



Africa :: Lesotho

Introduction :: Lesotho

Background:

Basutoland was renamed the Kingdom of Lesotho upon independence from the UK in 1966. The Basuto National Party ruled the country during its first two decades. King MOSHOESHOE was exiled in 1990, but returned to Lesotho in 1992 and was reinstated in 1995 and subsequently succeeded by his son, King LETSIE III, in 1996. Constitutional government was restored in 1993 after seven years of military rule. In 1998, violent protests and a military mutiny following a contentious election prompted a brief but bloody intervention by South African and Batswana military forces under the aegis of the Southern African Development Community. Subsequent constitutional reforms restored relative political stability. Peaceful parliamentary elections were held in 2002, but the National Assembly elections of February 2007 were hotly contested and aggrieved parties disputed how the electoral law was applied to award proportional seats in the Assembly. In May 2012, competitive elections involving 18 parties saw Prime Minister Motsoahae Thomas THABANE form a coalition government - the first in the country's history - that ousted the 14-year incumbent, Pakalitha MOSISILI, who peacefully transferred power the following month.

Geography :: Lesotho

Location:

Southern Africa, an enclave of South Africa

Geographic coordinates:

29 30 S, 28 30 E

Map references:

Africa

Area:

total: 30,355 sq km

country comparison to the world: 142

land: 30,355 sq km

water: 0 sq km

Area - comparative:

slightly smaller than Maryland

Land boundaries:

total: 909 km

border countries: South Africa 909 km

Coastline:

0 km (landlocked)

Maritime claims:

none (landlocked)

Climate:

temperate; cool to cold, dry winters; hot, wet summers

Terrain:

mostly highland with plateaus, hills, and mountains

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: junction of the Orange and Makhaleng Rivers 1,400 m

highest point: Thabana Ntlenyana 3,482 m

Natural resources:

water, agricultural and grazing land, diamonds, sand, clay, building stone

Land use:

arable land: 10.14%

permanent crops: 0.13%

other: 89.72% (2011)

Irrigated land:

26.37 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources:

3.02 cu km (2011)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural):

total: 0.04 cu km/yr (46%/46%/9%)

per capita: 21.79 cu m/yr (2000)

Natural hazards:

periodic droughts

Environment - current issues:

population pressure forcing settlement in marginal areas results in overgrazing, severe soil erosion, and soil exhaustion; desertification; Highlands Water Project controls, stores, and redirects water to South Africa

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands

signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements

Geography - note:

landlocked, completely surrounded by South Africa; mountainous, more than 80% of the country is 1,800 m above sea level

People and Society :: Lesotho

Nationality:

noun: Mosotho (singular), Basotho (plural)

adjective: Basotho

Ethnic groups:

Sotho 99.7%, Europeans, Asians, and other 0.3%,

Languages:

Sesotho (official) (southern Sotho), English (official), Zulu, Xhosa

Religions:

Christian 80%, indigenous beliefs 20%

Population:

1,936,181 (July 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 149

note: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, higher death rates, lower population growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected

Age structure:

0-14 years: 33.1% (male 322,189/female 319,618)
15-24 years: 20.2% (male 185,931/female 205,643)
25-54 years: 36.3% (male 344,120/female 359,370)
55-64 years: 4.9% (male 50,781/female 44,399)
65 years and over: 5.4% (male 52,241/female 51,889) (2013 est.)

Dependency ratios:

total dependency ratio: 68.3 %
youth dependency ratio: 61.2 %
elderly dependency ratio: 7.1 %
potential support ratio: 14.1 (2013)

Median age:

total: 23.4 years
male: 23.3 years
female: 23.4 years (2013 est.)

Population growth rate:

0.34% (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 164

Birth rate:

26.31 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 51

Death rate:

15.02 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 3

Net migration rate:

-7.89 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 203

Urbanization:

urban population: 27.6% of total population (2011)
rate of urbanization: 3.57% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

Major urban areas - population:

MASERU (capital) 220,000 (2009)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.03 male(s)/female
0-14 years: 1.01 male(s)/female
15-24 years: 0.9 male(s)/female
25-54 years: 0.96 male(s)/female
55-64 years: 1.14 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.99 male(s)/female
total population: 0.97 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

Mother's mean age at first birth:

21.2
note: Median age at first birth among women 25-29 (2009 est.)

