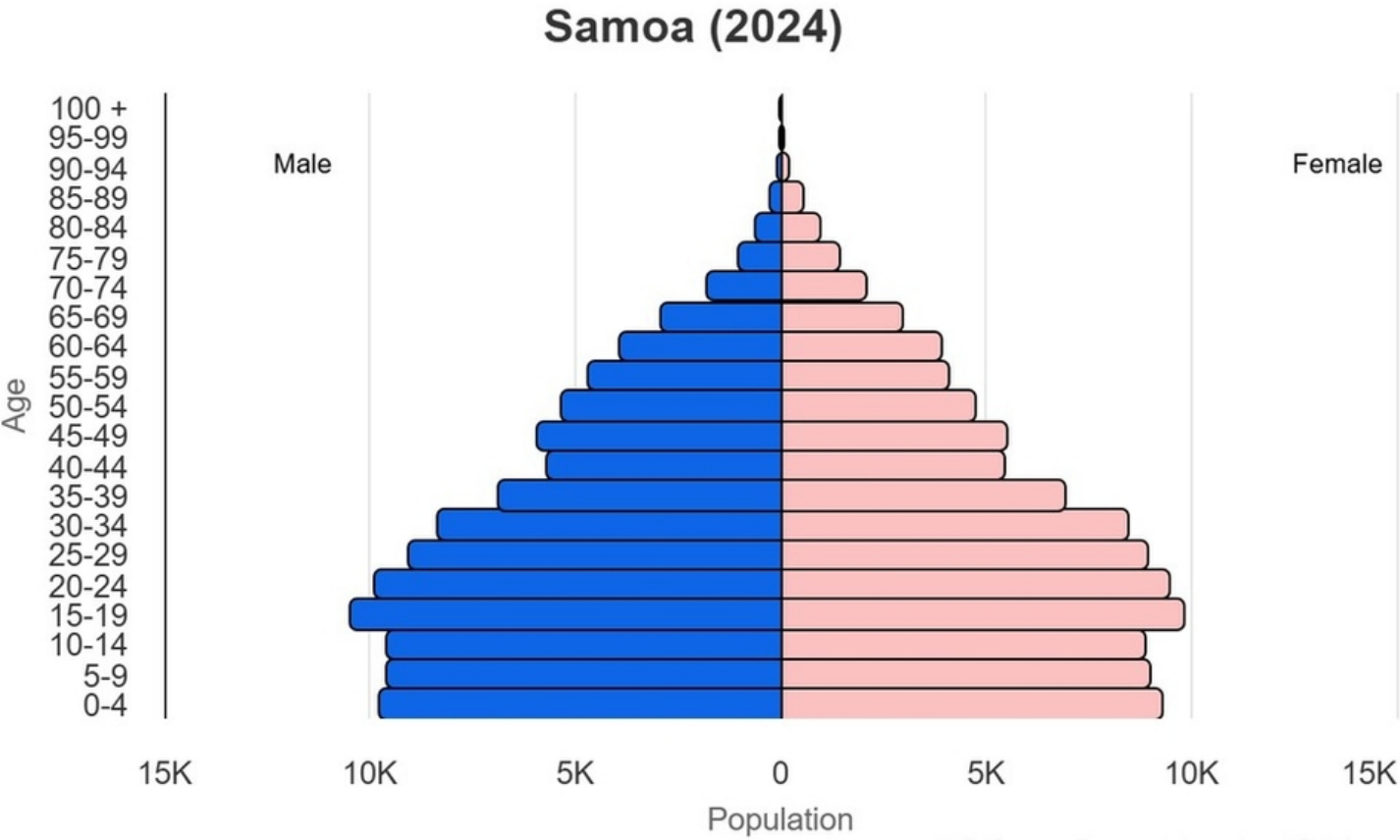
At the end of the civil war in 1894, Malietoa LAUPEPA was installed as king, but upon his death in 1898, a second civil war over succession broke out. When the war ended in 1899, the Western powers abolished the monarchy, giving the western Samoan islands to Germany and the eastern Samoan islands to the US. The UK abandoned claims in Samoa and received former German territory in the Solomon Islands.

New Zealand occupied Samoa during World War I but was accused of negligence and opposed by many Samoans, particularly an organized political movement called the Mau ("Strongly Held View") that advocated for independence. During the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic, about 20% of the population died. In 1929, New Zealand police shot into a crowd of peaceful Mau protestors, killing 11, in an event known as Black Sunday. In 1962, Samoa became the first Polynesian nation to reestablish its independence as Western Samoa but dropped the "Western" from its name in 1997. The Human Rights Protection Party dominated politics from 1982 until Prime Minister FIAME Naomi Mata'afa's Fa'atuatua i le Atua Samoa ua Tasi (FAST) party gained a majority in elections in 2021.

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| Capital | name: Apia |
| Government type | parliamentary republic |
| Area | total : 2,831 sq km land: 2,821 sq km water: 10 sq km |
| Climate | tropical; rainy season (November to April), dry season (May to October) |
| Natural resources | hardwood forests, fish, hydropower |
| Population | total: 208,853 (2024 est.) |

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| Population growth rate | 0.65% (2024 est.) |
| Ethnic groups | Samoaan 96%, Samoaan/New Zealander 2%, other 1.9% (2011 est.) |
| Religions | Protestant 54.9% (Congregationalist 29%, Methodist 12.4%, Assembly of God 6.8%, Seventh Day Adventist 4.4%, other Protestant 2.3%), Roman Catholic 18.8%, Church of Jesus Christ 16.9%, Worship Centre 2.8%, other Christian 3.6%, other 2.9% (includes Baha'i, Muslim), none 0.2% (2016 est.) |
| Languages | Samoaan (Polynesian) (official) 91.1%, Samoaan/English 6.7%, English (official) 0.5%, other 0.2%, unspecified 1.6% (2006 est.) |
| Executive branch | chief of state: TUIMALEALI'IFANO Va'aletoa Sualauvi II (since 21 July 2017) head of government: Prime Minister La'auli Leuatea SCHMIDT (since 16 September 2025) |
| Legislative branch | legislature name: Legislative Assembly (Fono) |
| Diplomatic representation in the US | chief of mission: Ambassador Pa'olelei LUTERU (since 7 July 2021); note - also Permanent Representative to the UN |
| Diplomatic representation from the US | chief of mission: the US Ambassador to New Zealand is accredited to Samoa |
| Economic overview | lower middle-income Pacific island economy; enormous fishing and agriculture industries; significant remittances; growing offshore financial hub; recently hosted Pacific Games to drive tourism and infrastructure growth |
| Real GDP (purchasing power parity) | \$1.503 billion (2024 est.) \$1.374 billion (2023 est.) \$1.258 billion (2022 est.) |
| Real GDP per capita | \$6,900 (2024 est.) \$6,300 (2023 est.) \$5,800 (2022 est.) |
| Exports | \$369.73 million (2024 est.) \$346.187 million (2023 est.) \$175.377 million (2022 est.) |
| Exports - partners | India 26%, NZ 14%, USA 12%, American Samoa 10%, Australia 9% (2023) |
| Exports - commodities | refined petroleum, integrated circuits, coconut oil, fish, insulated wire (2023) |
| Imports | \$575.749 million (2024 est.) \$560.776 million (2023 est.) \$512.021 million (2022 est.) |
| Imports - partners | NZ 20%, Singapore 19%, China 17%, Australia 10%, Fiji 9% (2023) |
| Imports - commodities | refined petroleum, poultry, cars, plastic products, milk (2023) |

Population Pyramid



U.S. Census Bureau, International Database