**Yemen**

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*For other uses, see* [*Yemen (disambiguation)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_(disambiguation))*.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Republic of Yemen**  **الجُمهورية اليَمَنية *al-Jumhūriyyah al-Yamaniyyah*** | | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | | [Flag](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Yemen) | [Emblem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emblem_of_Yemen) | | | |
| **Motto:**  الله، الوَطَن، الثَورة، الوَحدة ([Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language)) "Allāh, al-Waṭan, aṯ-Ṯawrah, al-Waḥdah" "God, Country, Revolution, Unity" | | |
| **Anthem:**  نشيد اليمن الوطني (Arabic) [*Nashīd al-Yaman al-waṭanī*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_anthem_of_Yemen) *United Republic*  Menu  0:00 | | |
|  | | |
| **Capital** | | [Sana'a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a) |
| **Official languages** | | [Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic) |
| [**Demonym**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demonym) | | [Yemeni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_(disambiguation)) |
| [**Government**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Yemen) | | [Unitary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitary_state) [presidential republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_system) |
| - | [President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Yemen) | [Abd Rabbuh Mansur al-Hadi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abd_Rabbuh_Mansur_Al-Hadi) |
| - | [Prime Minister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Yemen) | [Mohammed Basindawa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammed_Basindawa) |
| **Legislature** | | [House of Representatives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Representatives_(Yemen)) |
| **Establishment** | | |
| - | [North Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Yemen) independence from the [Ottoman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) | 1 November 1918 |
| - | [South Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Yemen) independence | 30 November 1967 |
| - | [Unification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_unification) | 22 May 1990 |
| [**Area**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Yemen) | | |
| - | Total | 527,829 km2 ([50th](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area)) 203,796 sq mi |
| - | Water (%) | negligible |
| [**Population**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Yemen) | | |
| - | 2011 estimate | 23,833,000 ([96th](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population)) |
| - | 2004 census | 19,685,000 |
| - | Density | 44.7/km2 ([160th](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_sovereign_states_and_dependent_territories_by_population_density)) 115.7/sq mi |
| [**GDP**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_domestic_product) ([PPP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity)) | | 2011 estimate |
| - | Total | $57.966 billion |
| - | Per capita | $2,306 |
| [**GDP**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_domestic_product) (nominal) | | 2011 estimate |
| - | Total | $33.675 billion |
| - | Per capita | $1,340 |
| [**HDI**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Development_Index) (2011) | | 0.462 low **·** [154th](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index) |
| **Currency** | | [Yemeni rial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_rial) ([YER](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_4217)) |
| **Time zone** | | ([UTC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coordinated_Universal_Time)+3) |
| **Drives on the** | | right |
| [**Calling code**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telephone_numbers_in_Yemen) | | [+967](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telephone_numbers_in_Yemen) |
| [**ISO 3166 code**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_3166) | | [YE](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_3166-2:YE) |
| [**Internet TLD**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country_code_top-level_domain) | | [.ye](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/.ye) |
| a. | From the [Ottoman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire). | |
| b. | From the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom). | |

The **Republic of Yemen** ([Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language): الجمهورية اليمنية‎ *al-Jumhūriyyah al-Yamaniyyah*), commonly known as **Yemen** [**i**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:En-us-Yemen.ogg)[/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English)[ˈjɛmən](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English#Key)[/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English) ([Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language): اليَمَن‎ *al-Yaman*), is a country located in [Western Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Asia), occupying the southwestern to southern end of the [Arabian Peninsula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabian_Peninsula). It is bordered by [Saudi Arabia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) to the north, the [Red Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Sea) to the west, the [Gulf of Aden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Aden) and [Arabian Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabian_Sea) to the south, and [Oman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oman) to the east.



Its capital and largest city is [Sana'a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a). Yemen's territory includes over 200 [islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island), the largest of which is [Socotra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socotra), about 354 km (220 mi) to the south of mainland Yemen. It is the only state in the Arabian Peninsula to have a purely [republican](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic) form of government. Yemen was the first country in the Arabian peninsula to grant women the right to vote. [Yemeni unification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_unification) took place on 22 May 1990, when [North Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Yemen) was united with [South Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Yemen), forming the Republic of Yemen.

The majority of Yemen's population is divided into tribal groups, especially in the northern areas of the country where 85% of local residents belong to various tribes There are also small groups of peoples of [Turkish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey)/[Ottoman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) origin in urban areas. Roughly 53% of the population are [Sunni Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunni_Muslims) following the [Shafi'i](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shafi%27i) school while 45% adhere to the [Zaydi Shia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaidiyyah) branch of Islam with small minorities of [Ismali Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ismailism).

**Etymology**

One etymology derives Yemen from *yamin*, meaning "on the right side", as the south is on the right when facing the sunrise. Another derives Yemen from *yumn*, meaning "felicity", as the region is fertile. The Romans called it [*Arabia Felix*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabia_Felix) (Happy Arabia) as opposed to [*Arabia Deserta*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabia_Deserta) (Deserted Arabia), which was their term for northern Arabia. Yemen was mentioned in [Old South Arabian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_South_Arabian) script as *Yamnat* particularly after the unification of the four dynasties of ancient Yemen by the [Himyarite kings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himyarite_Kingdom) and it literally means "the south-land".

**History**

Main article: [History of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Yemen)



Dhamar Ali Yahbur II, King of [*Sheba*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheba)*, Dhu Raydan, Hadramout and Yamnat* (Himyrite Kindom)



Ancient Sabaean inscription in 8th century BCE

**Ancient Kingdoms**

Main article: [Ancient history of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_history_of_Yemen)

Yemen has long existed at the crossroads of cultures. It linked some of the oldest centers of civilization in the Near East by virtue of its location in South Arabia.

Between the 12th century BCE and the 6th century CE, the [Minaean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minaean), [Sabaean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabaean) (biblical [Sheba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheba)), [Hadhramaut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadhramaut), [Qataban](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qataban), and [Himyarite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himyarite_Kingdom) kingdoms controlled the lucrative [spice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spice_trade) and [incense trade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incense_route) in the region.