Maternal mortality rate:

620 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)
country comparison to the world: 12

Infant mortality rate:

total: 51.93 deaths/1,000 live births
country comparison to the world: 38
male: 55.96 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 47.78 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 52.3 years
country comparison to the world: 212
male: 52.2 years
female: 52.39 years (2013 est.)

Total fertility rate:

2.83 children born/woman (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 69

Contraceptive prevalence rate:

47% (2009/10)

Health expenditures:

12.8% of GDP (2011)

country comparison to the world: 8

Physicians density:

0.05 physicians/1,000 population (2003)

Hospital bed density:

1.3 beds/1,000 population (2006)

Drinking water source:**improved:**

urban: 91% of population

rural: 73% of population

total: 78% of population

unimproved:

urban: 9% of population

rural: 27% of population

total: 22% of population (2010 est.)

Sanitation facility access:**improved:**

urban: 32% of population

rural: 24% of population

total: 26% of population

unimproved:

urban: 68% of population

rural: 76% of population

total: 74% of population (2010 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

23.6% (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 3

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

290,000 (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 20

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

14,000 (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 22

Obesity - adult prevalence rate:

14.6% (2008)

country comparison to the world: 120

Children under the age of 5 years underweight:

13.5% (2010)

country comparison to the world: 56

Education expenditures:

13% of GDP (2008)

country comparison to the world: 1

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 89.6%

male: 83.3%

female: 95.6% (2010 est.)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

total: 10 years

male: 10 years

female: 10 years (2006)

Child labor - children ages 5-14:

total number: 103,020

percentage: 23 % (2000 est.)

Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:

total: 34.4%

country comparison to the world: 17

male: 29%

female: 41.9% (2008)

Government :: Lesotho

Country name:

conventional long form: Kingdom of Lesotho

conventional short form: Lesotho

local long form: Kingdom of Lesotho

local short form: Lesotho

former: Basutoland

Government type:

parliamentary constitutional monarchy

Capital:

name: Maseru

geographic coordinates: 29 19 S, 27 29 E

time difference: UTC+2 (7 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions:

10 districts; Berea, Butha-Buthe, Leribe, Mafeteng, Maseru, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek, Quthing, Thaba-Tseka

Independence:

4 October 1966 (from the UK)

National holiday:

Independence Day, 4 October (1966)

Constitution:

previous 1959, 1967; latest adopted 2 April 1993 (effectively restoring the 1967 version); amended 2001

Legal system:

mixed legal system of English common law and Roman-Dutch law; judicial review of legislative acts in High Court and Court of Appeal

International law organization participation:

accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction with reservations; accepts ICtJ jurisdiction

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

chief of state: King LETSIE III (since 7 February 1996); note - King LETSIE III formerly occupied the throne from November 1990 to February 1995 while his father was in exile

head of government: Prime Minister Motsoahae Thomas THABANE (since 8 June 2012)

cabinet: Cabinet

(For more information visit the **World Leaders website** [↗](#))

elections: according to the constitution, the leader of the majority party, or coalition of parties, in the Assembly automatically becomes prime minister; the monarchy is hereditary, but, under the terms of the constitution that came into effect after the March 1993 election, the monarch is a "living symbol of national unity" with no executive or legislative powers; under traditional law the college of chiefs has the power to depose the monarch, determine who is next in the line of succession, or who shall serve as regent in the event that the successor is not of mature age

Legislative branch:

bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (33 members - 22 principal chiefs and 11 other members appointed by the ruling party) and the Assembly (120 seats, 80 by popular vote and 40 by proportional vote; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)

elections: last held on 26 May 2012 (next to be held in 2017)

election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - DC 48, ABC 30, LCD 26, BNP 5, PFD 3, NIP 2, other 6

