

# The World Factbook

**Latvia**



## Introduction **Latvia**

**Background:** After a brief period of independence between the two World Wars, Latvia was annexed by the USSR in 1940. It reestablished its independence in 1991 following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Although the last Russian troops left in 1994, the status of the Russian minority (some 30% of the population) remains of concern to Moscow. Latvia continues to revamp its economy for eventual integration into various Western European political and economic institutions and was invited to join NATO and the EU in 2002.

## Geography **Latvia**

**Location:** Eastern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea, between Estonia and Lithuania

**Geographic coordinates:** 57 00 N, 25 00 E

**Map references:** Europe

**Area:** *total:* 64,589 sq km  
*water:* 1,000 sq km  
*land:* 63,589 sq km

**Area - comparative:** slightly larger than West Virginia

**Land** *total:* 1,150 km

<b>boundaries:</b>	<i>border countries:</i> Belarus 141 km, Estonia 339 km, Lithuania 453 km, Russia 217 km
<b>Coastline:</b>	531 km
<b>Maritime claims:</b>	<i>continental shelf:</i> 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation <i>exclusive economic zone:</i> 200 NM <i>territorial sea:</i> 12 NM
<b>Climate:</b>	maritime; wet, moderate winters
<b>Terrain:</b>	low plain
<b>Elevation extremes:</b>	<i>lowest point:</i> Baltic Sea 0 m <i>highest point:</i> Gaizinkalns 312 m
<b>Natural resources:</b>	peat, limestone, dolomite, amber, hydropower, wood, arable land
<b>Land use:</b>	<i>arable land:</i> 29.01% <i>permanent crops:</i> 0.48% <i>other:</i> 70.51% (1998 est.)
<b>Irrigated land:</b>	200 sq km <i>note:</i> land in Latvia is often too wet, and in need of drainage, not irrigation; approximately 16,000 sq km or 85% of agricultural land has been improved by drainage (1998 est.)
<b>Natural hazards:</b>	NA
<b>Environment - current issues:</b>	Latvia's environment has benefited from a shift to service industries after the country regained independence; the main environmental priorities are improvement of drinking water quality and sewage system, household and hazardous waste management, and reduction of air pollution; in 2001, Latvia closed the EU accession negotiation chapter on environment committing to full enforcement of EU environmental directives by 2010
<b>Environment - international agreements:</b>	<i>party to:</i> Air Pollution, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands <i>signed, but not ratified:</i> Air Pollution-Persistent Organic Pollutants, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol
<b>Geography - note:</b>	most of the country is composed of fertile, low-lying plains, with some hills in the east
<b>People</b>	<b>Latvia</b>
<b>Population:</b>	2,348,784 (July 2003 est.)
<b>Age structure:</b>	<i>0-14 years:</i> 15.1% (male 180,976; female 172,988) <i>15-64 years:</i> 68.9% (male 774,133; female 844,856) <i>65 years and over:</i> 16% (male 122,850; female 252,981) (2003 est.)

<b>Median age:</b>	<i>total:</i> 39 years <i>male:</i> 35.5 years <i>female:</i> 42.1 years (2002)
<b>Population growth rate:</b>	-0.73% (2003 est.)
<b>Birth rate:</b>	8.55 births/1,000 population (2003 est.)
<b>Death rate:</b>	14.7 deaths/1,000 population (2003 est.)
<b>Net migration rate:</b>	-1.19 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2003 est.)
<b>Sex ratio:</b>	<i>at birth:</i> 1.05 male(s)/female <i>under 15 years:</i> 1.05 male(s)/female <i>15-64 years:</i> 0.92 male(s)/female <i>65 years and over:</i> 0.49 male(s)/female <i>total population:</i> 0.85 male(s)/female (2003 est.)
<b>Infant mortality rate:</b>	<i>total:</i> 14.59 deaths/1,000 live births <i>female:</i> 12.32 deaths/1,000 live births (2003 est.) <i>male:</i> 16.74 deaths/1,000 live births
<b>Life expectancy at birth:</b>	<i>total population:</i> 69.31 years <i>male:</i> 63.46 years <i>female:</i> 75.45 years (2003 est.)
<b>Total fertility rate:</b>	1.2 children born/woman (2003 est.)
<b>HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:</b>	0.4% (2001 est.)
<b>HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:</b>	5,000 (2001 est.)
<b>HIV/AIDS - deaths:</b>	less than 100 (2001 est.)
<b>Nationality:</b>	<i>noun:</i> Latvian(s) <i>adjective:</i> Latvian
<b>Ethnic groups:</b>	Latvian 57.7%, Russian 29.6%, Belarusian 4.1%, Ukrainian 2.7%, Polish 2.5%, Lithuanian 1.4%, other 2%
<b>Religions:</b>	Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox
<b>Languages:</b>	Latvian (official), Lithuanian, Russian, other
<b>Literacy:</b>	<i>definition:</i> age 15 and over can read and write <i>total population:</i> 99.8% <i>male:</i> 99.8% <i>female:</i> 99.8% (2003 est.)

