



# Eritrea



**Background** After independence from Italian control and then UK oversight, the UN established Eritrea as an autonomous region within the Ethiopian federation in 1952. Ethiopian annexation sparked a 30-year conflict for independence that ended in 1991. Eritreans overwhelmingly approved independence in a 1993 referendum.

**Capital** name: Asmara

**Government type** presidential republic

**Area** total: 117,600 sq km  
land: 101,000 sq km  
water: 16,600 sq km

**Climate** hot, dry desert strip along Red Sea coast; cooler and wetter in the central highlands (up to 61 cm of rainfall annually, heaviest June to September); semiarid in western hills and lowlands

**Natural resources** gold, potash, zinc, copper, salt, possibly oil and natural gas, fish

**Population** total: 6,343,956

**Population growth rate** 1.12% (2024 est.)

**Ethnic groups** Tigrinya 50%, Tigre 30%, Saho 4%, Afar 4%, Kunama 4%, Bilen 3%, Hedareb/Beja 2%, Nara 2%, Rashaida 1% (2021 est.)

**Religions** Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, Sunni Muslim

**Languages** Tigrinya (official), Arabic (official), English (official), Tigre, Kunama, Afar, other Cushitic languages

**Executive branch** chief of state: President ISAIAS Afwerk (since 24 May 1993)

head of government: President ISAIAS Afwerk (since 8 June 1993)

**Diplomatic representation in the US** chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); Chargé d'Affaires Berhane Gebrehiwet SOLOMON (since 15 March 2011)

**Diplomatic representation from the US** chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); Chargé d'Affaires Leslie FRERIKSEN (since 18 July 2022)

**Economic overview** largely agrarian economy with a significant mining sector; substantial fiscal surplus due to tight controls; high and vulnerable debts; increased Ethiopian trade and shared port usage decreasing prices; financial and economic data integrity challenges

**Real GDP (purchasing power parity)** \$9.702 billion (2017 est.)  
\$8.953 billion (2016 est.)  
\$8.791 billion (2015 est.)

<b>Real GDP per capita</b>	\$1,600 (2017 est.) \$1,500 (2016 est.) \$1,500 (2015 est.)
<b>Exports</b>	\$624.3 million (2017 est.) \$485.4 million (2016 est.)
<b>Exports - partners</b>	China 67%, UAE 26%, Philippines 5%, Italy 1%, Croatia 1% (2023)
<b>Exports - commodities</b>	copper ore, zinc ore, gold, garments, liquor (2023)
<b>Imports</b>	\$1.127 billion (2017 est.) \$1.048 billion (2016 est.)
<b>Imports - partners</b>	China 32%, UAE 27%, Turkey 9%, USA 7%, Italy 5% (2023)
<b>Imports - commodities</b>	trucks, sorghum, construction vehicles, wheat flours, other foods (2023)