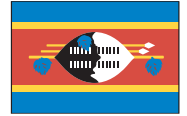


Swaziland



KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	1968
Population:	1,185,000 (2009)
GDP p.c. growth:	1.7% p.a. 1990–2009
UN HDI 2010:	world ranking 121
Official languages:	siSwati, English
Time:	GMT plus 2hr
Currency:	lilangeni, plural emalangeni (E)

Geography

Area:	17,364 sq km
Coastline:	none
Capital:	Mbabane

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a small landlocked country in the east of Southern Africa, bounded to the east by Mozambique and elsewhere by South Africa. The country comprises four regions: Hhohho (in the north), Manzini (west-central), Lubombo (east) and Shiselweni (south).

Main towns: Mbabane (capital, pop. 61,400 in 2009), Manzini (93,400), Malkerns (7,900), Nhlangano (7,000), Mhlume (6,900), Big Bend (6,800), Siteki (5,900), Simunye (5,500), Hluti (5,400) and Pigg's Peak (4,500).

Topography: There are four regions, all running from north to south. The western Highveld, a continuation of the Drakensberg Mountains, rises to 1,862m. East of the Highveld is the grassy Middleveld, beside the Lowveld (also called the Bushveld) at around 150–300m with some higher ridges and knolls. The eastern region, the Lubombo, is a narrow escarpment. The four most important rivers, all flowing from the Highveld east towards the Indian Ocean, are the Komati, the Usutu, the Mbuluzi and the Ngwavuma. None is easily navigable. The Lowveld watercourses are wadis, except after heavy rain.

Climate: The Highveld is near-temperate and humid, the Middleveld and Lubombo subtropical, the Lowveld near-tropical. Swaziland is one of the best-watered countries in southern Africa although, in common with the region, rainfall may be unreliable and periods of drought occur in the Lowveld, for example in 2004–05. Summer (October–March) is the rainy season. There is occasional, short-lived frost in the Highveld and the Middleveld.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are overgrazing, soil degradation, soil erosion, limited supplies of drinking water, and depletion of wildlife populations by excessive hunting.

did you know?

Swaziland is a monarchy.

It is one of seven landlocked Commonwealth countries, all of which are in Africa. Mountains in the western highlands rise to 1,862m, and the lowlands to the east fall to around 150m.

As a neighbour of South Africa – Africa's economic powerhouse – Swaziland receives more than most other African countries in remittances per capita.

Vegetation: Varies from the forested Highveld with its Usutu pines to the grassland and bush vegetation of the Lowveld. Forest covers 32% of the land area, having increased at 0.9% p.a. 2000–07. Arable land comprises 10% and permanent cropland less than 1% of the total land area.

Wildlife: There are eight nature reserves inhabited by indigenous species, several of them under threat elsewhere, such as black and white rhinoceros, elephant, buffalo, hippopotamus, and a vast variety of bird species – including storks and vultures.

Transport: There are 3,590km of roads, at least 30% paved, linking with South Africa and Mozambique.

The 300km railway is used mainly for freight and continues in a north-easterly direction to Maputo in Mozambique, providing Swaziland with access to shipping. Since 1986, there has been a direct connection between Mpaka (35km east of Manzini) and the South African railway network. The passenger service from Durban to Maputo, Mozambique, passes through Swaziland, stopping at Mpaka.

A new international airport, Sikhuphe International Airport, sited to the east of Manzini, is due to replace Matsapha as the principal international airport in 2010.

Society

KEY FACTS 2009

Population per sq km: 68
Life expectancy: 46 years
Net primary enrolment: 83%

Population: 1,185,000 (2009); 21% lives in urban areas; growth 1.2% p.a. 1990–2009; birth rate 30 per 1,000 people (49 in 1970); life expectancy 46 years, having fallen sharply since the latter 1990s due to AIDS (48 in 1970, 61 in 1990 and 60 in 1997).

Swazis make up 90%; persons of other African, European or mixed descent 10%. Large numbers of Mozambicans fled to Swaziland to escape the civil war, but repatriation was completed in 1993.

Language: siSwati is the national language and English widely spoken.

Religion: Christians about 60% and most of the rest hold traditional beliefs. Traditional beliefs often coexist with Christian beliefs.

