



ISRAEL
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Introduction**Israel**

Background: Following World War II, the British withdrew from their mandate of Palestine, and the UN partitioned the area into Arab and Jewish states, an arrangement rejected by the Arabs. Subsequently, the Israelis defeated the Arabs in a series of wars without ending the deep tensions between the two sides. The territories Israel occupied since the 1967 war are not included in the Israel country profile, unless otherwise noted. On 25 April 1982, Israel withdrew from the Sinai pursuant to the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty. In keeping with the framework established at the Madrid Conference in October 1991, bilateral negotiations were conducted between Israel and Palestinian representatives and Syria to achieve a permanent settlement. Israel and Palestinian officials signed on 13 September 1993 a Declaration of Principles (also known as the "Oslo Accords") guiding an interim period of Palestinian self-rule. Outstanding territorial and other disputes with Jordan were resolved in the 26 October 1994 Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace. In addition, on 25 May 2000, Israel withdrew unilaterally from southern Lebanon, which it had occupied since 1982. In April 2003, US President BUSH, working in conjunction with the EU, UN, and Russia - the "Quartet" - took the lead in laying out a roadmap to a final settlement of the conflict by 2005, based on reciprocal steps by the two parties leading to two states, Israel and a democratic Palestine. However, progress toward a permanent status agreement was undermined by Israeli-Palestinian violence between September 2003 and February 2005. An Israeli-Palestinian agreement reached at Sharm al-Sheikh in February 2005, along with an internally-brokered Palestinian ceasefire, significantly reduced the violence. In the summer of 2005, Israel unilaterally disengaged from the Gaza Strip, evacuating settlers and its military while retaining control over most points of entry into the Gaza Strip. The election of HAMAS in January 2006 to head the Palestinian Legislative Council froze relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). Ehud OLMERT became prime minister in March 2006; following an Israeli military operation in Gaza in June-July 2006 and a 34-day conflict with Hizballah in Lebanon in June-August 2006, he shelved plans to unilaterally evacuate from most of the West Bank. OLMERT in June 2007 resumed talks with the PA after HAMAS seized control of the Gaza Strip and PA President Mahmoud ABBAS formed a new government without HAMAS.

Geography**Israel**

Location: Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Egypt and Lebanon

Geographic coordinates: 31 30 N, 34 45 E

Map references: Middle East

Area: *total*: 20,770 sq km
land: 20,330 sq km
water: 440 sq km

Area - comparative: slightly smaller than New Jersey

Land boundaries: *total*: 1,017 km
border countries: Egypt 266 km, Gaza Strip 51 km, Jordan 238 km, Lebanon 79 km, Syria 76 km, West Bank 307 km

Coastline: 273 km

Maritime claims: *territorial sea*: 12 nm
continental shelf: to depth of exploitation

Climate: temperate; hot and dry in southern and eastern desert areas

Terrain: Negev desert in the south; low coastal plain; central mountains; Jordan Rift Valley

Elevation extremes: *lowest point*: Dead Sea -408 m
highest point: Har Meron 1,208 m

Natural resources: timber, potash, copper ore, natural gas, phosphate rock, magnesium bromide, clays, sand

Land use: *arable land*: 15.45%
permanent crops: 3.88%
other: 80.67% (2005)

Irrigated land: 1,940 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources: 1.7 cu km (2001)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural): *total*: 2.05 cu km/yr (31%/7%/62%)
per capita: 305 cu m/yr (2000)

Natural hazards: sandstorms may occur during spring and summer; droughts; periodic earthquakes

Environment - current issues: limited arable land and natural fresh water resources pose serious constraints; desertification; air pollution from industrial and vehicle emissions; groundwater pollution from industrial and domestic waste, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides

Environment - international agreements: *party to*: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands, Whaling
signed, but not ratified: Marine Life Conservation

Geography - note: there are 242 Israeli settlements and civilian land use sites in the West Bank, 42 in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, 0 in the Gaza Strip, and 29 in East Jerusalem (August 2005 est.); Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee) is an important freshwater source

