**The United Arab Emirates**

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| [**Background**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2028&alphaletter=B&term=Background)**:** |  |
| The Trucial States of the Persian Gulf coast granted the UK control of their defense and foreign affairs in 19th century treaties. In 1971, six of these states - Abu Dhabi, 'Ajman, Al Fujayrah, Ash Shariqah, Dubayy, and Umm al Qaywayn - merged to form the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They were joined in 1972 by Ra's al Khaymah. The UAE's per capita GDP is on par with those of leading West European nations. Its high oil revenues and its moderate foreign policy stance have allowed the UAE to play a vital role in the affairs of the region. For more than three decades, oil and global finance drove the UAE's economy. However, in 2008-09, the confluence of falling oil prices, collapsing real estate prices, and the international banking crisis hit the UAE especially hard. The UAE has essentially avoided the "Arab Spring" unrest seen elsewhere in the Middle East, though in March 2011, political activists and intellectuals signed a petition calling for greater public participation in governance that was widely circulated on the Internet. In an effort to stem potential further unrest, the government announced a multi-year, $1.6-billion infrastructure investment plan for the poorer northern emirates and aggressively pursued advocates of political reform. | |
| [**Location**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2144&alphaletter=L&term=Location)**:** |  |
| Middle East, bordering the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, between Oman and Saudi Arabia | |
| [**Climate:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2059&alphaletter=C&term=Climate) |  |
| desert; cooler in eastern mountains | |
| [**Terrain:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2125&alphaletter=T&term=Terrain) |  |
| flat, barren coastal plain merging into rolling sand dunes of vast desert wasteland; mountains in east | |
| [**Natural resources:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2111&alphaletter=N&term=Natural%20resources) |  |
| petroleum, natural gas | |
| [**Natural hazards:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2021&alphaletter=N&term=Natural%20hazards) |  |
| frequent sand and dust storms | |
| [**Environment - current issues:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2032&alphaletter=E&term=Environment%20-%20current%20issues) |  |
| lack of natural freshwater resources compensated by desalination plants; desertification; beach pollution from oil spills | |
| [**Geography - note:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2113&alphaletter=G&term=Geography%20-%20note) |  |
| strategic location along southern approaches to Strait of Hormuz, a vital transit point for world crude oil | |
| [**Ethnic groups:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2075&alphaletter=E&term=Ethnic%20groups) |  |
| Emirati 19%, other Arab and Iranian 23%, South Asian 50%, other expatriates (includes Westerners and East Asians) 8% (1982)  ***note:***less than 20% are UAE citizens (1982) | |
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| [**Languages:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2098&alphaletter=L&term=Languages) |  |
| Arabic (official), Persian, English, Hindi, Urdu | |
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| [**Religions:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2122&alphaletter=R&term=Religions) |  |
| Muslim (Islam - official) 96% (Shia 16%), other (includes Christian, Hindu) 4% | |
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| [**Population:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2119&alphaletter=P&term=Population) |  |
| 5,473,972 (July 2013 est.)  **country comparison to the world:** [115](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=115#ae)  ***note:***estimate is based on the results of the 2005 census that included a significantly higher estimate of net immigration of non-citizens than previous estimates | |
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| [**Age structure:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2010&alphaletter=A&term=Age%20structure) |  |
| **0-14 years:**20.6% (male 577,599/female 551,346)  **15-24 years:**13.8% (male 449,258/female 306,410)  **25-54 years:**61.5% (male 2,570,054/female 798,070)  **55-64 years:**3.1% (male 127,569/female 40,996)  **65 years and over:**1% (male 33,481/female 19,189) (2013 est.)  **population pyramid: [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/graphics/poppyramid_icon.jpg](javascript:void();)** | |
| [**Population growth rate:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2002&alphaletter=P&term=Population%20growth%20rate) |  |
| 2.87% (2013 est.)  **country comparison to the world:** [14](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2002rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=14#ae) | |
| [**Urbanization:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2212&alphaletter=U&term=Urbanization) |  |
| **urban population:**84.4% of total population (2011)  **rate of urbanization:**2.52% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.) | |
| [**Literacy:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2103&alphaletter=L&term=Literacy) |  |
| **definition:**age 15 and over can read and write  **total population:**90%  **male:**89.5%  **female:**91.5% (2005 est.) | |
| [**Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2229&alphaletter=U&term=Unemployment,%20youth%20ages%2015-24) |  |
| **total:**12.1%  **country comparison to the world:** [99](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2229rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=99#ae)  **male:**7.9%  **female:**21.8% (2008) | |
| [**Government type:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2128&alphaletter=G&term=Government%20type) |  |
