

Kuwait

Key Facts

Total Population:	3368,600
Population aged under 5:	324,300
Population aged under 18:	324,300
Population aged 15-24:	15.21% (2015)
Migration to the UK:	2001 Census identified approximately 6,000
Capital:	Kuwait City
Area:	17,818 sq km
Languages:	Arabic (official), English
Major religions:	Muslim 85% (Sunni 70%, Shia 30%), other (includes Christian, Hindu, Parsi) 15%
Life expectancy:	74.3 years
Political party:	State of Kuwait
Chief of State:	Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah

Geographical Location



Economy

Labour force (1.3 million) by occupation: Government and social services	50%
Business	40%
Agriculture	10%

The labour force itself is divided along ethnic lines, with Kuwaitis holding most of the government jobs and owning most of the businesses in the private sector. Non-Kuwaitis generally labour in various businesses and in the oil industry.

Unemployment rate: 3%

Oil-rich Kuwait is a tiny country nestling at the top of the Gulf. Flanked by powerful neighbours Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran, its strategic location and massive oil reserves make it one of the world's richest countries per capita. It has crude oil reserves of about 102 billion barrels, more than 6% of world reserves. Kuwaiti officials plan to increase oil production to 4 million barrels per day by 2020. Petroleum accounts for over half of GDP, 94% of export revenues, and 89% of government income. For the last decade, high oil prices have generated budget surpluses despite increasing budget expenditures, particularly on wage hikes for public sector employees. Despite Kuwait's dependence on oil, the government has cushioned itself against the impact of lower oil prices by continuous saving of at least 10% of government revenue in the Fund for Future Generations. Kuwait has done little to diversify its economy, in part, due to a poor business climate and an acrimonious relationship between the National Assembly and the executive branch that has stymied most economic reforms. In 2010, Kuwait passed its first long-term economic development plan in almost twenty-five years. While the government planned to spend up \$104 billion over four years to diversify the economy away from oil, attract more investment, and boost private sector participation in the economy, many of the projects did not materialize because of the uncertain political situation.

Education

Percentage of 15-24 year olds who can read and write (2009-2013):	Total	95.5%
	Male	98.7%
	Female	98.8%

Primary school net enrolment ratio (%) (2012):	Total	100%
	Male	97%
	Female	100%

Education for Kuwaitis is free, and between the ages of six and fourteen, attendance is compulsory. While the government stresses the importance of education regardless of gender, most schools are segregated on the basis of gender after kindergarten. There is only one university in the country, but because of the great value placed on education, the government awards scholarships for many Kuwaitis to pursue higher education. There are also several post-secondary technical institutes where one may pursue knowledge of electronics, air-conditioning, and diesel and petrol engines, all necessary to the major industries of Kuwait.

Child Protection

Adolescent birth rate for 15-19 year olds per 1000 girls: 12 (2012)



Politics

Chief of state: Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah (since 29 January 2006); Crown Prince Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah (born 25 June 1937).

Head of government: Prime Minister Jabir Al-Mubarak al-Hamad al-Sabah (since 30 November 2011); First Deputy Prime Minister Sabah Khaled al-Hamad al-Sabah; Deputy Prime Ministers al-Khald al-Jarrah al-Sabah, Muhammad Al-Khalid al-Hamad al-Sabah, Abdulmohsen Mudej.

Cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the prime minister, approved by the amir

Elections/appointments: amir chosen from within the ruling family, confirmed by the National Assembly; prime minister and deputy prime ministers appointed by the amir

Political parties and leaders: none; while the formation of political parties is not permitted, they are not forbidden by law.

A conservative state with a Sunni Muslim majority and a US ally, Kuwait stands out from the other Gulf monarchies for having the most open political system. However tensions have persisted between parliament and the cabinet, controlled by the ruling Al-Sabah family, and the government is facing increasing calls for radical political reform from the opposition. Parliament has the most powers of any elected body in the Gulf, although the ruling Al Sabah family has the final word over all key decisions and members of the ruling family hold most of the key cabinet posts.

Key dates:

1700s - Nomadic tribes from central Arabia settle in the bay of Kuwait City, among them the Al-Sabah family whose descendants now rule Kuwait.

1899 - British protectorate: Britain assumes control of foreign and defence policy amid fears of an expanding Ottoman Empire.

1930s - Oil: The discovery of massive oil reserves revolutionises the country's economy.

1961- Kuwait gains independence from Britain.

