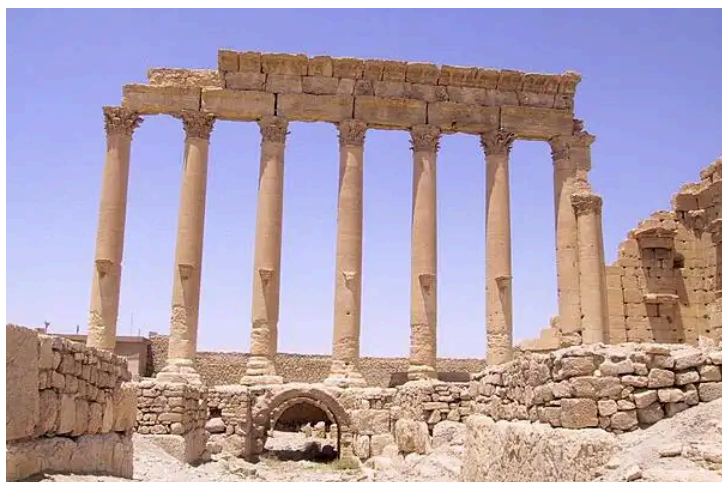


Explore All Countries Syria

Middle East

Page last updated: August 20, 2024



INTRODUCTION

Background

After World War I, France acquired a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. The French administered the area until granting it independence in 1946. The new country lacked political stability and experienced a series of military coups. Syria united with Egypt in 1958 to form the United Arab Republic. In 1961, the two entities separated, and the Syrian Arab Republic was reestablished. In the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Syria lost control of the Golan Heights region to Israel. During the 1990s, Syria and Israel held occasional, albeit unsuccessful, peace talks over its return. In 1970, Hafiz al-ASAD, a member of the socialist Ba'ath Party and the minority Alawi sect, seized power in a bloodless coup and brought political stability to the country. Following the death of al-ASAD, his son, Bashar al-ASAD, was approved as president by popular referendum in 2000. Syrian troops that were stationed in Lebanon since 1976 in an ostensible peacekeeping role were withdrawn in 2005. During the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hizballah, Syria placed its military forces on alert but did not intervene directly on behalf of its ally Hizballah. In 2007, Bashar al-ASAD's second term as president was again approved in a referendum.

In the wake of major uprisings elsewhere in the region, antigovernment protests broke out in the southern province of Dar'a in 2011. Protesters called for the legalization of political parties, the removal of corrupt local officials, and the repeal of the restrictive Emergency Law allowing arrests without charge. Demonstrations and violent unrest spread across Syria, and the government responded with concessions, but also with military force and detentions that led to extended clashes and eventually civil war. International pressure on the Syrian Government intensified after 2011, as the Arab League, the EU, Turkey, and the US expanded economic sanctions against the ASAD regime and those entities that supported it. In 2012, more than 130 countries recognized the Syrian National Coalition as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people. In 2015, Russia launched a military intervention on behalf of the ASAD regime, and domestic and foreign-government-aligned forces recaptured swaths of territory from opposition forces. With foreign support, the regime continued to periodically regain opposition-held territory until 2020, when Turkish firepower halted a regime advance and forced a stalemate between regime and opposition forces. The government lacks territorial control over much of the northeastern part of the country, which the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) hold, and a smaller area dominated by Turkey.

Since 2016, Turkey has conducted three large-scale military operations to capture territory along Syria's northern border. Some opposition forces organized under the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army and Turkish forces have maintained control of northwestern Syria along the Turkish border with the Afrin area of Aleppo Province since 2018. The violent extremist organization Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (formerly the Nusra Front) emerged in 2017 as the predominant opposition force in Idlib Province, and still dominates an area also hosting Turkish forces. Negotiations have failed to produce a resolution to the conflict, and the UN estimated in 2022 that at least 306,000 people have died during the civil war. Approximately 6.7 million Syrians were internally displaced as of 2022, and 14.6 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance across the country. An additional 5.6 million Syrians were registered refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and North Africa. The conflict in Syria remains one of the two largest displacement crises worldwide (the other is the full-scale invasion of Ukraine).

GEOGRAPHY

Location

Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Lebanon and Turkey

Geographic coordinates

35 00 N, 38 00 E

Map references

Middle East

Area

total : 187,437 sq km

land: 185,887 sq km

water: 1,550 sq km

note: includes 1,295 sq km of Israeli-occupied territory

comparison ranking: total 89

Area - comparative

slightly more than 1.5 times the size of Pennsylvania

Area comparison map:



Land boundaries

total: 2,363 km

border countries (5): Iraq 599 km; Israel 83 km; Jordan 379 km; Lebanon 403 km; Turkey 899 km

Coastline

193 km

Maritime claims

territorial sea: 12 nm

contiguous zone: 24 nm

Climate

mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically in Damascus

Terrain

primarily semiarid and desert plateau; narrow coastal plain; mountains in west

Elevation

highest point: Mount Hermon (Jabal a-Shayk) 2,814 m

lowest point: Yarmuk River -66 m

mean elevation: 514 m

Natural resources

petroleum, phosphates, chrome and manganese ores, asphalt, iron ore, rock salt, marble, gypsum, hydropower

Land use

agricultural land: 75.8% (2018 est.)

arable land: 25.4% (2018 est.)

permanent crops: 5.8% (2018 est.)

permanent pasture: 44.6% (2018 est.)

forest: 2.7% (2018 est.)

other: 21.5% (2018 est.)