In the 8th century BC, the Sabaens built the 1,894-foot-high and 3,000-foot long [Marib Dam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marib_Dam). Led by the priest-king [Karib'il Watar I](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Karib%27il_Watar_I&action=edit&redlink=1), the Sabaeans unified most of Southern Arabia in the 7th century BCE and established a confederacy with the Hadramites and Qatabanis. Lack of water in the Arabian peninsula prevented the Sabaeans from unifying the entire peninsula; instead, they established various colonies to control trade routes. Similar colonies were found in northern Ethiopia, as well and descriptions of Sabaean presence in the extended border of Palestine are also found in the [Hebrew Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible), including an attack on [Job](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job_(biblical_figure)). Ancient Yemenis developed a writing system by the 10th century BCE called [Musnad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Arabian_alphabet), which used to be the main writing form for the entire Arabian peninsula until the 6th century CE.

Around the 1st century BCE, leaders of the [Banu Hamdan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banu_Hamdan) confederation ([Hashid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashid) and [Bakil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakil)) overthrew the Sabaean royal family and subjugated them to slavery. The Hamdanis formed an alliance with Hadramout and burned the Qatabani capital of [Timna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timna). The Himyarites, as a Qatabani sub-tribe, ignited a long but sporadic civil war to avenge their "cousins", as a mid-1st century BCE Hamdani inscription read. The civil war was over with a decisive Himyarite victory around 275 CE. They established a centralized rule with [Zafar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zafar) as the capital instead of [Marib](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marib). The Himyarites secured the trade routes through the Kingdom of [Kindah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindah) who launched several successful campaigns against the [Lakhmids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lakhmids) in Southern Iraq.

In the 6th century, [sectarian violence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sectarian_violence) between [Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemenite_Jews) and Christians weakened the central government. Jews and pagans, led by [Joseph Dhu Nuwas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhu_Nuwas), inflicted heavy casualties on Christian tribes, particularly in Najran. [Dhu Nuwas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhu_Nuwas) was deposed around 525 – 527 CE after Byzantine Emperor [Justinian I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinian_I) sent a fleet to aid Christians in Yemen. Southwestern coasts of the Arabian peninsula became a [puppet state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puppet_state) until the occupiers were driven out by Himyarite Jewish elites.

**Islam, Ottoman Turks and British**

In the 7th century, the Yemeni tribes converted to [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) and played a major role in the Muslim conquest of the Middle East, North Africa and Spain. From about 1547, the [Ottoman Turks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Turks) absorbed [Sana'a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a) and [Tihama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tihama), into their empire until they were expelled in 1630. In 1839, [Aden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aden) came under British rule. When the [Suez Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suez_Canal) opened in 1869, Aden served as a major refueling port. The Ottoman Turks tried to regain control of Yemen in 1849 but failed. They returned in 1872 and took over the northern half of the country. However, the Ottomans were constantly harassed by the [Zaidi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaidiyyah) tribes led by Imam [Yahya Hamid ed-Din](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahya_Muhammad_Hamid_ed-Din). His son and successor, Imam [Yahya Muhammad Hamid ed-Din](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahya_Muhammad_Hamid_ed-Din) (or Imam Yahya), continued the resistance against the Turks until the Turks recognized him as Imam of Yemen in 1911.

**Two States**

Main articles: [North Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Yemen) and [South Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Yemen)

In 1918, the Ottoman Empire was dissolved and northern Yemen gained full independence under Imam Yahya. Between 1918 and 1962, Yemen was ruled by the [Hamidaddin family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutawakkilite_Kingdom_of_Yemen). Imam Yahya was assassinated during the [revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahia_clan_coup) of 1947–48. However, his son Imam [Ahmad bin Yahya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmad_bin_Yahya), beat off the opponents of feudal rule and succeeded his father. Imam Ahmad died in 1962. He was succeeded by his son, but army officers attempted to seize power, sparking the [North Yemen Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Yemen_Civil_War). The Hamidaddin royalists were supported by Saudi Arabia, Britain, and Jordan, whilst the republicans were backed by Egypt. After six years of civil war, the republicans were victorious (February 1968) and formed the [Yemen Arab Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_Arab_Republic).

The revolution in the north coincided with the [Aden Emergency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aden_Emergency), which hastened the end of British rule in the south. On 30 November 1967, the state of [South Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Yemen) was formed, comprising Aden and the former Protectorate of South Arabia. This socialist state was later officially known as the [People's Democratic Republic of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Democratic_Republic_of_Yemen) and a program of nationalization was begun.

Relations between the two Yemeni states remained relatively friendly, although sometimes strained. In 1972, a small border conflict was resolved with a ceasefire and negotiations brokered by the [Arab League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_League), where it was declared that unification would eventually occur. In 1978, [Ali Abdallah Saleh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Abdallah_Saleh) was named as president of the Yemen Arab Republic. Fresh fighting between the two states resumed in 1979 and there were renewed efforts to bring about unification. Thousands were killed in the [South Yemen Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Yemen_Civil_War) of 1986. President [Ali Nasser Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Nasser_Muhammad) fled to the north and a new government was formed.

**Post-unification**

Main article: [Yemeni unification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_unification)

In 1990, the two governments reached a full agreement on the joint governing of Yemen, and the countries were merged on 22 May 1990 with Saleh as President. The President of South Yemen, [Ali Salim al-Beidh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Salim_al-Beidh), became Vice-President. A unified [parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assembly_of_Representatives_of_Yemen) was formed and a unity constitution was agreed upon. In the [1993 parliamentary election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_parliamentary_election,_1993), the first held after unification, the [General People's Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_People%27s_Congress_(Yemen)) won 122 of 301 seats.

After the [invasion of Kuwait](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War) crisis in 1990, Yemen's President opposed military intervention from non-Arab states. As a member of the [United Nations Security Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council) for 1990 and 1991, Yemen abstained on a number of UNSC resolutions concerning Iraq and Kuwait and voted against the "use of force resolution". The vote outraged the US. [Saudi Arabia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) expelled 800,000 Yemenis in 1990 and 1991 to punish Yemen for its opposition to the war.

Following food riots in major towns in 1992, a new coalition government made up of the ruling parties from both the former Yemeni states was formed in 1993. However, Vice-President al-Beidh withdrew to [Aden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aden) in August 1993 and said he would not return to the government until his grievances were addressed. These included northern violence against his [Yemeni Socialist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_Socialist_Party), as well as the economic marginalization of the south. Negotiations to end the political deadlock dragged on into 1994. The government of Prime Minister [Haydar Abu Bakr Al-Attas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haydar_Abu_Bakr_Al-Attas) became ineffective due to political infighting.

