

South Africa

Estimated population 47 million

Immense natural resources have made South Africa the most powerful economic force on the continent. Its reserves of gold are the largest in the world and it is also the major producer of diamonds and platinum. Non-precious metals are also to be found abundantly. Tourism, particularly to the Western Cape, the Kruger National Park and the coastal resorts along the Indian Ocean. The country has a well-developed infrastructure and extensive networks of roads, railways and air services. Set up in 1910 as a self-governing British Dominion, following the Anglo-Boer war, power in South Africa was handed over by London to the white minority population consisting of the descendants of British and Dutch colonists. Following elections in 1948 the more extreme Afrikaner elements gained power and instituted a policy of apartheid perhaps the most evil political system to be invented after the second world war. International sanctions and opposition from within led to the introduction of democracy in 1994. Elections were won convincingly by the African National Congress (ANC) and Mr Nelson Mandela, released from prison in 1990, became president. South Africa is ranked 121st in Human Development and despite the country's immense wealth the GDP per capita was low at \$5,200 in 2004. While the economy is strong the country has a major problem with HIV-AIDS with an infection rate of 20%. The government, after a long delay, has made substantial funds to fight this pandemic. Violent crime is also a problem in the greater Johannesburg region. Life expectancy for females in 49 and for males 45.

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