Irrigated land

13,100 sq km (2013)

Major rivers (by length in km)

Euphrates (shared with Turkey [s], Iran, and Iraq [m]) - 3,596 km; Tigris (shared with Turkey, Iran, and Iraq [m]) - 1,950 km

note – [s] after country name indicates river source; [m] after country name indicates river mouth

Major watersheds (area sq km)

Indian Ocean drainage: (*Persian Gulf*) Tigris and Euphrates (918,044 sq km)

Population distribution

significant population density along the Mediterranean coast; larger concentrations found in the major cities of Damascus, Aleppo (the country's largest city), and Hims (Homs); more than half of the population lives in the coastal plain, the province of Halab, and the Euphrates River valley

note: the ongoing civil war has altered the population distribution

Natural hazards

dust storms, sandstorms

volcanism: Syria's two historically active volcanoes, Es Safa and an unnamed volcano near the Turkish border have not erupted in centuries

Geography - note

the capital of Damascus -- located at an oasis fed by the Barada River -- is thought to be one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities; there are 42 Israeli settlements and civilian land use sites in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights (2017)

PEOPLE AND SOCIETY**Population**

total: 23,865,423

male: 11,981,578

female: 11,883,845 (2024 est.)

comparison rankings: female 58; male 57; total 57

Nationality

noun: Syrian(s)

adjective: Syrian

Ethnic groups

Arab ~50%, Alawite ~15%, Kurd ~10%, Levantine ~10%, other ~15% (includes Druze, Ismaili, Imami, Nusairi, Assyrian, Turkoman, Armenian)

Languages

Arabic (official), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian, French, English

major-language sample(s):

كتاب حقائق العالم، المصدر الذي لا يمكن الاستغناء عنه للمعلومات الأساسية (Arabic)

راستییه‌کانی جیهان، باشترین سەرچاوه‌یه بۆ زانیارییه بنه‌رتیبه‌کان (Kurdish)

The World Factbook, the indispensable source for basic information.

Arabic audio sample:**Kurdish audio sample:****Religions**

Muslim 87% (official; includes Sunni 74% and Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia 13%), Christian 10% (includes Orthodox, Uniate, and Nestorian), Druze 3%

note: the Christian population may be considerably smaller as a result of Christians fleeing the country during the ongoing civil war

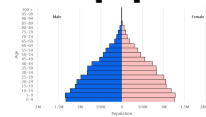
Age structure

0-14 years: 33% (male 4,037,493/female 3,828,777)

15-64 years: 62.8% (male 7,475,355/female 7,522,797)

65 years and over: 4.2% (2024 est.) (male 468,730/female 532,271)

2023 population pyramid:



Dependency ratios

total dependency ratio: 55.4

youth dependency ratio: 53

elderly dependency ratio: 7.4

potential support ratio: 13.5 (2021 est.)

Median age

total: 24.1 years (2024 est.)

male: 23.6 years

female: 24.7 years

comparison ranking: total 178

Population growth rate

1.67% (2024 est.)

comparison ranking: 56

Birth rate

21.7 births/1,000 population (2024 est.)

comparison ranking: 57

Death rate

4 deaths/1,000 population (2024 est.)

comparison ranking: 214

Net migration rate

-1.1 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2024 est.)

comparison ranking: 147

Population distribution

significant population density along the Mediterranean coast; larger concentrations found in the major cities of Damascus, Aleppo (the country's largest city), and Hims (Homs); more than half of the population lives in the coastal plain, the province of Halab, and the Euphrates River valley

note: the ongoing civil war has altered the population distribution

Urbanization

urban population: 57.4% of total population (2023)

rate of urbanization: 5.38% annual rate of change (2020-25 est.)

Major urban areas - population

2.585 million DAMASCUS (capital), 2.203 million Aleppo, 1.443 million Hims (Homs), 996,000 Hamah (2023)

Sex ratio

at birth: 1.06 male(s)/female

0-14 years: 1.05 male(s)/female

15-64 years: 0.99 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.88 male(s)/female

total population: 1.01 male(s)/female (2024 est.)