Media: The English-language dailies are *The Times of Swaziland/Sunday Times* and *The Swazi Observer/The Weekend Observer*.

Three national radio stations and the sole national television channel, Swazi TV, are public services.

Some 35% of households have TV sets (2006). There are 37 personal computers (2006) and 76 internet users (2009) per 1,000 people.

Education: Public spending on education was 7.8% of GDP in 2008. There are seven years of primary education starting at age six and five of secondary comprising cycles of three and two years. Some 74% of pupils complete primary school (2006). The school year starts in January.

The University of Swaziland offers degrees in law, commerce, agriculture, education, science and the humanities, as well as part-time courses in business studies. Swaziland College of Technology runs courses in engineering, building, education and business. The Vocational and Commercial Training Institute offers technical and business training. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 97:100 (2006). Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 93% (2008). There is a national library and a mobile library service to remoter parts of the country.

Health: Services are provided by the state, missions and some industrial organisations. 69% of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 55% of people have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2009). Infant mortality was 52 per 1,000 live births in 2009 (150 in 1960). In 2009, 25.9% of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.



History

The Nguni Swazi Kingdom rose to prominence early in the 19th century, under the leadership of King Sobhuza I, who enlarged the territory by conquering and absorbing numbers of non-Nguni people.

King Mswati II then moulded the young kingdom into a powerful military force. Through internal stability, military might and diplomacy, Swaziland remained an independent country until the 1890s, the King taking advantage of the rivalry between the British administration in Natal and the Boer republic of the Transvaal to avoid takeover by either.

From 1894 until 1902 the country was administered by the Boer republic, but not annexed. After the defeat of the Boers by Britain in 1902, Swaziland came under British control until independence.

King Sobhuza II reigned from 1921 to 1982 and is thought to have been the second-longest reigning monarch in world history – although he was only officially recognised as king in 1967 under

the Swaziland Constitution Order of the British Government. Sobhuza II was a staunch conservative, determined to restore traditional customs and land rights, much of the land having been sold by the colonial authorities to individual European or African farmers. By the time of his death in 1982, almost 40% of the land of the Kingdom was back in the traditional communal system of land tenure.

Swaziland became independent on 6 September 1968 and joined the Commonwealth.

In 1973, King Sobhuza II repealed the independence constitution, abolishing parliament and all political parties. The tinkhundla system of government was introduced in 1978 and overhauled in 1993 (see 'Constitution').

When the King died in 1982, there was a four-year delay before Prince Makhosetive acceded to the throne as King Mswati III in 1986.

Communications: Country code 268; internet domain '.sz'. Public telephones are widely available. Mobile phone coverage is good in urban areas. There are internet cafes in Mbabane and Manzini, and post offices in all the main towns.

There are 37 main telephone lines and 554 mobile phone subscriptions per 1,000 people (2009).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, King's Birthday (19 April), National Flag Day (25 April), Labour Day (1 May), Birthday of late King Sobhuza II (22 July), Independence Day (Somhlolo, 6 September), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Umhlanga Reed Dance Day (August/September, date fixed at short notice) and Incwala ceremony (December/January, date fixed at short notice).

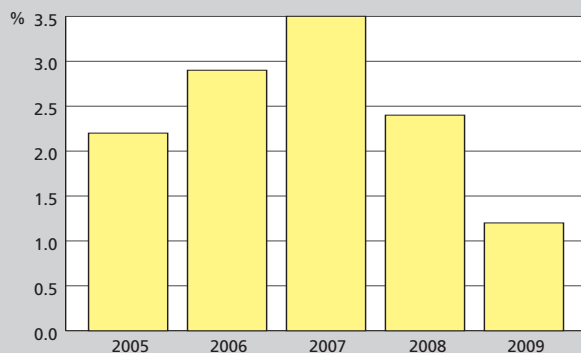
Economy

KEY FACTS 2009

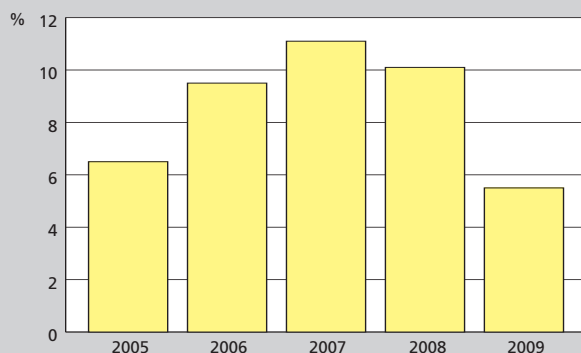
GNI:	US\$2.9bn
GNI p.c.:	US\$2,470
GDP growth:	2.4% p.a. 2005–09
Inflation:	8.5% p.a. 2005–09