Judicial branch:

highest court(s): Court of Appeal (consists of the court president, such number of justices of appeal as set by Parliament, and the Chief Justice and the puisne judges of the High Court ex officio); High Court (consists of the chief justice and such number of puisne judges as set by Parliament); note - both the Court of Appeal and the High Court have jurisdiction in constitutional issues

judge selection and term of office: Court of Appeal president and High Court chief justice appointed by the monarch on the advice of the prime minister; puisne judges appointed by the monarch on advice of the Judicial Service Commission, an independent body of judicial officers and officials designated by the monarch; judges of both courts can serve until age 75

subordinate courts: Magistrate Courts; customary or traditional courts; Courts Martial

Political parties and leaders:

All Basotho Convention or ABC [Motsoahae Thomas THABANE]

Basotho Batho Democratic Party or BBDP [Geremane RAMATHEBANE]

Basotho Congress Party or BCP [Thulo MAHLAKENG]

Basotho Democratic National Party or BDNP [Thabang NYEOE]

Basotho National Party or BNP [Thesele 'MASERIBANE]

Democratic Congress or DC [Pakalitha MOSISILI]

Lesotho Congress for Democracy or LCD [Mothetjoa METSING]

Lesotho Peoples Congress or LPC [Kelebone MAOPE]

Lesotho Workers Party or LWP [Macaefa BILLY]

Marematlou Freedom Party or MFP [Vincent MALEBO]

National Independent Party or NIP [Kimetso MATHABA]

Political pressure groups and leaders:

Media Institute of Southern Africa, Lesotho chapter [Tsebo MATŠASA] (pushes for media freedom)

International organization participation:

ACP, AfDB, AU, C, CD, FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, ILO, IMF, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent), ITU, MIGA, NAM, OPCW, SACU, SADC, UN, UNAMID, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Eliachim Molapi SEBATANE (since 2 November 2011)

chancery: 2511 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008

telephone: [1] (202) 797-5533

FAX: [1] (202) 234-6815

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); Charge d'Affaires Carl B. FOX

embassy: 254 Kingsway Road, Maseru West (Consular Section)

mailing address: P. O. Box 333, Maseru 100, Lesotho

telephone: [266] 22 312666

FAX: [266] 22 310116

Flag description:

three horizontal stripes of blue (top), white, and green in the proportions of 3:4:3; the colors represent rain, peace, and prosperity respectively; centered in the white stripe is a black Basotho hat representing the indigenous people; the flag was unfurled in October 2006 to celebrate 40 years of independence

National symbol(s):

Basotho hat

National anthem:

name: "Lesotho fatse la bo ntat'a rona" (Lesotho, Land of Our Fathers)

lyrics/music: Francois COILLARD/Ferdinand-Samuel LAUR

note: adopted 1967; the anthem's music derives from an 1823 Swiss songbook

Economy - overview:

Small, mountainous, and completely landlocked by South Africa, Lesotho is a least developed country in which about three-fourths of the people live in rural areas and engage in subsistence agriculture. Lesotho produces less than 20% of the nation's demand for food. Rain-fed agriculture is vulnerable to weather and climate variability; an estimated 725,500 people will require food assistance in 2012/13. The distribution of income in Lesotho remains inequitable. Lesotho relies on South Africa for much of its economic activity. Lesotho imports 90% of the goods it consumes from South Africa, including most agricultural inputs. Households depend heavily on remittances from family members working in South Africa, in mines, on farms and as domestic workers, though mining employment has declined substantially since the 1990s. Government revenue depends heavily on transfers from South Africa. Customs duties from the Southern Africa Customs Union accounted for 44% of government revenue in 2012. The South African Government also pays royalties for water transferred to South Africa from a dam and reservoir system in Lesotho. However, the government continues to strengthen its tax system to reduce dependency on customs duties and other transfers. Access to credit remains a problem for the private sector. The government maintains a large presence in the economy - public expenditures accounted for 55% of GDP in 2010 and the government remains Lesotho's largest employer. Lesotho's largest private employer is the textile and garment industry - approximately 36,000 Basotho, mainly women, work in factories producing garments for export to South Africa and the US. Diamond mining in Lesotho has grown in recent years and may contribute 8.5% to GDP by 2015, according to current forecasts. Lesotho's \$362.5 million Millennium Challenge Account Compact, which focused on strengthening the healthcare system, developing the private sector, and providing access to improved water supplies and sanitation facilities, will end in September 2013. Despite the 2008/09 global economic crisis, the economy has recovered strongly with growth averaging nearly 5% per year since 2010.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$4.041 billion (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 176

\$3.865 billion (2011 est.)