Maternal mortality ratio

30 deaths/100,000 live births (2020 est.)

comparison ranking: 111

Infant mortality rate

total: 15.1 deaths/1,000 live births (2024 est.)

male: 16.6 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 13.5 deaths/1,000 live births

comparison ranking: total 92

Life expectancy at birth

total population: 74.8 years (2024 est.)

male: 73.4 years

female: 76.4 years

comparison ranking: total population 137

Total fertility rate

2.69 children born/woman (2024 est.)

comparison ranking: 60

Gross reproduction rate

1.31 (2024 est.)

Contraceptive prevalence rate

NA

Drinking water source

improved: urban: 99.6% of population

rural: 100% of population

total: 99.8% of population

unimproved: urban: 0.4% of population

rural: 0.7% of population

total: 0.2% of population (2020 est.)

Current health expenditure

NA

Physician density

1.29 physicians/1,000 population (2016)

Hospital bed density

1.4 beds/1,000 population (2017)

Sanitation facility access

improved: urban: 99.5% of population

rural: 99.5% of population

total: 99.5% of population

unimproved: urban: 0.5% of population

rural: 0.5% of population

total: 0.5% of population (2020 est.)

Obesity - adult prevalence rate

27.8% (2016)

comparison ranking: 35

Alcohol consumption per capita

total: 0.13 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)

beer: 0.02 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)

wine: 0 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)

spirits: 0.11 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)

other alcohols: 0 liters of pure alcohol (2019 est.)

comparison ranking: total 176

Children under the age of 5 years underweight

NA

Currently married women (ages 15-49)

52.6% (2023 est.)

Education expenditures

NA

Literacy

definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 86.4%

male: 91.7%

female: 81% (2015)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education)

total: 9 years

male: 9 years

female: 9 years (2013)

ENVIRONMENT

Environment - current issues

deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion; desertification; depletion of water resources; water pollution from raw sewage and petroleum refining wastes; inadequate potable water

Environment - international agreements

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Climate Change-Paris Agreement, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Marine Dumping-London Convention, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands

signed, but not ratified: Environmental Modification

Climate

mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically in Damascus

Land use

agricultural land: 75.8% (2018 est.)

arable land: 25.4% (2018 est.)

permanent crops: 5.8% (2018 est.)

permanent pasture: 44.6% (2018 est.)

forest: 2.7% (2018 est.)

other: 21.5% (2018 est.)

Urbanization

urban population: 57.4% of total population (2023)

rate of urbanization: 5.38% annual rate of change (2020-25 est.)

Food insecurity

exceptional shortfall in aggregate food production/supplies: *due to civil conflict and economic crisis* - the latest available nationwide food security assessment estimated that about 12 million people, 60% of the overall population, were food insecure in 2021, a slight decline from 12.4 million in 2020, but 5 million more than at the end of 2019, mostly due to constrained livelihood opportunities and a rapidly worsening economy (2022)

Air pollutants

particulate matter emissions: 25.14 micrograms per cubic meter (2019 est.)

carbon dioxide emissions: 28.83 megatons (2016 est.)

methane emissions: 12.93 megatons (2020 est.)

Waste and recycling

municipal solid waste generated annually: 4.5 million tons (2009 est.)

municipal solid waste recycled annually: 112,500 tons (2010 est.)

percent of municipal solid waste recycled: 2.5% (2010 est.)

Major rivers (by length in km)

Euphrates (shared with Turkey [s], Iran, and Iraq [m]) - 3,596 km; Tigris (shared with Turkey, Iran, and Iraq [m]) - 1,950 km

note – [s] after country name indicates river source; [m] after country name indicates river mouth

Major watersheds (area sq km)

Indian Ocean drainage: (*Persian Gulf*) Tigris and Euphrates (918,044 sq km)

Total water withdrawal

municipal: 1.48 billion cubic meters (2020 est.)

industrial: 620 million cubic meters (2020 est.)

agricultural: 14.67 billion cubic meters (2020 est.)

Total renewable water resources

16.8 billion cubic meters (2020 est.)

GOVERNMENT

Country name

conventional long form: Syrian Arab Republic

conventional short form: Syria

local long form: Al Jumhuriyah al Arabiyah as Suriyah

local short form: Suriyah

former: United Arab Republic (with Egypt)

etymology: name ultimately derived from the ancient Assyrians who dominated northern Mesopotamia, but whose reach also extended westward to the Levant; over time, the name came to be associated more with the western area

Government type

presidential republic; highly authoritarian regime

Capital

name: Damascus

geographic coordinates: 33 30 N, 36 18 E

time difference: UTC+3 (8 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

etymology: Damascus is a very old city; its earliest name, Temeseq, first appears in an Egyptian geographical list of the 15th century B.C., but the meaning is uncertain