An accord between northern and southern leaders was signed in [Amman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amman), [Jordan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan) on 20 February 1994, but this could not stop the civil war. During these tensions, both the northern and southern armies (which had never integrated) gathered on their respective frontiers. The May–July [1994 civil war in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1994_civil_war_in_Yemen) resulted in the defeat of the southern armed forces and the flight into exile of many [Yemeni Socialist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_Socialist_Party) leaders and other southern secessionists. Saudi Arabia actively aided the south during the 1994 civil war.

Saleh became Yemen's first directly-elected president in [the 1999 presidential election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_presidential_election,_1999), winning 96.2% of the vote. The only other candidate, [Najeeb Qahtan Al-Sha'abi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Najeeb_Qahtan_Al-Sha%27abi), was the son of [Qahtan Muhammad al-Shaabi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qahtan_Muhammad_al-Shaabi), a former President of [South Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Yemen). Though a member of Saleh's [General People's Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_People%27s_Congress_(Yemen)) (GPC) party, Najeeb ran as an independent.

In October 2000, the US naval vessel [USS Cole](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Cole) was [damaged in a suicide attack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Cole_bombing) in Aden which was subsequently blamed on al-Qaeda. Seventeen US personnel were killed. After the [9/11](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9/11) attacks on the USA, President Saleh assured President [George W. Bush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_W._Bush) that Yemen was a partner in his [War on Terror](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Terror). In 2001, there was violence surrounding [a referendum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_constitutional_referendum,_2001) which apparently supported extending Saleh's rule and powers.

The [Houthi rebellion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houthi_rebellion) began in June 2004 when dissident cleric [Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hussein_Badreddin_al-Houthi), head of the [Shia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia) [Zaidiyyah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaidiyyah) sect, launched an uprising against the Yemeni government. The Yemeni government alleged that the [Houthis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houthis) were seeking to overthrow it and to implement Shī‘a [religious law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_law). The rebels counter that they are "defending their community against discrimination" and government aggression.

In 2005, at least 36 people were killed in clashes across the country between police and protesters over rising fuel prices.

In [the 2006 presidential election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_presidential_election,_2006), held on 20 September Saleh won with 77.2% of the vote. His main rival, [Faisal bin Shamlan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faisal_bin_Shamlan), received 21.8%. Saleh was sworn in for another term on 27 September.

A suicide bomber killed eight Spanish tourists and two Yemenis in the province of Marib in July 2007. There was a series of bomb attacks on police, official, diplomatic, foreign business and tourism targets in 2008. Car bombings outside the US embassy in Sana'a killed 18 people, including six of the assailants in September 2008. In 2008, an opposition rally in Sana'a demanding electoral reform was met with police gunfire.

In January 2009, the Saudi and Yemeni al-Qaeda branches merged to form [Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Qaeda_in_the_Arabian_Peninsula) (AQAP). Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is based in Yemen, and many of its members Saudi nationals released from Guantanamo Bay. Saleh released 176 al-Qaeda suspects on condition of good behavior, but terrorist activities continued.

The Yemeni army launched a fresh offensive against the Shia insurgents in 2009, assisted by Saudi forces. Tens of thousands of people were displaced by the fighting. A new ceasefire was agreed upon in February 2010. However, by the end of the year, Yemen claimed that 3,000 soldiers had been killed in renewed fighting. The Shiite rebels accused Saudi Arabia of providing support to [Salafi groups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salafism) to suppress Zaydism in Yemen. Saleh's government used Al-Qaeda in its wars against [Hothis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houthi).

Some news reports have suggested that, on orders from United States President [Barack Obama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama), US warplanes fired [cruise missiles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruise_missile) at what officials in Washington claimed were Al Qaeda training camps in the provinces of [Sana’a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%E2%80%99a) and [Abyan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abyan) on 17 December 2009. Instead of hitting Al-Qaeda operatives, it hit a village killing 55 civilians. Officials in Yemen said that the attacks claimed the lives of more than 60 civilians, 28 of them children. Another airstrike was carried out on 24 December.

The US launched a series of drone attacks in Yemen to curb a perceived growing terror threat due to political chaos in Yemen. Since December 2009, U.S. strikes in Yemen have been carried out by the U.S. military with intelligence support from CIA. The drone strikes are protested by human-rights groups who say they kill innocent civilians and that the US military and CIA drone strikes lack sufficient congressional oversight, including the choice of human targets suspected of being threats to America. Controversy over U.S. policy for drone attacks mushroomed after a September 2011 drone strike in Yemen killed Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, both U.S. citizens. A majority of American citizens support the use of drones against foreign targets. In 2010 the Obama administration policy allowed targeting of people whose names are not known. The US government increased military aid to $140 million in 2010.

**Revolution and aftermath**

Main article: [2011 Yemeni revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Yemeni_revolution)



Anti-government protest in Sana'a, 3 February 2011

The [2011 Yemeni revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Yemeni_revolution) followed other [mass protests in the Arab world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring) in early 2011. The uprising was initially against unemployment, economic conditions, and corruption, as well as against the government's proposals to modify the [constitution of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Yemen) so that Saleh's son could inherit the presidency.

In March 2011, police snipers opened fire on the pro-democracy camp in Sana'a, killing more than 50 people. In May, dozens were killed in clashes between troops and tribal fighters in Sana'a. By this point, Saleh began to lose international support. In October 2011, Yemeni human rights activist [Tawakul Karman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tawakul_Karman) won the [Nobel Peace Prize](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Peace_Prize) and the UN [Security Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security_Council) condemned the violence and called for a transfer of power. On 23 November 2011, Saleh flew to Riyadh, in neighboring Saudi Arabia, to sign the [Gulf Co-operation Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_Co-operation_Council) plan for political transition, which he had previously spurned. Upon signing the document, he agreed to legally transfer the office and powers of the presidency to his deputy, Vice President [Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abd_Rabbuh_Mansur_Hadi).

Hadi took office for a two-year term upon winning the uncontested presidential elections in February 2012. A unity government – including a prime minister from the opposition – was formed. Al-Hadi will oversee the drafting of a new constitution, followed by parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014. Saleh returned in February 2012. In the face of objections from thousands of street protesters, parliament granted him full immunity from prosecution. Saleh's son, General [Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Ali_Abdullah_Saleh) continues to exercise a strong hold on sections of the military and security forces.