**Government**    **Latvia**

- Country name:** *conventional long form:* Republic of Latvia  
*conventional short form:* Latvia  
*local short form:* Latvija  
*former:* Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic  
*local long form:* Latvijas Republika
- Government type:** parliamentary democracy
- Capital:** Riga
- Administrative divisions:** 26 counties (singular - rajons) and 7 municipalities\*: Aizkraukles Rajons, Aluksnes Rajons, Balvu Rajons, Bauskas Rajons, Cesu Rajons, Daugavpils\*, Daugavpils Rajons, Dobeles Rajons, Gulbenes Rajons, Jekabpils Rajons, Jelgava\*, Jelgavas Rajons, Jurmala\*, Kraslavas Rajons, Kuldigas Rajons, Liepaja\*, Liepajas Rajons, Limbazu Rajons, Ludzas Rajons, Madonas Rajons, Ogres Rajons, Preilu Rajons, Rezekne\*, Rezeknes Rajons, Riga\*, Rigas Rajons, Saldus Rajons, Talsu Rajons, Tukuma Rajons, Valkas Rajons, Valmieras Rajons, Ventspils\*, Ventspils Rajons
- Independence:** 21 August 1991 (from Soviet Union)
- National holiday:** Independence Day, 18 November (1918); note - 18 November 1918 is the date of independence from Soviet Russia, 21 August 1991 is the date of independence from the Soviet Union
- Constitution:** the 1991 Constitutional Law, which supplements the 1922 constitution, provides for basic rights and freedoms
- Legal system:** based on civil law system
- Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal for Latvian citizens
- Executive branch:** *chief of state:* President Vaira VIKE-FREIBERGA (since 8 July 1999)  
*head of government:* Prime Minister Einars REPSE (since 7 November 2002)  
*cabinet:* Council of Ministers nominated by the prime minister and appointed by the Parliament  
*elections:* president reelected by Parliament for a four-year term; election last held 20 June 2003 (next to be held by June 2007); prime minister appointed by the president  
*election results:* Vaira VIKE-FREIBERGA reelected president; parliamentary vote - Vaira VIKE-FREIBERGA 88 of 94 votes cast
- Legislative branch:** unicameral Parliament or Saeima (100 seats; members are elected by direct, popular vote to serve four-year terms)  
*elections:* last held 5 October 2002 (next to be held NA October 2006)  
*election results:* percent of vote by party - New Era 23.9%, PCTVL 18.9%, People's Party 16.7%, ZZS 9.5%, First Party 7.6%, LNNK 5.4%; seats by party - New Era 26, PCTVL 24, People's Party 21, ZZS 12, First Party 10, LNNK 7
- Judicial branch:** Supreme Court (judges' appointments are confirmed by Parliament)

**Political parties and leaders:** Alliance of the Greens and Farmers Union or ZZS [Augusts BRIGMANIS (Farmer's Union); Indulis EMSIS (Green Party)]; CENTER Political Alliance [Juris CELMINS]; First Party of Latvia [Eriks JEKABSONS]; For Fatherland and Freedom or LNNK [Maris GRINBLATS]; For Human Rights in a United Latvia or PCTVL [Janis JURKANS], a coalition of the People's Harmony Party or TSP, the Latvian Socialist Party or LSP, and the Equal Rights Movement; Freedom Party [Ziedonis CEVERS]; Land of Mara [Irena SAPROVSKA]; Latvian Rebirth Party [Andris RUBINS]; Latvian Social-Democratic Workers Party (Social Democrats) or LSDSP [Juris BOJARS]; Latvia's Way Union or LC [Janis NAGLIS]; Light of Latgale or LG [Rihards EIGIMS]; New Era Party [Einars REPSE]; Our Land Party [Ilmars ANCANS]; Party of Latvians [Aivars GARDA]; People's Party [Andris SKELE]; Progressive Center Party [Inta STAMGUTE]; Russian Party [Mihails GAVRILOVS]; Social Democratic Union or SDS [Egils BALDZENS]; Social Democratic Welfare Party or SLP [Juris ZURAVLOVS]; United Republican Party of Latvia or LARP [Eriks Andrejs SAULUNS, Janis PUKIS, Sarmite JEGERE]