| federation with specified powers delegated to the UAE federal government and other powers reserved to member emirates | |
| [**Capital:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2057&alphaletter=C&term=Capital) |  |
| **name:**Abu Dhabi | |
| [**Administrative divisions:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2051&alphaletter=A&term=Administrative%20divisions) |  |
| 7 emirates (imarat, singular - imarah); Abu Zaby (Abu Dhabi), 'Ajman, Al Fujayrah, Ash Shariqah (Sharjah), Dubayy (Dubai), Ra's al Khaymah, Umm al Qaywayn | |
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| [**Independence:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2088&alphaletter=I&term=Independence) |  |
| 2 December 1971 (from the UK) | |
| [**Constitution:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2063&alphaletter=C&term=Constitution) |  |
| previous 1971 (provisional); latest drafted in 1979, became permanent May 1996; amended 2009 (2012) | |
| [**Legal system:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2100&alphaletter=L&term=Legal%20system) |  |
| mixed legal system of Islamic law and civil law | |
| [**Suffrage:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2123&alphaletter=S&term=Suffrage) |  |
| limited; note - rulers of the seven emirates each select a proportion of voters for the Federal National Council (FNC) that together account for about 12 percent of Emirati citizens | |
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| [**Executive branch:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2077&alphaletter=E&term=Executive%20branch) |  |
| **chief of state:**President KHALIFA bin Zayid Al-Nuhayyan (since 3 November 2004), ruler of Abu Zaby (Abu Dhabi) (since 4 November 2004); Vice President and Prime Minister MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID Al-Maktum (since 5 January 2006)  **head of government:**Prime Minister Vice President MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID Al-Maktum (since 5 January 2006); Deputy Prime Ministers SAIF bin Zayid Al-Nuhayyan (since 11 May 2009) and MANSUR bin Zayid Al-Nuhayyan (since 11 May 2009)  **cabinet:**Council of Ministers appointed by the president  (For more information visit the [World Leaders website](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/AE.html) Opens in New Window)  ***note:***there is also a Federal Supreme Council (FSC) composed of the seven emirate rulers; the FSC is the highest constitutional authority in the UAE; establishes general policies and sanctions federal legislation; meets four times a year; Abu Zaby (Abu Dhabi) and Dubayy (Dubai) rulers have effective veto power  **elections:**president and vice president elected by the FSC for five-year terms (no term limits) from among the seven FSC members; election last held 3 November 2004 upon the death of the UAE's Founding Father and first President ZAYID bin Sultan Al Nuhayyan (next election NA); prime minister and deputy prime minister appointed by the president  **election results:**KHALIFA bin Zayid Al-Nuhayyan elected president by a unanimous vote of the FSC; MUHAMMAD bin Rashid Al-Maktum unanimously affirmed vice president after the 2006 death of his brother Sheikh MAKTUM bin Rashid Al-Maktum | |
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| [**Legislative branch:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2101&alphaletter=L&term=Legislative%20branch) |  |
| unicameral Federal National Council (FNC) or Majlis al-Ittihad al-Watani (40 seats; 20 members appointed by the rulers of the constituent states, 20 members elected to serve four-year terms)  **elections:**last held on 24 September 2011 (next to be held in 2015); note - the electoral college was expanded from 6,689 voters in the December 2006 election to 129,274 in the September 2011 election; elections for candidates rather than party lists; 469 candidates including 85 women ran for 20 contested FNC seats  **election results:**elected seats by emirate - Abu Dhabi 4, Dubai 4, Sharjah 3, Ras al-Khaimah 3, Ajman 2, Fujairah 2, Umm al-Quwain 2; note - number of appointed seats for each emirate are same as elected seats | |
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| [**Judicial branch:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2094&alphaletter=J&term=Judicial%20branch) |  |
| **highest court(s):**Federal Supreme Court (consists of the court president and 4 judges)  **judge selection and term of office:**judges appointed by the federal president following approval by the Federal Supreme Council, which includes the rulers of the 7 emirates; judge term NA  **subordinate courts:**Federal Court of Cassation (determines the constitutionality of laws promulgated at the federal and local (emirate) levels; federal level courts of first instance and appeals courts; each emirate has its own court system | |
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| [**Political parties and leaders:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2118&alphaletter=P&term=Political%20parties%20and%20leaders) |  |
| none; political parties are not allowed | |
| [**Economy - overview**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2116&alphaletter=E&term=Economy%20-%20overview)**:** |  |