AQAP claimed responsibility for the February 2012 suicide attack on the presidential palace which killed 26 Republican Guards on the day that President Hadi was sworn in. AQAP was also behind the suicide bombing which killed 96 soldiers in Sanaa three months later. In September 2012, a car bomb attack in Sanaa killed 11 people, a day after a local al-Qaeda leader [Said al-Shihri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Said_al-Shihri) was reported killed in the south.

By 2012 there has been a "small contingent of U.S. special-operations troops" in addition to CIA and "unofficially acknowledged" U.S. military presence in response to increasing terror attacks by AQAP on Yemeni citizens. Many analysts have pointed out the former Yemeni government role in cultivating terrorist activity in the country. Following the election new president [Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abd_Rabbuh_Mansur_Hadi), the Yemeni military was able push [Ansar al-Sharia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ansar_al-Sharia_(Yemen)) back and recapture the [Shabwah Governorate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabwah_Governorate).

**Geography**

Main article: [Geography of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Yemen)



Mountains of north Yemen

Yemen is located in [Western Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Asia), in the southern half of the [Arabian Peninsula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabian_Peninsula), bordering the [Arabian Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabian_Sea), [Gulf of Aden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Aden), and the [Red Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Sea). It lies south of [Saudi Arabia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) and west of [Oman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oman), between latitudes [12°](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12th_parallel_north) and [19° N](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/19th_parallel_north) and longitudes [42°](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/42nd_meridian_east) and [55° E](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/55th_meridian_east).

A number of Red Sea islands, including the [Hanish Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanish_Islands), [Kamaran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamaran), and [Perim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perim), as well as [Socotra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socotra) in the Arabian Sea, belong to Yemen. Many of the islands are volcanic; for example [Jabal al-Tair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jabal_al-Tair_island) had a volcanic eruption in 2007 and before that in 1883.

At 527,970 km2 (203,850 sq mi), Yemen is the world's [50th-largest country](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_total_area). It is comparable in size to [Thailand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thailand) and larger than the U.S. state of [California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California). Yemen is situated at

WikiMiniAtlas



[15°N 48°E﻿ / ﻿15°N 48°E﻿ / 15; 48](http://toolserver.org/~geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Yemen&params=15_N_48_E_).

The country can be divided geographically into four main regions: the coastal plains in the west, the western highlands, the eastern highlands, and the [Rub al Khali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rub_al_Khali) in the east.

The [Tihamah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tihamah) ("hot lands" or "hot earth") form a very arid and flat coastal plain along Yemen's entire Red Sea coastline. Despite the aridity, the presence of many [lagoons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lagoon) makes this region very marshy and a suitable breeding ground for [malaria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaria) [mosquitoes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosquito). There are extensive crescent-shaped sand dunes. The evaporation in the Tihamah is so great that streams from the highlands never reach the sea, but they do contribute to extensive [groundwater](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groundwater) reserves. Today, these are heavily exploited for agricultural use. Near the village of [Madar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madar,_Yemen) about 48 km (30 mi) north of Sana'a, [dinosaur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinosaur) footprints were found, indicating that the area was once a muddy flat.

The Tihamah ends abruptly at the [escarpment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escarpment) of the western highlands. This area, now heavily [terraced](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrace_(agriculture)) to meet the demand for food, receives the highest rainfall in [Arabia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabia), rapidly increasing from 100 mm (3.9 in) per year to about 760 mm (29.9 in) in [Ta'izz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta%27izz) and over 1,000 mm (39.4 in) in [Ibb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibb).

Temperatures are hot in the day but fall dramatically at night. There are perennial streams in the highlands but these never reach the sea because of high evaporation in the Tihamah.

The central highlands are an extensive high plateau over 2,000 meters (6,562 ft) in elevation. This area is drier than the western highlands because of rain-shadow influences but still receives sufficient rain in wet years for extensive cropping. Water storage allows for [irrigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irrigation) and the growing of [wheat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheat) and [barley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barley). Sana'a is located in this region. The highest point in Yemen is [Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jabal_an_Nabi_Shu%27ayb), at 3,666 meters (12,028 ft).

Yemen's portion of the [Rub al Khali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rub_al_Khali) desert in the east is much lower, generally below 1,000 meters (3,281 ft), and receives almost no rain. It is populated only by [Bedouin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedouin) herders of [camels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabian_Camel). The growing scarcity of water is a source of increasing international concern. See [Water supply and sanitation in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_supply_and_sanitation_in_Yemen).

**Politics**

Main article: [Politics of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Yemen)



Large areas of Yemen are controlled by armed rebel groups rather than the national government.

As a result of the [Yemeni revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_revolution), the constitution of Yemen is expected to be rewritten, and then new elections held in 2014. The national government administers the capital and largest cities, but some other regions are outside of its grasp, governed by armed militant groups which expanded their control during the chaos of the 2011–12 uprising. The two major groups are Ansar al-Sharia (a branch or affiliate of [Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Qaeda_in_the_Arabian_Peninsula)), which has declared several "Islamic emirates" in the southern provinces of [Abyan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abyan) and [Shabwah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabwah), and the [Houthis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houthis), a [Shiite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiite) rebel group centered in [Sa'dah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%27dah) province.

Yemen is a [republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic) with a [bicameral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicameral) legislature. Under the 1991 constitution, an elected President, an elected 301-seat [Assembly of Representatives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assembly_of_Representatives_of_Yemen), and an appointed 111-member [Shura Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shura) share power. The [President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Yemen) is the [head of state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_state), and the [Prime Minister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Yemen) is the [head of government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_government).

The 1991 constitution provides that the president be elected by popular vote from at least two candidates endorsed by at least fifteen members of the Parliament. The prime minister, in turn, is appointed by the president and must be approved by two thirds of the Parliament. The presidential term of office is seven years, and the parliamentary term of elected office is six years. [Suffrage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffrage) is universal for people age 18 and older, but only Muslims may hold elected office.

President [Ali Abdullah Saleh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Abdullah_Saleh) became the first elected President in reunified Yemen in 1999 (though he had been President of unified Yemen since 1990 and President of North Yemen since 1978). He was re-elected to office in September 2006. Saleh's victory was marked by an election that international observers judged to be "partly free", though the election was accompanied by violence, violations of press freedoms, and allegations of fraud. Parliamentary elections were held in April 2003, and the [General People's Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_People%27s_Congress_(Yemen)) (GPC) maintained an absolute majority.

