The Portuguese Republic is a country in southwestern Europe, bordering Spain as well as the North Atlantic Ocean. Following its heyday as a global maritime power during the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal lost much of its wealth and status with the destruction of Lisbon in a 1755 earthquake, occupation during the Napoleonic Wars, and the independence of Brazil, its wealthiest colony, in 1822. A 1910 revolution deposed the monarch, and after decades of repressive governments, a left-wing military coup installed broad democratic reforms in 1974. Today, Portugal is a semi-presidential republic and has been led by President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and his appointed Prime Minister Antonio Luis Santos da Costa since March 2016. On June 10, the Portuguese celebrate their national holiday, Portugal Day.

**RELIGION**

Portugal has no official religion and freedom of religion is guaranteed under the Portuguese constitution. Although church and state are separated, as demanded by the 1976 constitution, the Catholic church still receives certain benefits and continues to influence Portuguese society and culture. The education and health systems, for example, were under the control of the church for a long time. Around 81% of Portuguese are Roman Catholics, and another 3.3% are other Christians. Moreover, other groups such as Jews and Muslims make up 0.6% and there are around 7% that have no religious affiliation.

**ETHNICITY & DEMOGRAPHICS**

The ethnicities represented in Portugal are predominantly of homogenous Mediterranean stock. Due to this lack of diversity, Portugal also became the first unified nation-state in Western Europe. For centuries, Portugal had virtually no ethnic or cultural minorities. While there are some people of black African decent and East European nowadays, they remain a very small minority. Portugal’s death rate significantly outnumbers its birth rate, which has been plummeting in the last years, and only has a slight positive net migration rate as well. Therefore, the population growth rate was virtually stagnant at 0.07% as of 2016. Similar to many European countries, especially because of the low birth rate, Portugal faces an increasingly aging population problem.
Famous Portuguese people include explorer Vasco da Gama, football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, football manager José Mourinho, poet Fernando António Nogueira, Nobel Prize-winning novelist José Saramago, singer Carmen Miranda, and composer Pedro Camacho.

Portugal has been a member state of the European Union since January 1986 and has also been a founding member of the euro zone in 1999, making the euro its currency. Moreover, Portugal is a member of the border-free Schengen area. It has 21 seats in the European Parliament and has held the revolving presidency of the Council of the EU 3 times between 1992 and 2007. Furthermore, Portugal is one of the founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In the late 1800s, large numbers of Portuguese began to immigrate to the US, and after the immigration legislation of 1921 put a halt to this, it picked up again in the 1950s, especially from the Portuguese islands such as the Azores, Cape Verde and Madeira. Today, according to the American Community Survey, around 1,370,000 people in the US claim Portuguese ancestry, with the three biggest Portuguese communities being in Providence, RI, Boston, and New York City.

The flag is composed of two vertical bands of green (two-fifths) and red (three-fifths) with the national coat of arms centered on the dividing line.

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