**Political pressure groups and leaders:** NA

**International organization participation:** BIS, CBSS, CE, EAPC, EBRD, ECE, EU (applicant), FAO, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCT, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IFC, IFRC, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO (correspondent), ITU, NSG, OAS (observer), OPCW, OSCE, PCA, PFP, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UPU, WCO, WEU (associate partner), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTrO

**Diplomatic representation in the US:** *chief of mission:* Ambassador Aivis RONIS  
*FAX:* [1] (202) 726-6785  
*telephone:* [1] (202) 726-8213, 8214  
*chancery:* 4325 17th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011

**Diplomatic representation from the US:** *chief of mission:* Ambassador Brian E. CARLSON  
*embassy:* 7 Raina Boulevard, Riga LV-1510  
*mailing address:* American Embassy Riga, PSC 78, Box Riga, APO AE 09723  
*telephone:* [371] 703-6200  
*FAX:* [371] 781-0047

**Flag description:** three horizontal bands of maroon (top), white (half-width), and maroon

## **Economy** **Latvia**

**Economy - overview:** Latvia's transitional economy recovered from the 1998 Russian financial crisis, largely due to the SKELE government's budget stringency and a gradual reorientation of exports toward EU countries, lessening Latvia's trade dependency on Russia. The majority of companies, banks, and real estate have been privatized, although the state still holds sizable stakes in a few large enterprises. Latvia officially joined the World Trade

Organization in February 1999. Preparing for EU membership continues as a top foreign policy goal. The current account and internal government deficits remain major concerns, but the government's efforts to increase efficiency in revenue collection may lessen the budget deficit.

<b>GDP:</b>	purchasing power parity - \$20.99 billion (2002 est.)
<b>GDP - real growth rate:</b>	6.1% (2002 est.)
<b>GDP - per capita:</b>	purchasing power parity - \$8,900 (2002 est.)
<b>GDP - composition by sector:</b>	<i>agriculture: 4.5%</i> <i>industry: 26%</i> <i>services: 69.5% (2001)</i>
<b>Population below poverty line:</b>	NA%
<b>Household income or consumption by percentage share:</b>	<i>lowest 10%: 2.9%</i> <i>highest 10%: 25.9% (1998)</i>
<b>Distribution of family income - Gini index:</b>	32 (1999)
<b>Inflation rate (consumer prices):</b>	2% (2002 est.)
<b>Labor force:</b>	1.1 million (2001 est.)
<b>Labor force - by occupation:</b>	agriculture 15%, industry 25%, services 60% (2000 est.)
<b>Unemployment rate:</b>	7.6% (2001 est.)
<b>Budget:</b>	<i>revenues: \$2.4 billion</i> <i>expenditures: \$2.6 billion, including capital expenditures of \$NA (2002 est.)</i>
<b>Industries:</b>	buses, vans, street and railroad cars, synthetic fibers, agricultural machinery, fertilizers, washing machines, radios, electronics, pharmaceuticals, processed foods, textiles; note - dependent on imports for energy and raw materials
<b>Industrial production growth rate:</b>	5.7% (2002 est.)
<b>Electricity - production:</b>	4.365 billion kWh (2001)

- Electricity - production by source:** *fossil fuel:* 29.1%  
*hydro:* 70.9%  
*other:* 0% (2001)  
*nuclear:* 0%
- Electricity - consumption:** 6.046 billion kWh (2001)
- Electricity - exports:** 703 million kWh (2001)
- Electricity - imports:** 2.69 billion kWh (2001)
- Oil - production:** 0 bbl/day (2001 est.)
- Oil - consumption:** 44,000 bbl/day (2001 est.)
- Oil - exports:** NA (2001)
- Oil - imports:** NA (2001)
- Natural gas - production:** 0 cu m (2001 est.)
- Natural gas - consumption:** 1.7 billion cu m (2001 est.)
- Natural gas - exports:** 0 cu m (2001 est.)
- Natural gas - imports:** 1.7 billion cu m (2001 est.)
- Agriculture - products:** grain, sugar beets, potatoes, vegetables; beef, pork, milk, eggs; fish
- Exports:** \$2.3 billion f.o.b. (2002)
- Exports - commodities:** wood and wood products, machinery and equipment, metals, textiles, foodstuffs
- Exports - partners:** UK 21.6%, Sweden 13.1%, Germany 12.5%, US 6.4%, Lithuania 5.9%, Russia 4.6%, Estonia 4.2%, Denmark 4% (2002)
- Imports:** \$3.9 billion f.o.b. (2002)
- Imports - commodities:** machinery and equipment, chemicals, fuels, vehicles
- Imports - partners:** Germany 17.9%, Russia 15.1%, Finland 6.6%, Lithuania 6.4%, Sweden 5.5%, Italy 4.8%, Estonia 4.8% (2002)
- Debt - external:** \$3.4 billion (2000 est.)
- Economic aid - recipient:** \$96.2 million (1995)
- Currency:** Latvian lat (LVL)