The constitution calls for an independent judiciary. The former northern and southern legal codes have been unified. The legal system includes separate commercial courts and a Supreme Court based in [Sana'a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a). [Sharia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharia) is the main source of laws, with many court cases being debated according to the religious basis of law and many judges being religious scholars as well as legal authorities.

Yemen officially abolished [slavery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery) in 1962.

**Foreign relations**

Main article: [Foreign relations of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Yemen)



Saleh at [the Pentagon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pentagon), 8 June 2004

The geography and ruling Imams of [North Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Yemen) kept the country isolated from foreign influence before 1962. The country's relations with Saudi Arabia were defined by the [Taif Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taif_Agreement) of 1934, which delineated the northernmost part of the border between the two kingdoms and set the framework for commercial and other intercourse. The Taif Agreement has been renewed periodically in 20-year increments, and its validity was reaffirmed in 1995. Relations with the British colonial authorities in [Aden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aden) and the south were usually tense.

The Soviet and Chinese Aid Missions established in 1958 and 1959 were the first important non-Muslim presence in North Yemen. Following the September 1962 revolution, the [Yemen Arab Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_Arab_Republic) became closely allied with and heavily dependent upon Egypt. Saudi Arabia aided the royalists in their attempt to defeat the Republicans and did not recognize the Yemen Arab Republic until 1970. At the same time, Saudi Arabia maintained direct contact with Yemeni tribes, which sometimes strained its official relations with the Yemeni Government. Saudi Arabia remained hostile to any form of political and social reform in Yemen and continued to provide financial support for tribal elites.

In February 1989, North Yemen joined [Iraq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq), [Jordan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan), and [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) in forming the [Arab Cooperation Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Cooperation_Council) (ACC), an organization created partly in response to the founding of the [Gulf Cooperation Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_Cooperation_Council) and intended to foster closer economic cooperation and integration among its members. After unification, the Republic of Yemen was accepted as a member of the ACC in place of its YAR predecessor. In the wake of the Persian Gulf crisis, the ACC has remained inactive. Yemen is not a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council mainly for its republican government.

Yemen is a member of the [United Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations), the [Arab League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_League), and the [Organization of Islamic Cooperation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation_of_Islamic_Cooperation), and also participates in the nonaligned movement. The Republic of Yemen accepted responsibility for all treaties and debts of its predecessors, the YAR and the PDRY. Yemen has acceded to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

Since the end of the 1994 civil war, tangible progress has been made on the diplomatic front in restoring normal relations with Yemen's neighbors. In the summer of 2000, Yemen and Saudi Arabia signed an International Border Treaty settling a 50-year old dispute over the location of the border between the two countries. Until the signing of the Yemen-Saudi Arabia peace treaty in July 2000, Yemen's northern border was undefined; the [Arabian Desert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabian_Desert) prevented any human habitation there. Yemen settled its dispute with [Eritrea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eritrea) over the [Hanish Islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanish_Islands) in 1998.

**Human rights**

Main article: [Human rights in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_in_Yemen)

The government and its security forces, often considered to suffer from rampant corruption, have been responsible for torture, inhumane treatment, and extrajudicial executions. There are arbitrary arrests of citizens, especially in the south, as well as arbitrary searches of homes. Prolonged pretrial detention is a serious problem, and judicial corruption, inefficiency, and executive interference undermine due process. Freedom of speech, the press, and religion are all restricted. Journalists who tend to be critical of the government are often harassed and threatened by the police.

Since the start of the [Sa'dah insurgency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%27dah_insurgency) many people accused of supporting Al-Houthi have been arrested and held without charge or trial. According to the U.S. State Department International Religious Freedom Report 2007, "Some Zaydis reported harassment and discrimination by the Government because they were suspected of sympathizing with the al-Houthis. However, it appears the Government's actions against the group were probably politically, not religiously, motivated".

The [U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Committee_for_Refugees_and_Immigrants) reported several violations of [refugee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugee) and asylum seekers' rights in the organization's 2008 *World Refugee Survey*. Yemeni authorities reportedly deported numerous foreigners without giving them access to the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_High_Commissioner_for_Refugees), despite the UN’s repeated requests. Refugees further reported violence directed against them by Yemeni authorities while living in refugee camps. Yemeni officials reportedly raped and beat camp-based refugees with impunity in 2007.

Yemen is ranked last of 135 countries in the 2012 [Global Gender Gap Report](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Gender_Gap_Report). [Human Rights Watch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Rights_Watch) reported on discrimination and [violence against women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence_against_women) as well as on the abolition of the minimum marriage age of fifteen for women. The onset of [puberty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puberty) (interpreted by some to be as low as the age of nine) was set as a requirement for marriage instead. Publicity about the case of ten-year old Yemeni divorcee [Nujood Ali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nujood_Ali) brought the child marriage issue to the fore not only in Yemen but worldwide.

**Military**

Main article: [Military of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_of_Yemen)



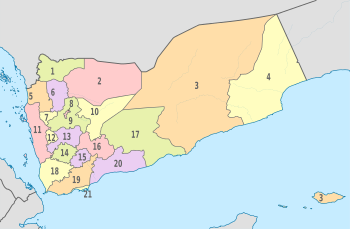
Yemeni soldiers

The armed forces of Yemen include the [Yemen Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_Army) (includes [Republican Guard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_Guard_(Yemen))), Navy (includes Marines), [Yemeni Air Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_Air_Force) (Al Quwwat al Jawwiya al Yamaniya; includes Air Defense Force). A major reorganization of the armed forces continues. The unified air forces and air defenses are now under one command. The navy has concentration in [Aden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aden). Total armed forces manning numbers about 401,000 active personnel, including moreover especially conscripts. The [Yemen Arab Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_Arab_Republic) and The [People's Democratic Republic of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Democratic_Republic_of_Yemen) joined to form the Republic of Yemen on 22 May 1990. The supreme commander of the armed forces is Field Marshal, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al-Hadi, the President of the Republic of Yemen.

The number of military personnel in Yemen is relatively high; in sum, Yemen has the second largest military force on the Arabian Peninsula after Saudi Arabia. In 2012 total active troops were estimated as follows: army, 390,000; navy, 7,000; and air force, 5,000. In September 2007, the government announced the reinstatement of compulsory military service. Yemen’s defense budget, which in 2006 represented approximately 40 percent of the total government budget, is expected to remain high for the near term, as the military draft takes effect and internal security threats continue to escalate. By 2012 Yemen now has 401,000 active personnel.