People	Israel
Population:	7,112,359 <i>note:</i> includes about 187,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, about 20,000 in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, and fewer than 177,000 in East Jerusalem (July 2008 est.)
Age structure:	<i>0-14 years:</i> 28% (male 1,018,229/female 971,083) <i>15-64 years:</i> 62.2% (male 2,242,928/female 2,183,688) <i>65 years and over:</i> 9.8% (male 303,289/female 393,142) (2008 est.)
Median age:	<i>total:</i> 28.9 years <i>male:</i> 28.2 years <i>female:</i> 29.7 years (2008 est.)
Population growth rate:	1.713% (2008 est.)
Birth rate:	20.02 births/1,000 population (2008 est.)
Death rate:	5.41 deaths/1,000 population (2008 est.)
Net migration rate:	2.52 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2008 est.)
Sex ratio:	<i>at birth:</i> 1.05 male(s)/female <i>under 15 years:</i> 1.05 male(s)/female <i>15-64 years:</i> 1.03 male(s)/female <i>65 years and over:</i> 0.77 male(s)/female <i>total population:</i> 1 male(s)/female (2008 est.)
Infant mortality rate:	<i>total:</i> 4.28 deaths/1,000 live births <i>male:</i> 4.43 deaths/1,000 live births <i>female:</i> 4.12 deaths/1,000 live births (2008 est.)
Life expectancy at birth:	<i>total population:</i> 80.61 years <i>male:</i> 78.54 years <i>female:</i> 82.79 years (2008 est.)
Total fertility rate:	2.77 children born/woman (2008 est.)
HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:	0.1% (2001 est.)

HIV/AIDS - 3,000 (1999 est.)
people living with
HIV/AIDS:

HIV/AIDS - 100 (2001 est.)
deaths:

Nationality: *noun*: Israeli(s)
adjective: Israeli

Ethnic groups: Jewish 76.4% (of which Israel-born 67.1%, Europe/America-born 22.6%, Africa-born 5.9%, Asia-born 4.2%), non-Jewish 23.6% (mostly Arab) (2004)

Religions: Jewish 76.4%, Muslim 16%, Arab Christians 1.7%, other Christian 0.4%, Druze 1.6%, unspecified 3.9% (2004)

Languages: Hebrew (official), Arabic used officially for Arab minority, English most commonly used foreign language

Literacy: *definition*: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 97.1%
male: 98.5%
female: 95.9% (2004 est.)

Government

Israel

Country name: *conventional long form*: State of Israel
conventional short form: Israel
local long form: Medinat Yisra'el
local short form: Yisra'el

Government type: parliamentary democracy

Capital: *name*: Jerusalem
geographic coordinates: 31 46 N, 35 14 E
time difference: UTC+2 (7 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)
daylight saving time: +1hr, begins last Friday in March; ends the Sunday between the holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur
note: Israel proclaimed Jerusalem as its capital in 1950, but the US, like nearly all other countries, maintains its Embassy in Tel Aviv

Administrative divisions: 6 districts (mehozot, singular - mehoz); Central, Haifa, Jerusalem, Northern, Southern, Tel Aviv

Independence: 14 May 1948 (from League of Nations mandate under British administration)

National holiday: Independence Day, 14 May (1948); note - Israel declared independence on 14 May 1948, but the Jewish calendar is lunar and the holiday may occur in April or May

Constitution: no formal constitution; some of the functions of a constitution are filled by the Declaration of Establishment (1948), the Basic Laws of the parliament (Knesset), and the Israeli citizenship law; note - since May 2003 the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee of the Knesset has been working on a draft constitution