Administrative divisions

14 provinces (muhafazat, singular - muhafazah); Al Hasakah, Al Ladhiqiyah (Latakia), Al Qunaytirah, Ar Raqqah, As Suwayda', Dar'a, Dayr az Zawr, Dimashq (Damascus), Halab (Aleppo), Hamah, Hims (Homs), Idlib, Rif Dimashq (Damascus Countryside), Tartus

Independence

17 April 1946 (from League of Nations mandate under French administration)

National holiday

Independence Day (Evacuation Day), 17 April (1946); note - celebrates the leaving of the last French troops and the proclamation of full independence

Legal system

mixed legal system of civil and Islamic (sharia) law (for family courts)

Constitution

history:

several previous; latest issued 15 February 2012, passed by referendum and effective 27 February 2012; note – UN-sponsored talks, which began in late 2019 between delegates from government and opposition forces to draft a new constitution; in June 2022, the 8th round of the Syrian Constitutional Committee ended in Geneva with no results, and the 9th round, scheduled for July 2022, was cancelled due to lack of Russian and regime participation

amendments: proposed by the president of the republic or by one third of the People's Assembly members; following review by a special Assembly committee, passage requires at least three-quarters majority vote by the Assembly and approval by the president

International law organization participation

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICC

Citizenship

citizenship by birth: no

citizenship by descent only: the father must be a citizen of Syria; if the father is unknown or stateless, the mother must be a citizen of Syria

dual citizenship recognized: yes

residency requirement for naturalization: 10 years

Suffrage

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch

chief of state: President Bashar al-ASAD (since 17 July 2000)

head of government: Prime Minister Hussein ARNOUS (since 30 August 2020)

cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president

elections/appointments: president directly elected by simple majority popular vote for a 7-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held on 26 May 2021 (next to be held in 2028); the president appoints the vice president and prime minister

election results:

2021: Bashar al-ASAD elected president; percent of vote - Bashar al-ASAD (Ba'th Party) 95.2%, Mahmoud Ahmad MAREI (Democratic Arab Socialist Union) 3.3%, other 1.5%

2014: Bashar al-ASAD elected president; percent of vote - Bashar al-ASAD (Ba'th Party) 88.7%, Hassan al-NOURI (independent) 4.3%, Maher HAJJER (independent) 3.2%, other/invalid 3.8%

Legislative branch

description: unicameral People's Assembly or Majlis al-Shaab (250 seats; members directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by simple majority preferential vote to serve 4-year terms)

elections: last held on 15 July 2024 (next to be held in July 2028)

election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Ba'ath Party 169, SSNP 3, other 13, independent 65; composition - NA

Judicial branch

highest court(s): Court of Cassation (organized into civil, criminal, religious, and military divisions, each with 3 judges); Supreme Constitutional Court (consists of 7 members)

judge selection and term of office: Court of Cassation judges appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), a judicial management body headed by the minister of justice with 7 members, including the national president; judge tenure NA; Supreme Constitutional Court judges nominated by the president and appointed by the SJC; judges serve 4-year renewable terms

subordinate courts: courts of first instance; magistrates' courts; religious and military courts; Economic Security Court; Counterterrorism Court (established June 2012)

Political parties

legal parties/alliances:

Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party
 Arab Socialist (Ba'ath) Party – Syrian Regional
 Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party – Syrian Regional Branch, Socialist Unionist Democratic Party
 Arab Socialist Union of Syria or ASU
 Democratic Arab Socialist Union
 National Progressive Front or NPF
 Socialist Unionist Democratic Party
 Socialist Unionist Party
 Syrian Communist Party (two branches)
 Syrian Social Nationalist Party or SSNP
 Unionist Socialist Party

major political organizations:

Kurdish Democratic Union Party or PYD
 Kurdish National Council or KNC
 Syriac Union Party
 Syrian Democratic Council or SDC
 Syrian Democratic Party
 Syrian Opposition Coalition

de facto governance entities:

Democratic Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria or DAANES
 Syrian Interim Government or SIG
 Syrian Salvation Government or SSG

International organization participation

ABEDA, AFESD, AMF, CAEU, FAO, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (national committees), ICRM, ICSID, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, LAS, MIGA, NAM, OAPEC, OIC, OPCW, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNRWA, UNWTO, UPU, WBG, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO (observer)

Diplomatic representation in the US

none

Note: operations at the embassy were suspended on 18 March 2014

Diplomatic representation from the US

chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); note - on 6 February 2012, the US suspended operations at its embassy in Damascus; Czechia serves as a protecting power for US interests in Syria

mailing address: 6110 Damascus Place, Washington DC 20521-6110

email address and website:

USIS_damascus@embassy.mzv.cz

<https://sy.usembassy.gov/>

Flag description

three equal horizontal bands of red (top), white, and black; two small, green, five-pointed stars in a horizontal line centered in the white band; the band colors derive from the Arab Liberation flag and represent oppression (black), overcome through bloody struggle (red), to be replaced by a bright future (white); identical to the former flag of the United Arab Republic (1958-1961) where the two stars represented the constituent states of Syria and Egypt; the current design dates to 1980

note: similar to the flag of Yemen, which has a plain white band; Iraq, which has an Arabic inscription centered in the white band; and that of Egypt, which has a gold Eagle of Saladin centered in the white band

National symbol(s)

hawk; national colors: red, white, black, green

National anthem

name: "Humat ad-Diyar" (Guardians of the Homeland)

lyrics/music: Khalil Mardam BEY/Mohammad Salim FLAYFEL and Ahmad Salim FLAYFEL

note: adopted 1936, restored 1961; between 1958 and 1961, while Syria was a member of the United Arab Republic with Egypt, the country had a different anthem

National heritage

total World Heritage Sites: 6 (all cultural)

selected World Heritage Site locales: Ancient City of Damascus; Ancient City of Bosra; Site of Palmyra; Ancient City of Aleppo; Crac des Chevaliers and Qal'at Salah El-Din; Ancient Villages of Northern Syria

ECONOMY**Economic overview**

low-income Middle Eastern economy; prior infrastructure and economy devastated by 11-year civil war; ongoing US sanctions; sporadic trans-migration during conflict; currently being supported by World Bank trust fund; ongoing hyperinflation

Real GDP (purchasing power parity)

\$62.151 billion (2021 est.)

\$61.353 billion (2020 est.)

\$61.465 billion (2019 est.)

note: data in 2021 dollars

comparison ranking: 114

Real GDP growth rate

1.3% (2021 est.)

-0.18% (2020 est.)

1.22% (2019 est.)

note: annual GDP % growth based on constant local currency

comparison ranking: 157

Real GDP per capita

\$2,900 (2021 est.)

\$3,000 (2020 est.)

\$3,100 (2019 est.)

note: data in 2021 dollars

comparison ranking: 197

GDP (official exchange rate)

\$8.98 billion (2021 est.)

note: data in current dollars at official exchange rate**Inflation rate (consumer prices)**

28.1% (2017 est.)

47.3% (2016 est.)

comparison ranking: 204

GDP - composition, by sector of origin**agriculture:** 20% (2017 est.)**industry:** 19.5% (2017 est.)**services:** 60.8% (2017 est.)

comparison rankings: services 117; industry 154; agriculture 48

GDP - composition, by end use**household consumption:** 73.1% (2017 est.)**government consumption:** 26% (2017 est.)**investment in fixed capital:** 18.6% (2017 est.)**investment in inventories:** 12.3% (2017 est.)**exports of goods and services:** 16.1% (2017 est.)**imports of goods and services:** -46.1% (2017 est.)**Agricultural products**

wheat, milk, olives, sheep milk, tomatoes, potatoes, maize, watermelons, apples, oranges (2022)

note: top ten agricultural products based on tonnage**Industries**

petroleum, textiles, food processing, beverages, tobacco, phosphate rock mining, cement, oil seeds crushing, automobile assembly

Industrial production growth rate

-14.03% (2021 est.)

note: annual % change in industrial value added based on constant local currency

comparison ranking: 215

Labor force

6.315 million (2023 est.)

note: number of people ages 15 or older who are employed or seeking work

comparison ranking: 72

Unemployment rate

13.54% (2023 est.)

13.81% (2022 est.)

14.8% (2021 est.)

note: % of labor force seeking employment
comparison ranking: 184

Youth unemployment rate (ages 15-24)

total: 33.5% (2023 est.)

male: 29.8% (2023 est.)

female: 52.6% (2023 est.)

note: % of labor force ages 15-24 seeking employment
comparison ranking: total 19

Population below poverty line

82.5% (2014 est.)

Gini Index coefficient - distribution of family income

26.6 (2022 est.)

comparison ranking: 143

Household income or consumption by percentage share

lowest 10%: 3.8% (2022 est.)

highest 10%: 21.1% (2022 est.)

Remittances

0% of GDP (2021 est.)

0% of GDP (2020 est.)

0% of GDP (2019 est.)

note: personal transfers and compensation between resident and non-resident individuals/households/entities

Budget

revenues: \$1.162 billion (2017 est.)

expenditures: \$3.211 billion (2017 est.)

note: government projections for FY2016

Public debt

94.8% of GDP (2017 est.)

comparison ranking: 25

Taxes and other revenues

4.2% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

comparison ranking: 203

Current account balance

-\$2.123 billion (2017 est.)

-\$2.077 billion (2016 est.)

comparison ranking: 162

Exports

\$2.224 billion (2021 est.)

\$1.649 billion (2020 est.)

