

Rwanda: country profile

The country has been beset by ethnic tension associated with the traditionally unequal relationship between the dominant Tutsi minority and the majority Hutus. Rwanda experienced Africa's worst genocide in modern times in 1994 and is still recovering from the effects. Many people had to flee to neighbouring countries to escape the killing.

Since then, most of the refugees have returned to Rwanda. In 2000 Paul Kagame became President of Rwanda under an interim government. His government soon introduced a policy encouraging people to describe themselves as Rwandans rather than Hutus or Tutsis. His presidency was confirmed in a landslide victory in the 2003 election.

The country continues to work to boost investment and agricultural output and to foster reconciliation, but involvement in two wars over the past eight years in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo has hindered its efforts.

Population:

7.954 million

Capital: Kigali

Major religions:

Christianity, indigenous beliefs

Ethnic groups:

Hutu 84%, Tutsi 15%, Twa 1%

Life expectancy:

39 years (men), 40 years (women)

Main exports:

Coffee, tea, hides, tin ore

Media: Rwanda's broadcast media are, in the main, government-controlled. A privately run radio station, the first to open since the 1994 genocide, began broadcasting in 2004.

There is a growing number of newspapers but they face government restrictions and generally exercise self-censorship.

Climate: Temperate; two rainy seasons (February to April, November to January); mild in mountains with frost and snow possible.

Physical features: Rwanda is a beautiful country. The forest-covered mountains in the west give way to fertile, terraced farmland, tea plantations and rolling hills, before turning into savannah in the east. The Virunga mountains in the northwest along the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo are the home of the only surviving mountain gorilla population in the world.