**Administrative divisions**

Main article: [Governorates of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governorates_of_Yemen)



Governorates of Yemen

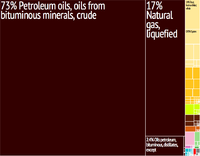
As of February 2004, Yemen is divided into twenty [governorates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governorates_of_Yemen) ([*muhafazat*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhafazat)) and one municipality called "Amanat Al-Asemah" (the latter containing the capital, Sana'a) The Governorates are subdivided into 333 [districts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts_of_Yemen) (*muderiah*), which are subdivided into 2,210 sub-districts, and then into 38,284 villages (as of 2001).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. [Sa'dah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%27dah_Governorate) 2. [Al Jawf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Jawf_Governorate) 3. [Hadramaut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadhramaut_Governorate) 4. [Al Mahrah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Mahrah_Governorate) 5. [Hajjah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hajjah_Governorate) 6. ['Amran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%27Amran_Governorate) 7. [Al Mahwit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Mahwit_Governorate) | 1. [Amanat Al Asimah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a) 2. [Sana'a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a_Governorate) 3. [Ma'rib](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%27rib_Governorate) 4. [Al Hudaydah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Hudaydah_Governorate) 5. [Raymah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymah_Governorate) 6. [Dhamar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhamar_Governorate) 7. [Ibb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibb_Governorate) | 1. [Ad Dali'](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad_Dali%27_Governorate) 2. [Al Bayda'](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Bayda%27_Governorate) 3. [Shabwah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabwah_Governorate) 4. [Ta'izz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta%27izz_Governorate) 5. [Lahij](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lahij_Governorate) 6. [Abyan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abyan_Governorate) 7. ['Adan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%27Adan_Governorate) |

**Economy**

Main article: [Economy of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Yemen)

*Further information:* [*Telecommunications in Yemen*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telecommunications_in_Yemen)*,* [*Transportation in Yemen*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transportation_in_Yemen)*, and* [*Internet usage in Yemen*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_usage_in_Yemen)



Graphical depiction of Yemen's product exports in 28 color-coded categories.



A market scene in Yemen

Yemen is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the [Arab World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_World), with a formal 35% [employment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Employment) rate, dwindling [natural resources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_resources), a young population and increasing [population growth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_growth). Yemen's economy is weak compared to most countries in the Middle-East, mainly because Yemen has very small oil reserves. Yemen's economy depends heavily on the [oil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crude_oil) it produces, and its government receives the vast majority of its revenue from oil taxes. But Yemen's [oil reserves](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_reserves) are expected to be depleted by 2017, possibly bringing on economic collapse. Yemen does have large proven reserves of [natural gas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_gas). [Yemen's first liquified natural gas (LNG) plant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_LNG) began production in October 2009.

Rampant [corruption](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption) is a prime obstacle to development in the country, limiting local reinvestments and driving away regional and international capital. Foreign investments remain largely concentrated around the nation's hydrocarbon industry.

Agriculture here is very diverse, with such crops as [sorghum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sorghum) dominating. [Cotton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotton) and many [fruit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fruit) trees are also grown, with [mangoes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mango) being the most valuable.

Beginning in the mid-1950s, the [Soviet Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) and [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China) provided large-scale assistance. For example, China and the United States are involved with the expansion of the [Sana'a International Airport](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a_International_Airport). In the south, pre-independence economic activity was overwhelmingly concentrated in the port city of [Aden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aden). The seaborne transit trade, which the port relied upon, collapsed with the closure of the [Suez Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suez_Canal) and Britain's withdrawal from Aden in 1967.

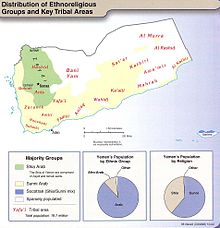
Since unification in 1990, the government has worked to integrate two relatively disparate economic systems. However, severe shocks, including the return in 1990 of approximately 850,000 Yemenis from the Persian Gulf states, a subsequent major reduction of aid flows, and internal political disputes culminating in the [1994 civil war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1994_civil_war_in_Yemen) hampered economic growth.

Since the conclusion of the war, the government made an agreement with the [International Monetary Fund](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Monetary_Fund) (IMF) to implement a structural adjustment program. Phase one of the program included major financial and monetary reforms, including floating the currency, reducing the budget deficit, and cutting subsidies. Phase two will address structural issues such as civil service reform.

In early 1995, the government of Yemen launched an economic, financial, and administrative reform program (EFARP) with the support of the World Bank and the IMF, as well as international donors. These programs had a positive impact on Yemen’s economy and led to the reduction of the budget deficit to less than 3% of [gross domestic product](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_domestic_product) (GDP) during the period 1995–1999 and the correction of macro-financial imbalances. The real growth rate in the non-oil sector rose by 5.6% from 1995 to 1997.

**Demographics**

Main article: [Demographics of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Yemen)



Ethnoreligious groups in 2002

The population of Yemen was about 24 million according to June 2011 estimates, with 46% of the population being under 15 years old and 2.7% above 65 years. In 1950, it was 4.3 million. By 2050, the population is estimated to increase to about 60 million.

Yemen has a high [total fertility rate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_fertility_rate), at 4.45 children per woman, it is the 30th highest in the world.

In the late 20th century [Sana'a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a)’s population grew rapidly, from roughly 55,000 in 1978 to more than 1 million in the early 21st century.

Yemenis are mainly of [Arab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab) origin. When the former states of north and south Yemen were established, most resident minority groups departed. Yemen is still a largely [tribal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribal) society. In the northern mountainous parts of the country live some 400 [Zaydi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaydi) tribes. There are also hereditary caste groups in urban areas such as [Al-Akhdam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Akhdam)



Yemeni Children in San'a

Yemen officially abolished [slavery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery) in 1962. [Turks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turks_in_Yemen) arrived in the region during the [Ottoman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) colonization process; today, there is between 10,000–30,000 people of [Turkish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_people) origin still living in the country. In addition, [Yemenite Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemenite_Jews) once formed a sizable Jewish minority in Yemen with a distinct culture from other Jewish communities in the world Most emigrated to [Israel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel) in the mid-20th century, following the [Jewish exodus from Arab lands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_exodus_from_Arab_lands) and [Operation Magic Carpet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Magic_Carpet_(Yemen)).