\$3.657 billion (2010 est.)

note: data are in 2012 US dollars

GDP (official exchange rate):

\$2.428 billion (2012 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:

4.5% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 78

5.7% (2011 est.)

6.3% (2010 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$2,100 (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 191

\$2,000 (2011 est.)

\$1,900 (2010 est.)

note: data are in 2012 US dollars

Gross national saving:

7.8% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 136

7.8% of GDP (2011 est.)

11.2% of GDP (2010 est.)

GDP - composition, by end use:

household consumption: 90.8%

government consumption: 38.1%

investment in fixed capital: 31.8%

investment in inventories: 0.8%

exports of goods and services: 46.5%

imports of goods and services: -108.1%
(2012 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

agriculture: 7.4%
industry: 34.6%
services: 58% (2012 est.)

Agriculture - products:

corn, wheat, pulses, sorghum, barley; livestock

Industries:

food, beverages, textiles, apparel assembly, handicrafts, construction, tourism

Industrial production growth rate:

9.3% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 19

Labor force:

855,600 (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 149

Labor force - by occupation:

agriculture: 86%

industry and services: 14%

note: most of resident population engaged in subsistence agriculture; roughly 35% of the active male wage earners work in South Africa (2002 est.)

Unemployment rate:

25% (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: 173

45% (2002 est.)

Population below poverty line:

49% (1999)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 1%

highest 10%: 39.4% (2003)

Distribution of family income - Gini index:

63.2 (1995)

country comparison to the world: 1

56 (1986-87)

Budget:

revenues: \$1.658 billion

expenditures: \$1.536 billion (2012 est.)

Taxes and other revenues:

68.3% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 3

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

5% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 12

Public debt:

NA

Fiscal year:

1 April - 31 March

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

6.1% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 163

5% (2011 est.)

Central bank discount rate:

9.36% (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 24

10% (31 December 2010 est.)

Commercial bank prime lending rate:

10.12% (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 85

10.43% (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of narrow money:

\$408.9 million (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 162

\$346.5 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of broad money:

\$897 million (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 171

\$820.4 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of domestic credit:

\$75,280 (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 180

\$15,600 (31 December 2011 est.)

Current account balance:

\$-587.4 million (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 107

\$-460.4 million (2011 est.)

Exports:

\$972.4 million (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 158

\$1.175 billion (2011 est.)

Exports - commodities:

manufactures (clothing, footwear), wool and mohair, food and live animals, electricity, water, diamonds

Imports:

\$2.239 billion (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 159

\$2.155 billion (2011 est.)

Imports - commodities:

food; building materials, vehicles, machinery, medicines, petroleum products

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:

\$749.4 million (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 142

\$832.6 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Debt - external:

\$779.8 million (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 166

\$791.9 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:

\$398 million (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 103

\$200.3 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Exchange rates:

maloti (LSL) per US dollar -

8.2 (2012 est.)

7.26 (2011 est.)

7.32 (2010 est.)

8.47 (2009)

7.75 (2008)

Electricity - production:

200 million kWh (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 183

Electricity - consumption:

307 million kWh (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 174

Electricity - exports:

0 kWh (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 95

Electricity - imports:

247 million kWh (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 83

Electricity - installed generating capacity:

76,000 kW (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 178

Electricity - from fossil fuels:

0% of total installed capacity (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 209

Electricity - from nuclear fuels:

0% of total installed capacity (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 126

Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:

100% of total installed capacity (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 1

Electricity - from other renewable sources:

0% of total installed capacity (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 194

Crude oil - production:

0 bbl/day (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 186

Crude oil - exports:

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 145

Crude oil - imports:

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 210

Crude oil - proved reserves:

0 bbl (1 January 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 154

Refined petroleum products - production:

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 197

Refined petroleum products - consumption:

1,777 bbl/day (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 191

Refined petroleum products - exports:

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 191

Refined petroleum products - imports:

3,711 bbl/day (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 164

Natural gas - production:

0 cu m (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 156

Natural gas - consumption:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 164

Natural gas - exports:

0 cu m (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 136

Natural gas - imports:

0 cu m (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 88

Natural gas - proved reserves:

0 cu m (1 January 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 161

Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:

445,600 Mt (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 181

Communications :: Lesotho

Telephones - main lines in use:

43,100 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 168

Telephones - mobile cellular:

1.312 million (2012)

country comparison to the world: 153

Telephone system:

general assessment: rudimentary system consisting of a modest number of landlines, a small microwave radio relay system, and a small radiotelephone communication system; mobile-cellular telephone system is expanding

domestic: privatized in 2001, Telecom Lesotho was tasked with providing an additional 50,000 fixed-line connections within five years, a target not met; mobile-cellular service dominates the market and is expanding with a subscribership roughly 65 per 100 persons in 2011; rural services are scant

international: country code - 266; satellite earth station - 1 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean) (2011)

Broadcast media:

1 state-owned TV station and 2 state-owned radio stations; government controls most private broadcast media; satellite TV subscription service available; transmissions of multiple international broadcasters obtainable (2008)

Internet country code:

.ls

Internet hosts:

11,030 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 131

Internet users:

76,800 (2009)

country comparison to the world: 168

Transportation :: Lesotho

Airports:

24 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 132

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 3

over 3,047 m: 1

914 to 1,523 m: 1

under 914 m: 1 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 21

914 to 1,523 m: 5

under 914 m:

16 (2013)

Roadways:

total: 5,940 km

country comparison to the world: 150

paved: 1,069 km

unpaved: 4,871 km (2011)

Military :: Lesotho

Military branches:

Lesotho Defense Force (LDF): Army (includes Air Wing) (2012)

Military service age and obligation:

18-24 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription; women serve as commissioned officers (2012)

Manpower available for military service:

males age 16-49: 472,456

females age 16-49: 508,953 (2010 est.)

Manpower fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 270,184

females age 16-49: 275,734 (2010 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:

male: 19,110

female: 20,037 (2010 est.)

Military expenditures:

1.9% of GDP (2012)

country comparison to the world: 70

Military - note:

Lesotho's declared policy is maintenance of its independent sovereignty and preservation of internal security; in practice, external security is guaranteed by South Africa; restructuring of the Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) and Ministry of Defense and Public Service over the past five years has focused on subordinating the defense apparatus to civilian control and restoring the LDF's cohesion; the restructuring has considerably improved capabilities and professionalism, but the LDF is disproportionately large for a small, poor country; the government has outlined a reduction to a planned 1,500-man strength, but these plans have met with vociferous resistance from the political opposition and from inside the LDF (2008)

Transnational Issues :: Lesotho

Disputes - international:

South Africa has placed military units to assist police operations along the border of Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique to control smuggling, poaching, and illegal migration

Trafficking in persons:

current situation: Lesotho is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking and for men subjected to forced labor; Basotho women and children are subjected to domestic servitude and children, to a lesser extent, commercial sexual exploitation within Lesotho and South Africa; some Basotho women willingly migrate to South Africa seeking work in domestic service only to be forced into prostitution; some Basotho men who voluntarily migrate to South Africa for work become victims of forced labor in agriculture and mining or are coerced into committing crimes

tier rating: Tier 2 Watch List - Lesotho does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so; the government has decreased its anti-trafficking law enforcement and victim protection efforts during 2012; authorities have initiated fewer prosecutions, ceased arresting suspected trafficking offenders due to a backlog of prosecutions, and stopped referring victims to NGO centers for care; the government has not implemented key portions of the 2011 anti-trafficking act, including failing to develop formal referral procedures, establish victim care centers, and complete a national action plan (2013)