1963 - British military intervention forces Iraq to abandon its territorial claims and recognize Kuwait's independence. Kuwait becomes the first Arab country in the Gulf to establish an elected parliament.

1990-91 - Gulf War: Iraq accuses Kuwait of stealing oil from a field near the border leading to Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. This leads to a US-led military campaign to liberate Kuwait.

2003 - Political reform: Emir issues a landmark decree separating the post of prime minister from the crown prince.

2005 - Kuwaiti women win the right to vote and run in parliamentary elections.

2012 - Unprecedented protests call for government reforms.

2015 March - Kuwait and four other Gulf states take part in Saudi-led air strikes on Houthi rebels in Yemen.



National Service

Kuwait's military service consists of Kuwaiti Land Forces (KLF), Kuwaiti Navy, Kuwaiti Air Force (Al-Quwwat al-Jawwiya al-Kuwaitiya) including Kuwaiti Air Defense Force and Kuwaiti National Guard. Conscription was suspended in 2012. Voluntary military service is between the ages of 17-21 years.

Human Rights

Freedom of Expression

The government has aggressively cracked down on free speech, using provisions in the constitution, the national security law, and other legislation to stifle political dissent. The authorities have stripped Kuwaitis and their dependents of their nationality deporting them, particularly if they have represented opposition voices. The authorities can revoke a person's citizenship if they consider it in the "best interest" of the state or its external security, or if they have evidence that the person concerned has promoted principles that undermine the country's wellbeing. Citizenship can also be revoked if it was obtained fraudulently or if a court convicts a naturalized citizen of a crime related to honour or dishonesty within 15 years of becoming a Kuwaiti.

The authorities have used several laws to prosecute people for criticizing the government or institutions in blogs or on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media. The government took sweeping new powers to block content, deny access to the Internet, and revoke service providers' licenses without giving reasons under a new telecommunications law. The law imposes severe penalties on people who create or send "immoral" messages, and gives unspecified authorities the power to suspend communication services on national security grounds.

Treatment of Minorities

Members of the Bidun community who live in Kuwait remain stateless. After an initial registration period for citizenship ended in 1960, authorities shifted Bidun citizenship claims to administrative committees that for decades have avoided resolving the claims. Authorities claim that many Bidun are "illegal residents" who deliberately destroyed evidence of another nationality in order to get the generous benefits that Kuwait provides to its citizens. Members of the Bidun community frequently take to the streets to protest the government's failure to address their citizenship claims, despite government warnings that Bidun should not gather in public. Article 12 of the 1979 Public Gatherings Law bars non-Kuwaitis from participating in public gatherings. At least seven were arrested for taking part in protests in 2014.

Women's Rights

Women continue to face discrimination in many aspects of their lives, and large legal gaps remain in protections for women. Kuwait has no laws prohibiting domestic violence, sexual harassment, or marital rape. Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis, unlike Kuwaiti men, cannot pass on their citizenship to their children or spouses. Kuwaiti law also prevents a woman marrying a partner of her choice without her father's permission.

In March and April 2014, the Justice Ministry prohibited women, but not men, from applying for legal researcher posts until the two-year evaluation of the first group of women admitted in 2013 is completed. A legal researcher post allows

women for the first time to become eligible, pending evaluation, for posts as prosecutors, enabling them thereafter to pursue careers as judges. In April 2014, a court struck down the Justice Ministry's order and 21 women have now been admitted.



Migrant Workers

Recognising the vulnerabilities of foreign migrant workers, particularly domestic workers who are excluded from the Labour Law or any other legal regime, in 2013 the authorities opened a shelter for domestic workers who flee abusive employers. Inadequate staffing prevented the shelter from becoming fully operational and providing in-house services. The shelter accepts victims on referral from a foreign embassy or international organization. Victims are not able to leave the shelter unescorted if they want to return to the shelter.

Terrorism

Extremist militant groups Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State (ISIS), are responsible for systematic rights abuses, including the intentional targeting and abduction of civilians during military operations in Syria and Iraq. Media reports indicate that ISIS members have included Kuwaiti nationals, and that individual Kuwaitis have financed and supported ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra military operations. Kuwait has since announced new measures to curb funding for extremists. These included banning all fundraising in mosques, requiring greater transparency from charities regarding the sources and destinations of their donations, and obtaining receipts.