\$2.94 billion (2019 est.)

note: GDP expenditure basis - exports of goods and services in current dollars
comparison ranking: 162

Exports - partners

Turkey 29%, Kuwait 15%, Lebanon 14%, Jordan 8%, Egypt 7% (2022)

note: top five export partners based on percentage share of exports

Exports - commodities

pure olive oil, nuts, phosphates, cotton, garments (2022)

note: top five export commodities based on value in dollars

Imports

\$6.553 billion (2021 est.)

\$3.751 billion (2020 est.)

\$6.552 billion (2019 est.)

note: GDP expenditure basis - imports of goods and services in current dollars

comparison ranking: 138

Imports - partners

Turkey 45%, UAE 10%, China 9%, Lebanon 8%, Egypt 7% (2022)

note: top five import partners based on percentage share of imports

Imports - commodities

tobacco, plastics, wheat, seed oils, plastic products (2022)

note: top five import commodities based on value in dollars

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold

\$407.3 million (31 December 2017 est.)

\$504.6 million (31 December 2016 est.)

comparison ranking: 167

Debt - external

\$4.989 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$5.085 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

comparison ranking: 133

Exchange rates

Syrian pounds (SYP) per US dollar -

Exchange rates:

2,505.747 (2022 est.)

1,256 (2021 est.)

877.945 (2020 est.)

436.5 (2019 est.)

436.5 (2018 est.)

ENERGY

Electricity access

electrification - total population: 89% (2022 est.)

electrification - urban areas: 100%

electrification - rural areas: 75%

Electricity

installed generating capacity: 10.124 million kW (2022 est.)

consumption: 12.909 billion kWh (2022 est.)

exports: 346 million kWh (2022 est.)

transmission/distribution losses: 3.618 billion kWh (2022 est.)

comparison rankings: transmission/distribution losses 150; exports 84; consumption 92; installed generating capacity 67

Electricity generation sources

fossil fuels: 95.3% of total installed capacity (2022 est.)

hydroelectricity: 4.5% of total installed capacity (2022 est.)

biomass and waste: 0.2% of total installed capacity (2022 est.)

Coal

consumption: 47,000 metric tons (2022 est.)

exports: (2022 est.) less than 1 metric ton

imports: 30,000 metric tons (2022 est.)

Petroleum

total petroleum production: 100,000 bbl/day (2023 est.)

refined petroleum consumption: 138,000 bbl/day (2022 est.)

crude oil estimated reserves: 2.5 billion barrels (2021 est.)

Natural gas

production: 3.085 billion cubic meters (2022 est.)

consumption: 3.084 billion cubic meters (2022 est.)

proven reserves: 240.693 billion cubic meters (2021 est.)

Carbon dioxide emissions

25.628 million metric tonnes of CO₂ (2022 est.)

from coal and metallurgical coke: 100,000 metric tonnes of CO₂ (2022 est.)

from petroleum and other liquids: 19.478 million metric tonnes of CO₂ (2022 est.)

from consumed natural gas: 6.05 million metric tonnes of CO₂ (2022 est.)

comparison ranking: total emissions 79

Energy consumption per capita

18.111 million Btu/person (2022 est.)

comparison ranking: 131

COMMUNICATIONS

Telephones - fixed lines

total subscriptions: 2.821 million (2021 est.)

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 13 (2021 est.)

comparison ranking: total subscriptions 42

Telephones - mobile cellular

total subscriptions: 16.991 million (2021 est.)

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 80 (2021 est.)

comparison ranking: total subscriptions 68

Telecommunication systems

general assessment: the years of civil war and destruction to infrastructure continue to have a toll on the telecoms sector in Syria; although over the years the major mobile service providers have endeavored to restore and rebuild damaged networks, the operating environment has been difficult; following disputed demands for back taxes, MTN Group in August 2021 exited the country, after its majority stake had been transferred to judicial guardianship; this effectively meant that the mobile market became a monopoly; in February 2022 the regulator awarded a third mobile license following a process which had been ongoing for many years; telecommunication services in Syria are highly regulated; although urban areas can make use of the network built and maintained by the government-owned incumbent, many under served remote areas in the countryside are obliged to rely on satellite communications; the domestic and international fixed-line markets in Syria remain the monopoly of the STE, despite several initiatives over the years aimed at liberalizing the market; mobile broadband penetration in Syria is still quite low, despite quite

a high population coverage of 3G networks and some deployment of LTE infrastructure; this may provide potential opportunities for growth once infrastructure and economic reconstruction efforts make headway, and civil issues subside (2022)

domestic: the number of fixed-line connections is 13 per 100; mobile-cellular service is 80 per 100 persons (2021)

international: country code - 963; landing points for the Aletar, BERYTAR and UGART submarine cable connections to Egypt, Lebanon, and Cyprus; satellite earth stations - 1 Intelsat (Indian Ocean) and 1 Intersputnik (Atlantic Ocean region); coaxial cable and microwave radio relay to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey; participant in Medarabtel (2019)

Broadcast media

state-run TV and radio broadcast networks; state operates 2 TV networks and 5 satellite channels; roughly two-thirds of Syrian homes have a satellite dish providing access to foreign TV broadcasts; 3 state-run radio channels; first private radio station launched in 2005; private radio broadcasters prohibited from transmitting news or political content (2018)

Internet country code

.sy

Internet users

total: 8,492,468 (2022 est.)

percent of population: 46.6% (2022 est.)

comparison ranking: total 69

Broadband - fixed subscriptions

total: 1,549,356 (2020 est.)