Overview: Despite subdued growth in the latter 1980s and early 1990s, a period much influenced by the economic problems and then political change in South Africa, Swaziland has, over the longer period, one of the best growth records in Africa, and has pursued liberal policies towards foreign and private investment –

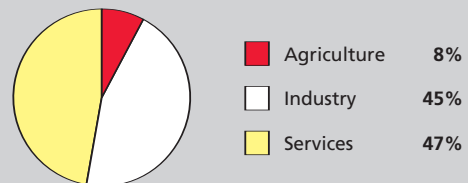
Real Growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by Sector (2009)



especially in mining and industry – since independence in 1968. GDP grew by 6.7% p.a. 1980–90.

Its vulnerability lies in heavy dependence on soft drink concentrate and sugar cane, and on South Africa, which provides imports, investment and employment. It does, however, have established wood pulp and fruit-canning industries, and manufactures a variety of consumer goods, including refrigerators, footwear and plastic domestic goods.

There is dual administration of Swaziland's official financial assets. Those of the Swazi nation, comprising communal land resources (known as Swazi Nation Land) and minerals, are managed by Tibiyo TakaNgwane, an institution created by royal charter in 1968 and not responsible to parliament. The modern economy is managed by the government, but there is an increasing demand, backed by the unions, for far-reaching economic reform.

The economy grew well in the late 1990s but growth was generally slower in the 2000s, due to the deteriorating investment climate, erosion of trade preferences, declining competitiveness, weak institutional capacity and devastation of the workforce by HIV/AIDS (see *Health* above). Average GDP growth was 2.4% p.a. in 2005–09. In response to the world economic downturn of 2008–09 Swaziland's economy slowed; GDP growth was 1.2% in 2009 and rose only slightly in 2010.

Trade: Exports of goods and services account for 69% of GDP (2008). Main exports are soft drink concentrate, sugar, citrus, consumer goods, canned fruit and wood pulp.

Constitution

Status:	National Monarchy
Legislature:	Parliament of Swaziland
Independence:	6 September 1968

Under the 2006 constitution the Kingdom of Swaziland is an absolute monarchy. The monarch appoints the prime minister and approves the cabinet and can veto legislation and dissolve parliament, though since July 2005 he can no longer rule by decree.

Under the tinkhundla electoral system, which was introduced in 1978 and amended in 1993 and 2005, there is a bicameral parliament. The House of Assembly has up to 76 members, ten (including at least five women) appointed by the monarch, 60 elected by universal adult suffrage from a list provided by the tinkhundla (tribal or community committees) and four women elected by the two houses of parliament (one from each region). The Senate has up to 31 members, with ten chosen by the Assembly (including at least five women) and 20 by the monarch (at least eight women).

In each of the 60 tinkhundla, numerous candidates are nominated by show of hands; these are then reduced in secret ballots to three candidates per tinkhundla; the 60 Assembly members are elected in a general election.

The 2006 constitution made provision for an independent judiciary and for human rights, including freedom of assembly and association, but it made no reference to political parties.

Politics

Last elections:	September 2008
Next elections:	2013
Head of state:	King Mswati III
Head of government:	Prime Minister Dr Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini
Ruling party:	no party system

From the mid-1980s there was building pressure for a return to multiparty democracy. The reintroduction of universal adult suffrage in 1993 only served to increase this pressure. There was from the mid-1990s a succession of strikes organised by the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions and increasingly public activity by opposition movements.

A Constitutional Review Commission was set up in July 1996 to solicit the views of the Swazi nation on the type of constitution they wanted, by visiting all the constituencies in the country and then submitting a report, including a draft new constitution by 1998.