Legal system: mixture of English common law, British Mandate regulations, and, in personal matters, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim legal systems; in December 1985, Israel informed the UN Secretariat that it would no longer accept compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Executive branch: *chief of state*: President Shimon PERES (since 15 July 2007)
head of government: Prime Minister Ehud OLMERT (since May 2006); Deputy Prime Minister Tzipora "Tzipi" LIVNI (since May 2006); Ehud OLMERT won the right to lead the government when his Kadima Party won 29 seats in elections held on 28 March 2006
cabinet: Cabinet selected by prime minister and approved by the Knesset
elections: president is largely a ceremonial role and is elected by the Knesset for a seven-year term (one-term limit); election last held 13 June 2007 (next to be held in 2014 but can be called earlier); following legislative elections, the president assigns a Knesset member - traditionally the leader of the largest party - the task of forming a governing coalition
note: government coalition - Kadima, Labor Party, GIL (Pensioners), and SHAS
election results: Shimon PERES elected president; number of votes in first round - Shimon PERES 58, Reuven RIVLIN 37, Colette AVITAL 21; PERES elected president in second round with 86 votes (unopposed)

Legislative unicameral Knesset (120 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve branch: four-year terms)
elections: last held 28 March 2006 (next scheduled to be held in 2010 but can be called earlier)
election results: percent of vote by party - Kadima 22%, Labor 15.1%, SHAS 9.5%, Likud 9%, Yisrael Beiteinu 9%, NU/NRP 7.1%, GIL 5.9%, Torah and Shabbat Judaism 4.7%, Meretz-YAHAD 3.8%, United Arab List 3%, Balad 2.3%, HADASH 2.7%, other 5.9%; seats by party - Kadima 29, Labor 19, Likud 12, SHAS 12, Yisrael Beiteinu 11, NU/NRP 9, GIL 7, Torah and Shabbat Judaism 6, Meretz-YAHAD 5, United Arab List 4, Balad 3, HADASH 3

- Judicial branch: Supreme Court (justices appointed by Judicial Selection Committee - made up of all three branches of the government; mandatory retirement age is 70)
- Political parties and leaders: Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (HADASH) [Muhammad BARAKA]; GIL (Pensioners) [Rafael "Rafi" EITAN]; Kadima [Ehud OLMERT]; Labor Party [Ehud BARAK]; Likud [Binyamin NETANYAHU]; Meretz-YAHAD [Yossi BEILIN]; National Democratic Assembly (Balad) [Jamal ZAHALKA]; National Union (NU)/National Religious Party (NRP) [Binyamin ELON]; SHAS [Eliyahu YISHAI]; Torah and Shabbat Judaism [Yaakov LITZMAN]; United Arab List [Ibrahim SARSOUR]; Yisrael Beiteinu [Avigdor LIEBERMAN]
- Political pressure groups and leaders: B'Tselem [Jessica MONTELL, Executive Director] monitors human rights abuses; Peace Now [Yariv OPPENHEIMER, Secretary General] supports territorial concessions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; YESHA Council of Settlements [Danny DAYAN, Chairman] promotes settler interests and opposes territorial compromise
- International organization participation: BIS, BSEC (observer), CERN (observer), EBRD, FAO, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICCT (signatory), ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, MIGA, OAS (observer), OPCW (signatory), OSCE (partner), PCA, SECI (observer), UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO
- Diplomatic representation in the US: *chief of mission:* Ambassador Salai MERIDOR
chancery: 3514 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008
telephone: [1] (202) 364-5500
FAX: [1] (202) 364-5607
consulate(s) general: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco
- Diplomatic representation from the US: *chief of mission:* Ambassador Richard H. JONES
embassy: 71 Hayarkon Street, Tel Aviv 63903
mailing address: PSC 98, Box 29, APO AE 09830
telephone: [972] (3) 519-7575
FAX: [972] (3) 516-4390
consulate(s) general: Jerusalem; note - an independent US mission, established in 1928, whose members are not accredited to a foreign government
- Flag description: white with a blue hexagram (six-pointed linear star) known as the Magen David (Shield of David) centered between two equal horizontal blue bands near the top and bottom edges of the flag

Economy**Israel**

Economy - Israel has a technologically advanced market economy with substantial, though diminishing, government participation. It depends on imports of crude oil, grains, raw materials, and military equipment. Despite limited natural resources, Israel has intensively developed its agricultural and industrial sectors over the past 20 years. Israel imports substantial quantities of grain but is largely self-sufficient in other agricultural products. Cut diamonds, high-technology equipment, and agricultural products (fruits and vegetables) are the leading exports. Israel usually posts sizable trade deficits, which are covered by large transfer payments from abroad and by foreign loans. Roughly half of the government's external debt is owed to the US, its major source of economic and military aid. Israel's GDP, after contracting slightly in 2001 and 2002 due to the Palestinian conflict and troubles in the high-technology sector, has grown by about 5% per year since 2003. The economy grew an estimated 5.4% in 2007, the fastest pace since 2000. The government's prudent fiscal policy and structural reforms over the past few years have helped to induce strong foreign investment, tax revenues, and private consumption, setting the economy on a solid growth path.

