INTRODUCTION
By about A.D. 500, Bantu speaking groups settled into northeastern South Africa. Dutch traders landed at the southern tip of present-day South Africa in 1652. The British seized the Cape of Good Hope area in 1806. British and Afrikaners (Dutch descendants) ruled jointly from 1910 in the Union of South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) led the opposition to apartheid. The first multi-racial elections in 1994 followed the end of apartheid.

GOVERNMENT
Chief of State
President Matamela Cyril RAMAPHOSA
Head of Government
President Matamela Cyril RAMAPHOSA
Government Type
parliamentary republic
Capital
Pretoria (administrative capital); Cape Town (legislative capital); Bloemfontein (judicial capital)
Legislature
bicameral Parliament consists of the National Council of Provinces (90 seats) and the National Assembly (400 seats)

ECONOMY
Economic Overview
upper middle-income South African economy; hard hit by COVID-19; poor utilities management; key rare earth goods exporter; high income inequality; hosts Africa’s largest stock exchange; rising unemployment, especially youth; land rights changes
GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) $680 billion (2020 est.)
GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity) $11,500 (2020 est.)
Industries - mining, automobile assembly, metalworking, machinery, textiles, iron, steel, chemicals, fertilizer, foodstuffs
Agricultural products - sugarcane, maize, milk, potatoes, grapes, poultry, oranges, wheat, soybeans, beef
Exports $93.01 billion (2020 est.)
gold, platinum, cars, iron products, coal, manganese, diamonds (2019)
partners: China 15%, UK 8%, Germany 7%, US 6%, India 6% (2019)
Imports $77.86 billion (2020 est.)
crude and refined petroleum, cars/vehicle parts, gold, broadcasting equipment (2019)
partners: China 18%, Germany 11%, US 6%, India 5% (2019)

PEOPLE & SOCIETY
Population
57 million (July 2021 est.)
Population Growth
0.95% (2021 est.)
Ethnicity
Black African 80.9%, Colored 8.8%, White 7.8%, Indian/Asian 2.5% (2018 est.); note: colored is a term used in South Africa, including on the national census, for persons of mixed race ancestry
Language
isiZulu (official) 25.3%, isiXhosa (official) 14.8%, Afrikaans (official) 12.2%, Sepedi (official) 10.1%, Setswana (official) 9.1%, English (official) 8.1%, Sesotho (official) 7.9%, Xitsonga (official) 3.6%, other 12.5% (2018 est.)
Religion
Christian 86%, ancestral, tribal, animist, or other traditional African religions 5.4%, Muslim 1.9%, other 1.5%, nothing in particular 5.2% (2015 est.)