**Currency code:** LVL

**Exchange rates:** lati per US dollar - 0.62 (2002), 0.63 (2001), 0.61 (2000), 0.59 (1999), 0.59 (1998)

**Fiscal year:** calendar year

### **Communications Latvia**

**Telephones - main lines in use:** 734,693 (2000)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:** 401,263 (2000)

**Telephone system:** *general assessment:* inadequate, but is being modernized to provide an international capability independent of the Moscow international switch; more facilities are being installed for individual use  
*domestic:* expansion underway in intercity trunk line connections, rural exchanges, and mobile systems; still many unsatisfied subscriber applications  
*international:* international connections are now available via cable and a satellite earth station at Riga, enabling direct connections for most calls (1998)

**Radio broadcast stations:** AM 8, FM 56, shortwave 1 (1998)

**Radios:** 1.76 million (1997)

**Television broadcast stations:** 44 (plus 31 repeaters) (1995)

**Televisions:** 1.22 million (1997)

**Internet country code:** .lv

**Internet Service Providers (ISPs):** 41 (2001)

**Internet users:** 312,000 (2001)

### **Transportation Latvia**

**Railways:** *total:* 2,347 km  
*broad gauge:* 2,314 km 1.520-m gauge (270 km electrified)  
*narrow gauge:* 33 km 0.750-m gauge (2002)

**Highways:** *total:* 73,202 km  
*paved:* 28,256 km  
*unpaved:* 44,946 km (2000)

**Waterways:** 300 km (perennially navigable)



**Pipelines:** gas 1,097 km; oil 412 km; refined products 421 km (2003)

**Ports and harbors:** Liepaja, Riga, Ventspils

**Merchant marine:** *total:* 8 ships (1,000 GRT or over) 52,607 GRT/35,650 DWT  
*note:* includes some foreign-owned ships registered here as a flag of convenience: Greece 3 (2002 est.)  
*ships by type:* cargo 2, petroleum tanker 1, refrigerated cargo 3, roll on/roll off 1, short-sea passenger 1

**Airports:** 38 (2002)

**Airports - with paved runways:** *total:* 22  
*2,438 to 3,047 m:* 7  
*1,524 to 2,437 m:* 2  
*914 to 1,523 m:* 1  
*under 914 m:* 12 (2002)

**Airports - with unpaved runways:** *total:* 16  
*2,438 to 3,047 m:* 1  
*1,524 to 2,437 m:* 4  
*914 to 1,523 m:* 1  
*under 914 m:* 10 (2002)

## **Military**      **Latvia**

**Military branches:** Ground Forces, Navy, Air and Air Defense Forces, Border Guard, National Guard

**Military manpower - military age:** 18 years of age (2003 est.)

**Military manpower - availability:** *males age 15-49:* 592,562 (2003 est.)

**Military manpower - fit for military service:** *males age 15-49:* 465,788 (2003 est.)

**Military manpower - reaching military age annually:** *males:* 19,477 (2003 est.)

**Military expenditures - dollar figure:** \$87 million (FY01)

**Military expenditures - percent of GDP:** 1.2% (FY01)

**Transnational  
Issues** **Latvia**

**Disputes - international:** the Russian Duma refuses to ratify boundary delimitation treaty with Latvia; the Latvian Parliament has not ratified its 1998 maritime boundary treaty with Lithuania, primarily due to concerns over oil exploration rights

**Illicit drugs:** transshipment point for opiates and cannabis from Central and Southwest Asia to Western Europe and Scandinavia and Latin American cocaine and some synthetics from Western Europe to CIS; money laundering remains a concern despite changes to banking legislation

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