GDP (purchasing power parity): \$185.9 billion (2007 est.)

GDP (official exchange rate): \$161.9 billion (2007 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: 5.3% (2007 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP): \$25,800 (2007 est.)

GDP - composition by sector: *agriculture: 2.7%*
industry: 30.2%
services: 67.1% (2007 est.)

Labor force: 2.894 million (2007 est.)

Labor force - by occupation: agriculture 18.5%, industry 23.7%, services 50%, other 7.8% (2002)

Unemployment rate: 7.3% (2007 est.)

Population below poverty line: 21.6%
note: Israel's poverty line is \$7.30 per person per day (2005)

Household *lowest 10%: 2.4%*
income or *highest 10%: 28.3% (2005)*
consumption by
percentage share:

Distribution of 38.6 (2005)
family income -
Gini index:

Inflation rate 0.5% (2007 est.)
(consumer prices):

Investment (gross 18.5% of GDP (2007 est.)
fixed):

Budget: *revenues: \$53.6 billion*
expenditures: \$53.63 billion (2007 est.)

Public debt: 80.6% of GDP (2007 est.)

Agriculture - citrus, vegetables, cotton; beef, poultry, dairy products
products:

Industries: high-technology projects (including aviation, communications, computer-aided design and manufactures, medical electronics, fiber optics), wood and paper products, potash and phosphates, food, beverages, and tobacco, caustic soda, cement, construction, metals products, chemical products, plastics, diamond cutting, textiles, footwear

Industrial 4.1% (2007 est.)
production growth
rate:

Electricity - 46.85 billion kWh (2005)
production:

Electricity - 43.28 billion kWh (2005)
consumption:

Electricity - 1.663 billion kWh (2005)
exports:

Electricity - 0 kWh (2005)
imports:

Oil - production: 100 bbl/day (2006 est.)

Oil - 249,500 bbl/day (2006 est.)
consumption:

Oil - exports: 75,980 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - imports: 315,200 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - proved reserves: 2 million bbl (1 January 2006 est.)

Natural gas - production: 709.7 million cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - consumption: 709.7 million cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - exports: 0 cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - imports: 0 cu m (2005)

Natural gas - proved reserves: 37.34 billion cu m (1 January 2006 est.)

Current account balance: \$4.993 billion (2007 est.)

Exports: \$50.24 billion f.o.b. (2007 est.)

Exports - commodities: machinery and equipment, software, cut diamonds, agricultural products, chemicals, textiles and apparel

Exports - partners: US 34.9%, Belgium 7.5%, Hong Kong 5.8% (2006)

Imports: \$55.76 billion f.o.b. (2007 est.)

Imports - commodities: raw materials, military equipment, investment goods, rough diamonds, fuels, grain, consumer goods

Imports - partners: US 13.9%, Belgium 7.9%, Germany 6.2%, China 6.1%, Switzerland 5.1%, UK 4.7%, Italy 4.1% (2006)

Economic aid - recipient: \$240 million from US (FY06)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold: \$28.52 billion (31 December 2007 est.)

Debt - external: \$89.95 billion (31 December 2007)

Stock of direct foreign investment - at home: \$57.43 billion (2007 est.)

Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad: \$41.98 billion (2007 est.)