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 9 (2020 est.)

comparison ranking: total 64

TRANSPORTATION

National air transport system

number of registered air carriers: 3 (2020)

inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers: 11

annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers: 17,896 (2018)

annual freight traffic on registered air carriers: 30,000 (2018) mt-km

Civil aircraft registration country code prefix

YK

Airports

39 (2024)

comparison ranking: 103

Heliports

12 (2024)

Pipelines

3,170 km gas, 2029 km oil (2013)

Railways

total: 2,052 km (2014)

standard gauge: 1,801 km (2014) 1.435-m gauge

narrow gauge: 251 km (2014) 1.050-m gauge

comparison ranking: total 73

Roadways

total: 69,873 km

paved: 63,060 km

unpaved: 6,813 km (2010)

comparison ranking: total 71

Waterways

900 km (2011) (navigable but not economically significant)

comparison ranking: 75

Merchant marine

total: 24 (2023)

by type: bulk carrier 1, container ship 1, general cargo 8, oil tanker 1, other 13

comparison ranking: total 144

Ports

total ports: 3 (2024)

large: 1

medium: 1

small: 1

very small: 0

ports with oil terminals: 3

key ports: Al Ladhiqiyah, Baniyas, Tartus

MILITARY AND SECURITY

Military and security forces

Syrian Armed Forces: Syrian Arab Army (includes Republican Guard), Syrian Naval Forces, Syrian Air Forces, Syrian Air Defense Forces, National Defense Forces (NDF), and Local Defense Forces (LDF) (2023)

note: NDF and LDF are pro-government militia and auxiliary forces; some militia and auxiliary forces are backed by Iran; the Syrian military is also supported by the Russian armed forces, the Iran-affiliated Hizballah terrorist group, and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Military expenditures

6.5% of GDP (2019 est.)

6.7% of GDP (2018 est.)

6.8% of GDP (2017 est.)

6.9% of GDP (2016 est.)

7.2% of GDP (2015 est.)

comparison ranking: 4

Military and security service personnel strengths

current estimates not available; the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) continue to rebuild after suffering significant casualties and desertions since the start of the civil war in 2011; prior to the civil war, the SAF had approximately 300,000 troops, including 200-225,000 Army, plus about 300,000 reserve forces (2023)

note: pro-government militia and auxiliary forces probably number in the tens of thousands

Military equipment inventories and acquisitions

the SAF's inventory is comprised mostly of older Russian and Soviet-era equipment; in recent years, Russia has supplied the majority of Syria's imported weapons systems (2023)

Military service age and obligation

men 18-42 are obligated to perform military service; compulsory service obligation reportedly up to 30 months; women are not conscripted but may volunteer to serve, including in combat arms (2023)

note 1: the military is comprised largely of conscripts; men in their late 40s and 50s reportedly have been drafted

into military service during the civil war

note 2: Syrian women have been serving in combat roles since 2013; in 2015, the Syrian military created an all-female commando brigade

Military - note

the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) has operated in the Golan between Israel and Syria since 1974 to monitor the ceasefire following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and supervise the areas of separation between the two countries; UNDOF has about 1,000 personnel

multiple actors are conducting military operations in Syria in support of the ASAD government or Syrian opposition forces, as well in pursuit of their own security goals, such as counterterrorism and border security; operations have included air strikes, direct ground combat, and sponsoring proxy forces, as well as providing non-lethal military support, including advisors, technicians, arms and equipment, funding, intelligence, and training:

pro-ASAD elements operating in Syria have included **the Syrian Arab Army, Lebanese Hizbollah, Iranian, Iranian-backed Shia militia, and Russian forces**; since early in the civil war, the ASAD government has relied on Lebanese Hizbollah (see Appendix T for further information), as well as Iran and Iranian-backed irregular forces, for combat operations and to hold territory; since 2011, Iran has provided military advisors and combat troops from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (including the Qods Force; see Appendix T for further information), as well as intelligence, logistical, material, technical, and financial support; it has funded, trained, equipped, and led Shia militia/paramilitary units comprised of both Syrian and non-Syrian personnel, primarily from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan; Russia intervened at the request of the ASAD government in 2015 and has since provided air support, special operations forces, military advisors, private military contractors, training, arms, and equipment; Iranian and Russian support has also included assisting Syria in combating the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS; see Appendix T) terrorist group