| The UAE has an open economy with a high per capita income and a sizable annual trade surplus. Successful efforts at economic diversification have reduced the portion of GDP based on oil and gas output to 25%. Since the discovery of oil in the UAE more than 30 years ago, the country has undergone a profound transformation from an impoverished region of small desert principalities to a modern state with a high standard of living. The government has increased spending on job creation and infrastructure expansion and is opening up utilities to greater private sector involvement. In April 2004, the UAE signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Washington and in November 2004 agreed to undertake negotiations toward a Free Trade Agreement with the US; however, those talks have not moved forward. The country's Free Trade Zones - offering 100% foreign ownership and zero taxes - are helping to attract foreign investors. The global financial crisis, tight international credit, and deflated asset prices constricted the economy in 2009. UAE authorities tried to blunt the crisis by increasing spending and boosting liquidity in the banking sector. The crisis hit Dubai hardest, as it was heavily exposed to depressed real estate prices. Dubai lacked sufficient cash to meet its debt obligations, prompting global concern about its solvency. The UAE Central Bank and Abu Dhabi-based banks bought the largest shares. In December 2009 Dubai received an additional $10 billion loan from the emirate of Abu Dhabi. Dependence on oil, a large expatriate workforce, and growing inflation pressures are significant long-term challenges. The UAE's strategic plan for the next few years focuses on diversification and creating more opportunities for nationals through improved education and increased private sector employment. | |
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| [**GDP (purchasing power parity):**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2001&alphaletter=G&term=GDP%20(purchasing%20power%20parity)) |  |
| $269.8 billion (2013 est.)  **country comparison to the world:** [50](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=50#ae)  $259.3 billion (2012 est.)  $248.5 billion (2011 est.)  ***note:***data are in 2013 US dollars | |
| [**GDP - per capita (PPP):**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2004&alphaletter=G&term=GDP%20-%20per%20capita%20(PPP)) |  |
| $29,900 (2013 est.)  **country comparison to the world:** [48](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=48#ae)  $29,600 (2012 est.)  $29,200 (2011 est.)  ***note:***data are in 2013 US dollars | |
| [**Agriculture - products:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2052&alphaletter=A&term=Agriculture%20-%20products) |  |
| dates, vegetables, watermelons; poultry, eggs, dairy products; fish | |
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| [**Industries:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2090&alphaletter=I&term=Industries) |  |
| petroleum and petrochemicals; fishing, aluminum, cement, fertilizers, commercial ship repair, construction materials, some boat building, handicrafts, textiles | |
| [**Labor force:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2095&alphaletter=L&term=Labor%20force) |  |
| 4.588 million  **country comparison to the world:** [84](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2095rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=84#ae)  ***note:***expatriates account for about 85% of the work force (2013 est.) | |
| [**Labor force - by occupation:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2048&alphaletter=L&term=Labor%20force%20-%20by%20occupation) |  |
| **agriculture:**7%  **industry:**15%  **services:**78% (2000 est.) | |
| [**Unemployment rate:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2129&alphaletter=U&term=Unemployment%20rate) |  |
| 2.4% (2001)  **country comparison to the world:** [16](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2129rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=16#ae) | |
| [**Population below poverty line:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2046&alphaletter=P&term=Population%20below%20poverty%20line) |  |
| 19.5% (2003) | |
| [**Exports:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2078&alphaletter=E&term=Exports) |  |
| $368.9 billion (2013 est.)  **country comparison to the world:** [18](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2078rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=18#ae)  $350.1 billion (2012 est.) | |
| [**Exports - commodities:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2049&alphaletter=E&term=Exports%20-%20commodities) |  |
| crude oil 45%, natural gas, reexports, dried fish, dates | |
| [**Exports - partners:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2050&alphaletter=E&term=Exports%20-%20partners) |  |
| Japan 15.4%, India 13.4%, Iran 10.7%, Thailand 5.5%, Singapore 5.5%, South Korea 5.3% (2012) | |
| [**Imports:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2087&alphaletter=I&term=Imports) |  |
| $249.6 billion (2013 est.)  **country comparison to the world:** [21](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2087rank.html?countryname=United%20Arab%20Emirates&countrycode=ae&regionCode=mde&rank=21#ae)  $221.9 billion (2012 est.) | |
| [**Imports - commodities:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2058&alphaletter=I&term=Imports%20-%20commodities) |  |
| machinery and transport equipment, chemicals, food | |
| [**Imports - partners:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2061&alphaletter=I&term=Imports%20-%20partners) |  |
| India 17%, China 13.7%, US 10.5%, Germany 5.1%, Japan 4.2% (2012) | |

[**Transnational Issues ::UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**](javascript:void();)

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| [**Disputes - international**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2070&alphaletter=D&term=Disputes%20-%20international)**:** |  |
| boundary agreement was signed and ratified with Oman in 2003 for entire border, including Oman's Musandam Peninsula and Al Madhah enclaves, but contents of the agreement and detailed maps showing the alignment have not been published; Iran and UAE dispute Tunb Islands and Abu Musa Island, which Iran occupies | |
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| [**Illicit drugs:**](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/notesanddefs.html?fieldkey=2086&alphaletter=I&term=Illicit%20drugs) |  |
| the UAE is a drug transshipment point for traffickers given its proximity to Southwest Asian drug-producing countries; the UAE's position as a major financial center makes it vulnerable to money laundering; anti-money-laundering controls improving, but informal banking remains unregulated | |