Most of the prominent [Indonesians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_Indonesia), [Malaysians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysians), and [Singaporeans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singaporeans) of [Arab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab) descent are [Hadhrami people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadhrami_people) with origins in southern Yemen in the [Hadramawt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadramawt) coastal region. Today there are almost 10,000 Hadramis in [Singapore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore). The Hadramis emigrated not only to Southeast Asia but also to [East Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Africa) and the [Indian subcontinent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_subcontinent). [Maqil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maqil) were a collection of Arab [Bedouin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedouin) tribes of Yemeni origin who migrated westwards via [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt). Several groups of Yemeni Arabs turned south to [Mauritania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritania), and by the end of the 17th century, they dominated the entire country. They can also be found throughout Morocco and in Algeria as well as in other North African Countries.



Sana'a, city center

According to the [US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_Committee_for_Refugees_and_Immigrants), Yemen hosted a population of [refugees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugees) and asylum seekers numbering approximately 124,600 in 2007. Refugees and asylum seekers living in Yemen were predominantly from [Somalia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia) (110,600), [Iraq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq) (11,000), and [Ethiopia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia) (2,000). There are also about 70,000 Iraqis presently living in Yemen. [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_High_Commissioner_for_Refugees) (UNHCR) estimates that in 2008 more than 50,000 Somalis reached Yemen. [Yemen's civil war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%27dah_insurgency) has forced at least 175,000 Yemenis to flee their homes.

The [Yemeni diaspora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_diaspora) is largely concentrated in the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), where between [70,000 and 80,000](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_British) Yemenis reside; just over [15,000 to 20,000](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni-American) Yemenis reside in the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), and 2,000 live in [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France).

**Religion**

Main article: [Religion in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Yemen)



Minaret in [Jibla](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jibla)

Religion in Yemen consists primarily of two principal [Islamic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) religious groups; 53% of the Muslim population is Sunni and 45% is Shiite according to the UNHCR. Sunnis are primarily [Shafi'i](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shafi%27i) but also include significant groups of [Malikis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maliki) and [Hanbalis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanbali). Shi'is are primarily [Zaidis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaidiyyah) and also have significant minorities of Twelver Shias and Musta'ali Western Isma'ili Shias.

The Sunnis are predominantly in the south and southeast. The Zaidis are predominantly in the north and northwest whilst the Ismailis are in the main centers such as Sana'a and Ma'rib. There are mixed communities in the larger cities. About 1 percent of Yemenis are non-Muslim, adhering to [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemenite_Jews), [Hinduism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_in_Arab_states), or [atheism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism).

An estimated 100,000 people of Indian origin are concentrated in the southern part of the country, around Aden, Mukalla, Shihr, Lahaj, Mokha and Hodeidah.

**Languages**

Arabic is the official language, although [English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) is increasingly understood by citizens in major cities. In the [Mahra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahra_Governorate) area (the extreme east) and the island [Soqotra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soqotra), several ancient south-Arabic Semitic languages are spoken.

The official language is [Modern Standard Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Standard_Arabic). [Yemeni Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemeni_Arabic) is spoken in several regional dialects.

Yemen is one of the main homelands of the [South Semitic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Semitic) family of languages. [Mehri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehri) is the largest South Semitic language in Yemen with more than 70,000 speakers. The ethnic group itself is called Mahra. [Soqotri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soqotri) is another South Semitic language, with speakers on the island of Socotra isolated from the pressures of Arabic on the Yemeni mainland. According to the 1990 census in Yemen, the number of speakers there was 57,000 .

Ancient [Hemiari](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hemiari&action=edit&redlink=1), which today is extinct, is another South Semitic language that once was spoken in Yemen.

Foreign language in public schools is taught from grade seven onwards, though the quality of public school instruction is low. Private schools using a British or American system teach English and produce proficient speakers, but Arabic is the dominant language of communication. The number of English speakers in Yemen is small compared to other Arab countries such as [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt), [Lebanon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon), the [UAE](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UAE), and [Saudi Arabia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia).

There is a significant number of [Russian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language) speakers, originating from Yemeni-Russian cross-marriages occurring mainly in the 1970s and 1980s. A small [Vietnamese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnamese_language)-speaking community is found in the capital city of Sana'a, originating from Yemeni immigrants expatriated from Vietnam after the Vietnam War in the 1970s.

A small yet rising number of [ethnic Chinese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhonghua_minzu) in Sana'a brought the [Chinese language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_language) to the country, a byproduct of historic Chinese immigration. Also there are [South Asian Languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=South_Asian_Languages&action=edit&redlink=1) spoken by the small but present [South Asian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asian) community, most notably [Hindi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindi), [Urdu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urdu), [Malayalam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malayalam) and [Marathi languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marathi_language).

**Culture**

Main article: [Culture of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Yemen)



The National Museum in [Sana'a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%27a)

Yemen is a culturally rich country with influence from many civilizations, such as the early civilization of [Sheba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheba).

**Media**

Main article: [Media of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_of_Yemen)



Dance in [Sa'dah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%27dah), northwestern Yemen.

[Radio broadcasting in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_in_Yemen) began in the 1940s when it was still divided into South by the [British](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) and North by [Imami ruling system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahya_Muhammad_Hamid_ed-Din). After the unity of Yemen in 1990, Yemeni government reformed its corporations and founded some additional radio channels which can broadcast locally. However it drew back after 1994 due to destroyed infrastructures by the [civil war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1994_civil_war_in_Yemen).

[Television](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television_in_Yemen) is the most significant media platform in Yemen. Given the low literacy rate in the country, television is the main source of news for Yemenis. There are six free-to-air channels currently headquartered in Yemen, of which four are state-owned.

The [Yemeni film industry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinema_of_Yemen) is in its early stages; only two Yemeni films have been released as of 2008.

**Sport**

[Football](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association_football) is the most popular sport in Yemen. The [Yemen national football team](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_national_football_team) competes in the [FIFA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FIFA) and the [AFC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_Football_Confederation) leagues. The country also hosts many football clubs that compete in the national or international leagues.

