

Zimbabwe



Capital City: Harare.

Background: The UK separated Southern Rhodesia from the [British] South Africa Company in 1923. A 1961 constitution was formulated that favored whites in power. In 1965 the government unilaterally declared its independence, but the UK did not recognise the act and demanded more complete voting rights for the black African majority in the country (then called Rhodesia). UN sanctions and a guerrilla uprising finally led to free elections in 1979 and independence (as Zimbabwe) in 1980. Robert Mugabe, the nation's first prime minister, has been the country's only ruler (as president since 1987) and has dominated the country's political system since independence. His chaotic land redistribution campaign, which began in 2000, caused an exodus of white farmers, crippled the economy, and ushered in widespread shortages of basic commodities. In April 2005, Harare embarked on Operation Restore Order, ostensibly an urban rationalization program, which resulted in the destruction of the homes or businesses of 700,000 mostly poor supporters of the opposition, according to UN estimates.

Geography:

- **Location:** Southern Africa, between South Africa and Zambia.
- **Area comparative:** 5½ times the size of Ireland.
- **Climate:** Tropical; moderated by altitude; rainy season (November to March).
- **Natural resources:** Coal, chromium ore, asbestos, gold, nickel, copper, iron ore, vanadium, lithium, tin, platinum group metals.
- **Natural hazards:** Recurring droughts; floods and severe storms are rare.
- **Environment issues:** Deforestation; soil erosion; land degradation; air and water pollution; the black rhinoceros herd - once the largest concentration of the species in the world - has been significantly reduced by poaching; poor mining practices have led to toxic waste and heavy metal pollution.

People:

- **Population:** 12,236,805
- **Birth rate:** 28.01 births per 1,000
- **Infant mortality:** 51.71 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- **Life expectancy:** *Total population:* 39.29 years, *male:* 40.39 years, *female:* 38.16 years.



Religion: Syncretic (part Christian, part indigenous beliefs) 50%, Christian 25%, indigenous beliefs 24%, Muslim and other 1%.

Government:

- **Type of government:** Parliamentary democracy.
- **Administrative divisions:** 8 provinces and 2 cities with provincial status.
- **Independence:** 18 April 1980 (from UK).
- **National holiday:** Independence Day, 18 April (1980).

Economy:

- **Unemployment:** 80%
- **Population below the poverty line:** 80%
- **Agricultural products:** Corn, cotton, tobacco, wheat, coffee, sugarcane, peanuts; sheep, goats, pigs.
- **Industries:** Mining (coal, gold, platinum, copper, nickel, tin, clay, numerous metallic and nonmetallic ores), steel; wood products, cement, chemicals, fertilizer, clothing and footwear, foodstuffs, beverages.

Education:

- **Literacy:** *Definition:* age 15 and over can read and write English. *Total population:* 90.7%, *male:* 94.2%, *female:* 87.2%.
- **Language:** English (official), Shona, Sindebele (the language of the Ndebele, sometimes called Ndebele), numerous but minor tribal dialects.

Communication:

- **Telephone lines:** Landlines, 328,000; Mobile lines, 423,600.
- **TV stations:** 16
- **Internet users:** 820,000

Asylum: In 2005 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that there were less than 100 applications for asylum in Ireland from Zimbabwean nationals.

Internally Displaced Persons: In July 2005 the United Nations estimated that Zimbabwe had 570,000 internally displaced persons.

Migration: In the first ten months of 2006 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment issued 167 work permits to Zimbabwean nationals.

Sources:

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