Market value of publicly traded shares: \$173.3 billion (2006)

Currency (code): new Israeli shekel (ILS); note - NIS is the currency abbreviation; ILS is the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) code for the NIS

Exchange rates: new Israeli shekels per US dollar - 4.14 (2007), 4.4565 (2006), 4.4877 (2005), 4.482 (2004), 4.5541 (2003)

Fiscal year: calendar year

Communications Israel

Telephones - main lines in use: 3.005 million (2006)

Telephones - mobile cellular: 8.404 million (2006)

Telephone system: *general assessment:* most highly developed system in the Middle East although not the largest
domestic: good system of coaxial cable and microwave radio relay; all systems are digital; four privately-owned mobile-cellular service providers with countrywide coverage; mobile-cellular teledensity is more than 130 per 100 persons
international: country code - 972; submarine cables provide links to Europe, Cyprus, and parts of the Middle East; satellite earth stations - 3 Intelsat (2 Atlantic Ocean and 1 Indian Ocean)

Radio broadcast stations: AM 23, FM 15, shortwave 2 (1998)

Television broadcast stations: 17 (plus 36 repeaters) (1995)

Internet country code: .il

Internet hosts: 671,030 (2007)

Internet users: 1.899 million (2006)

Transportation**Israel**

Airports: 53 (2007)

Airports - with *total*: 30
paved runways: *over 3,047 m*: 2
2,438 to 3,047 m: 5
1,524 to 2,437 m: 7
914 to 1,523 m: 10
under 914 m: 6 (2007)

Airports - with *total*: 23
unpaved runways: *1,524 to 2,437 m*: 1
914 to 1,523 m: 2
under 914 m: 20 (2007)

Heliports: 3 (2007)

Pipelines: gas 160 km; oil 442 km; refined products 261 km (2007)

Railways: *total*: 853 km
standard gauge: 853 km 1.435-m gauge (2006)

Roadways: *total*: 17,686 km
paved: 17,686 km (includes 146 km of expressways) (2006)

Merchant marine: *total*: 11 ships (1000 GRT or over) 425,833 GRT/523,103 DWT
by type: cargo 2, container 9
registered in other countries: 59 (Bermuda 3, Cyprus 4, Georgia 1, Honduras 1, Liberia 21, Malta 19, Panama 3, Slovakia 4, St Vincent and the Grenadines 3) (2008)

Ports and terminals: Ashdod, Elat (Eilat), Hadera, Haifa

Military**Israel**

Military branches: Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Israel Naval Forces (INF), Israel Air Force (IAF) (2007)

Military service age and obligation: 18 years of age for compulsory (Jews, Druzes) and voluntary (Christians, Muslims, Circassians) military service; both sexes are obligated to military service; conscript service obligation - 36 months for enlisted men, 21 months for enlisted women, 48 months for officers; reserve obligation to age 41-51 (men), 24 (women) (2008)

Manpower available for military service: *males age 16-49*: 1,717,362
females age 16-49: 1,636,574 (2008 est.)

Manpower fit for military service: *males age 16-49*: 1,452,926
females age 16-49: 1,383,796 (2008 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually: *males age 16-49*: 60,602
females age 16-49: 57,532 (2008 est.)

Military expenditures - percent of GDP: 7.3% (2006)

Transnational Issues	Israel
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Disputes - international: West Bank and Gaza Strip are Israeli-occupied with current status subject to the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement - permanent status to be determined through further negotiation; Israel continues construction of a "seam line" separation barrier along parts of the Green Line and within the West Bank; Israel withdrew its settlers and military from the Gaza Strip and from four settlements in the West Bank in August 2005; Golan Heights is Israeli-occupied (Lebanon claims the Shab'a Farms area of Golan Heights); since 1948, about 350 peacekeepers from the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) headquartered in Jerusalem monitor ceasefires, supervise armistice agreements, prevent isolated incidents from escalating, and assist other UN personnel in the region

Refugees and internally displaced persons: *IDPs*: 150,000-420,000 (Arab villagers displaced from homes in northern Israel) (2007)

Illicit drugs: increasingly concerned about ecstasy, cocaine, and heroin abuse; drugs arrive in country from Lebanon and, increasingly, from Jordan; money-laundering center

Information current as of 7 August, 2008

SOURCES: The CIA World Factbook

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