Elections for pre-selected candidates were held in October 1998. About 60% of the registered voters cast their vote. The King confirmed Dr Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini as prime minister and announced his new cabinet, which included Senator A R V Khoza as deputy prime minister and Senator John Carmichael as finance minister. Most of the 16 ministers were royal appointees rather than elected members of parliament.

The Constitutional Review Commission finally presented its report to the King in November 2000, but it was not published. In 2001 the King attempted to give himself additional powers to contain the pressure for constitutional reform but climbed down in the face of national and international protests. In August 2001 he called a national gathering and the Commission's chairperson announced – to an audience of only about 10,000 people (the last national gathering was attended by 250,000) – that the King's powers were to be enlarged but gave no details of the fruits of the five-year review.

Subsequently the King set up a new commission to draft a new constitution and the draft was released in May 2003. However, under this constitution the country remains an absolute monarchy. The Assembly is to include at least nine women members (of an increased total of up to 76) and the Senate 13 (of up to 31). Though freedom of assembly is allowed and the ban on political parties therefore technically lifted, under the continuing tinkhundla election system there is no role for parties.

Assembly and Senate elections for the pre-selected candidates were held in October 2003 and the turnout was again low, especially in urban areas. A Commonwealth expert team was present. It said that while there were shortcomings 'the elections

were well conducted', but that 'no elections can be credible when they are for a parliament which does not have power and when political parties are banned'. In November 2003 the King confirmed A T Dlamini as prime minister.

The new constitution – drafted by the commission which was chaired by Prince David Dlamini – was approved by parliament and signed by the King in July 2005. It came into effect in February 2006.

In the first elections under the new constitution, a new parliament was elected in September 2008. The election was observed by a Commonwealth expert team. The King appointed Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini as prime minister; he had previously served in that position 1996–2003.

International relations

Swaziland is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Non-Aligned Movement, Southern African Customs Union, Southern African Development Community, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Traveller information

Local laws and conventions: Smuggling and drug taking are both illegal and can incur severe penalties. It is prohibited to photograph the Royal Palace, the Royal Family, uniformed police, army personnel, army vehicles or aircraft and bank buildings. Visitors should always ask permission before taking photographs of local residents.

Personal medications may be brought into the country, but a doctor's note is advisable in case of questioning by customs.

Traditional Swazi culture, in rural areas especially, plays an important role in daily life.

Dress is usually casual. English is widely used in business circles and appointments should always be made. Exchanging business cards is customary. Many hotels in the main cities can provide basic conference facilities. Office hours are Mon–Fri 0800–1300 and 1400–1645.

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid for six months and visas are not necessary for visitors from South Africa, UK, the USA, Australia, Canada and many Commonwealth countries. Other nationals should consult their local consulate for current visa requirements.

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required by all those arriving from infected areas.

Duty free allowances are counted as one for married couples travelling together.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left and foreign drivers will require an international driving permit. Car hire is available through a number of international agencies. The maximum speed limit is 80kph.

A good bus network links many of the towns and cities, and there are minibus taxis that run shorter routes. Regular taxis are available in the larger towns.

Travel health: Medical facilities are generally limited outside of Mbabane but private services are available through some hotels. Visitors should ensure they have adequate health insurance that includes medical evacuation to South Africa.

Visitors will need protection against malaria together with insect repellent and suitable clothing to discourage mosquito bites. Hepatitis A, typhoid, tetanus and rabies are also present. Visitors should not swim or paddle in fresh water due to the risk of bilharzia, and should check for ticks after walking or hiking in rural areas, as tick bite fever can occur.

Mains water is generally safe to drink in urban areas, but elsewhere should be boiled or sterilised before use. Bottled water is also available. Milk is pasteurised.

Money: Local currency is the lilangeni (plural, emalangeni). The South African rand is accepted as legal tender, although coins cannot be used. Visitors are advised to exchange emalangeni back into their own currency before leaving Swaziland. American Express, Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, and ATMs are available in most towns. Travellers cheques are easily changed but should be taken in US dollars, pounds sterling or euros to avoid additional charges. Banking hours are Mon–Fri 0830–1430 and Sat 0830–1100.

There were 754,000 tourist arrivals in 2008.

Further information

Government of Swaziland: www.gov.sz

Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org

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