Yemen's mountains provide many opportunities for outdoor sports, such as [biking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain_biking), [rock climbing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_climbing), [hill climbing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hill_climbing), [skiing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skiing), [hiking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiking), [mountain jumping](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mountain_jumping&action=edit&redlink=1), and more challenging mountain climbing. Mountain climbing and hiking tours to the [Sarawat Mountains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarawat_Mountains) and the [Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jabal_an_Nabi_Shu%27ayb), including the 5,000 m peaks in the region, are seasonally organized by local and international alpine agencies.

The coast of Yemen and [Socotra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socotra) island also provide many opportunities for water sports, such as [surfing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surfing), [bodyboarding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodyboarding), [sailing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailing), [swimming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swimming_(sport)), and [scuba diving](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scuba_diving). Socotra island is home to one of the best surfing destinations in the world.

[Camel jumping](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Camel_jumping&action=edit&redlink=1) is popular among the [Zaraniq](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Zaraniq&action=edit&redlink=1) tribe on the west coast of Yemen on the desert plain by the [Red Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Sea). Camels are rounded up and placed side to side. Athletes jump from a running start to achieve height and length in the air. The jumpers train year round for competitions. Tribesmen tuck their robes around their waists to reduce impediment while running and leaping.

Yemen's biggest sports event was hosting the [2010 Gulf Cup of Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Gulf_Cup_of_Nations) in Aden and Abyan in the southern part of the country on 22 November 2010. Yemen was thought to be the strongest competitor, but was defeated in the first three matches of the tournament.

The Yemeni national team has never won a championship, though it includes many renowned Arab players.

**World Heritage sites**



High-rise architecture at [Shibam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shibam), Wadi [Hadramawt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadramawt)

Among Yemen’s natural and cultural attractions are four [World Heritage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage) sites.

The Old Walled City of [Shibam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shibam) in Wadi Hadhramaut, inscribed by [UNESCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO) in 1982, two years after Yemen joined the World Heritage Committee, is nicknamed "Manhattan of the Desert" because of its "skyscrapers." Surrounded by a fortified wall made of mud and straw, the 16th-century city is one of the oldest examples of urban planning based on the principle of vertical construction.

The ancient Old City of [Sana’a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sana%E2%80%99a), at an altitude of more than 7,000 feet (2,100 m), has been inhabited for over two and a half millennia and was inscribed in 1986. Sana’a became a major Islamic center in the 7th century, and the 103 mosques, 14 hammams (traditional bath houses), and more than 6,000 houses that survive all date from before the 11th century.

Close to the Red Sea Coast, the Historic Town of [Zabid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zabid), inscribed in 1993, was Yemen’s capital from the 13th to the 15th century, and is an archaeological and historical site. It played an important role for many centuries because of its university, which was a center of learning for the whole Arab and Islamic world. Algebra is said to have been invented there in the early 9th century by the little-known scholar [Al-Jazari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Jazari).

The latest addition to Yemen’s list of World Heritage Sites is the [Socotra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socotra) Archipelago. Mentioned by [Marco Polo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marco_Polo) in the 13th century, this remote and isolated archipelago consists of four islands and two rocky islets delineating the southern limit of the Gulf of Aden. The site has a rich biodiversity. Nowhere else in the world do 37% of Socotra’s 825 plants, 90% of its reptiles and 95% of its snails occur. It is home to 192 bird species, 253 species of coral, 730 species of coastal fish, and 300 species of crab and lobster, as well as a range of [*Aloes*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aloe) and the Dragon’s Blood Tree ([*Dracaena cinnabari*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dracaena_cinnabari)). The cultural heritage of Socotra includes the unique [Soqotri language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soqotri_language).

**Education**

Main article: [Education in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Yemen)



New Sana'a University in Sana

The adult literacy rate in 2010 was 63.9%. The government has committed to reduce illiteracy to less than 10% by 2025. Although Yemen’s government provides for universal, compulsory, free education for children ages six through 15, the U.S. Department of State reports that compulsory attendance is not enforced. The government developed the National Basic Education Development Strategy in 2003 that aimed at providing education to 95% of Yemeni children between the ages of six and 14 years and also at decreasing the gap between males and females in urban and rural areas.

A seven-year project to improve gender equity and the quality and efficiency of secondary education, focusing on girls in rural areas, was approved by the World Bank in March 2008. Following this, Yemen has increased its education spending from 4.5% of GDP in 1995 to 9.6% in 2005.

According to the [Webometrics Ranking of World Universities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Webometrics_Ranking_of_World_Universities), the top-ranking universities in the country are the [Yemeni University of Science & Technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Yemeni_University_of_Science_%26_Technology&action=edit&redlink=1) (6532nd worldwide), [Al Ahgaff University](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Al_Ahgaff_University&action=edit&redlink=1) (8930th) and [Sanaa University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanaa_University) (11043rd).

**Health**

Main article: [Health in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_in_Yemen)



A Yemeni doctor examines an infant in a USAID-sponsored health care clinic

According to 2009 estimates, life expectancy in Yemen is 63.27 years. Despite the significant progress Yemen has made to expand and improve its health care system over the past decade, the system remains severely underdeveloped. Total expenditures on health care in 2004 constituted 5% of gross domestic product. In that same year, the per capita expenditure for health care was very low compared with other Middle Eastern countries—US$34 per capita according to the [World Health Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Organization).

According to the [World Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Bank), the number of doctors in Yemen rose by an average of more than 7% between 1995 and 2000, but as of 2004 there were still only three doctors per 10,000 people. In 2005 Yemen had only 6.1 hospital beds available per 10,000 persons. Health care services are particularly scarce in rural areas; only 25% of rural areas are covered by health services, compared with 80% of urban areas. Most childhood deaths are caused by illnesses for which vaccines exist or that are otherwise preventable.

Sana'a may be the first capital city in the world to run out of drinking water.

**See also**

* [Outline of Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_Yemen)
* [List of Yemen-related topics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Yemen-related_topics)
* [Arab diaspora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_diaspora)
* [Arab Singaporean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Singaporean)
* [Jambiya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jambiya), the Yemeni dagger
* [List of newspapers in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_newspapers_in_Yemen)
* [List of Yemenis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Yemenis)
* [Wars involving Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Wars_involving_Yemen)
* [Water crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_crisis)
* [Yemen Observer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_Observer)
* [Yemen Times](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_Times)
* [Yemen Post](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen_Post)
* [List of cities in Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_in_Yemen)

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