Turkey has intervened militarily several times since 2016 to combat Kurdish militants and ISIS, support select Syrian opposition forces, and establish a buffer along portions of its border with Syria; Turkey continues to maintain a considerable military presence in northern Syria; it has armed and trained militia/proxy forces, such as the Syrian National Army, which was formed in late 2017 of Syrian Arab and Turkmen rebel factions in the Halab (Aleppo) province and northwestern Syria

the **US and some regional and European states** have at times backed Syrian opposition forces militarily and/or conducted military operations, primarily against ISIS; the US has operated in Syria since 2015 with ground forces and air strikes; the majority the US ground forces are deployed in the Eastern Syria Security Area (ESSA, which includes parts of Hasakah and Dayr az Zawr provinces east of the Euphrates River) in support of operations by the Syrian Democratic Forces against ISIS, while the remainder are in southeast Syria around At Tanf supporting counter-ISIS operations by the Syrian Free Army opposition force; the US has also conducted air strikes against Syrian military targets in response to Syrian Government use of chemical weapons against opposition forces and civilians; in addition, France, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UK have provided forms of military assistance to opposition forces and/or conducted operations against ISIS, including air strikes

Israel has conducted hundreds of military air strikes in Syria against Syrian military, Hizbollah, Iranian, and/or Iranian-backed militia targets

the **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**, a coalition of forces comprised primarily of Kurdish, Sunni Arab, and Syriac Christian fighters; it is dominated and led by Kurdish forces, particularly the People's Protection Units (YPG) militia; the SDF began to receive US support in 2015 and as of 2023 was the main local US partner in its counter-ISIS campaign; the SDF has internal security, counterterrorism, and commando units; Turkey views the SDF as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a US-designated terrorist organization (see Appendix T)

the **ISIS** terrorist group (see Appendix T) lost its last territorial stronghold to SDF forces in 2019, but continues to maintain a low-level insurgency; in addition, the SDF holds about 10,000 captured suspected ISIS fighters in detention facilities across northern Syria, including 2,000 from countries other than Iraq and Syria

the **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)** (formerly known as al-Nusrah Front) terrorist organization (see Appendix T) is the dominant militant group in northwest Syria and has asserted considerable influence and control over the so-called Syrian Salvation Government in the Iblib de-escalation zone and the Aleppo province (2023)

SPACE

Space agency/agencies

Syrian Space Agency (created in 2014); General Organization of Remote Sensing (GORS; established 1986 to replace the National Remote Sensing Center, established 1981) (2024)

Space program overview

status unclear; has been handicapped by the impact of the civil war, including the loss of students and scientists who fled the country; had previously focused on satellite development and related space technologies, as well as

scientific research; has relations with the space agency and space industries of Russia (2024)

note: further details about the key activities, programs, and milestones of the country's space program, as well as government spending estimates on the space sector, appear in the Space Programs reference guide

TERRORISM

Terrorist group(s)

Terrorist group(s): Abdallah Azzam Brigades; Ansar al-Islam; Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq; Hizballah; Hurras al-Din; Islamic Jihad Union; Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)/Qods Force; Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS); Kata'ib Hizballah; Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK); Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem; al-Nusrah Front (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham); al-Qa'ida; Palestine Liberation Front; Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); PFLP-General Command

note: details about the history, aims, leadership, organization, areas of operation, tactics, targets, weapons, size, and sources of support of the group(s) appear(s) in the Terrorism reference guide

TRANSNATIONAL ISSUES

Refugees and internally displaced persons

refugees (country of origin): 580,000 (Palestinian Refugees) (2022); 11,121 (Iraq) (2023)

IDPs: 6.865 million (ongoing civil war since 2011) (2022)

stateless persons: 160,000 (2022); note - Syria's stateless population consists of Kurds and Palestinians; stateless persons are prevented from voting, owning land, holding certain jobs, receiving food subsidies or public healthcare, enrolling in public schools, or being legally married to Syrian citizens; in 1962, some 120,000 Syrian Kurds were stripped of their Syrian citizenship, rendering them and their descendants stateless; in 2011, the Syrian Government granted citizenship to thousands of Syrian Kurds as a means of appeasement; however, resolving the question of statelessness is not a priority given Syria's ongoing civil war

note: the ongoing civil war has resulted in more than 5 million registered Syrian refugees - dispersed mainly in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey - as of March 2024

Trafficking in persons

tier rating: Tier 3 — Syria does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so, therefore, Syria remained on Tier 3; for more details, go to: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/syria/>

Illicit drugs

increasing drug trafficking particularly the synthetic stimulant captagon, a mixture of various amphetamines, methamphetamine, and/or other stimulants; drug smuggling of captagon and other stimulants linked to the Syrian government and Hizballah