International Problems

Kuwait is a destination country for men and women subjected to forced labour and, to a lesser degree, forced prostitution. Men and women migrate from India, Egypt, Bangladesh, Syria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Iran, Jordan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iraq, Lebanon, and Kenya to work in Kuwait. Most of them work in domestic service, construction, and sanitation sectors. Although most enter Kuwait voluntarily, upon arrival some are subjected to conditions of forced labour by their sponsors and labour agents, including non-payment of wages, long working hours without rest, deprivation of food, threats, physical or sexual abuse, and restrictions on movement, such as withholding passports or confinement to the workplace

The United States, in its 2014 US State Department annual Trafficking in Persons report, classified Kuwait as Tier 3, which is amongst the most problematic countries for trafficking for the eighth consecutive year. Kuwait does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making sufficient efforts to do so. No efforts were made to prosecute or convict trafficking offenders using the 2013 anti-trafficking law or other laws addressing trafficking crimes; victim protection measures remained weak particularly due to a lack of proactive victim identification procedures and non-enforcement of the law prohibiting sponsors from withholding workers' passports; no system was developed to refer victims to protective services; the government initiated investigations of companies that brought in large numbers of unskilled foreign workers under false promises of work and that illegally sold visas.

Family life

Family forms the basis of Kuwaiti society. Extended families live together, both out of necessity caused by limited housing space, and so that all family members can be involved in the socialization of future generations and maintain familial and cultural traditions. Most marriages in Kuwait are arranged, in accordance with tradition. Inter-marriage occurs within clans, but not between social classes. Women, regardless of their age, need their father's permission to marry. Also, a woman cannot marry a non-Muslim, although a man is afforded this privilege. In addition, a woman can only marry one spouse, while a man has the legal right to four wives.

Cultural Etiquette

There are five levels of social stratification in Kuwaiti society, and these divisions are based on wealth. At the apex of the social hierarchy is the ruling family. Below that are old Kuwaiti merchant families. In the middle of the strata are former Bedouins, Arabian Desert nomads, who settled in Kuwait with the



advent of the oil industry. Next come Arabs from neighboring countries, and at the bottom of this hierarchy are foreigners.

Within classes there are strong kinship bonds, which help maintain the social structure. Social stratification is perpetuated by the state, as in the legal ability to own property by cultural factors, such as marriage patterns, and by social rights, such as the provision or lack of state funded education, healthcare, and housing. Within this hierarchy there are enormous gaps between the vastly rich, the middle class, and the extraordinarily poor migrants.

- Kuwaitis, like other Arab populations, have different personal boundaries than Westerners. In general, they sit, talk, and stand closer to one another. It is common for members of the same sex to touch one another during their interactions as an expression of their friendship, and men often shake hands upon greeting and departure. Socially, physical contact between men and women is not acceptable.
- It is considered disrespectful to give or accept anything with your left hand.
- Showing the bottoms of your shoes or feet or moving/passing objects with your feet is considered very rude.
- Strong public displays of affection between genders tend to be culturally inappropriate and offensive.

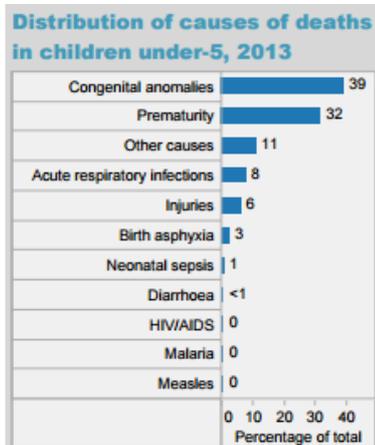
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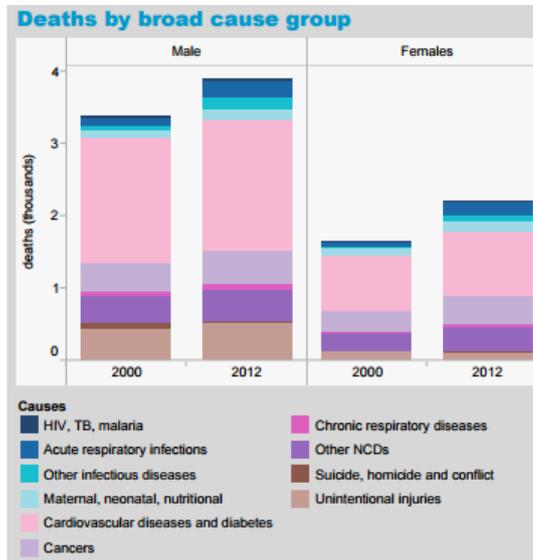
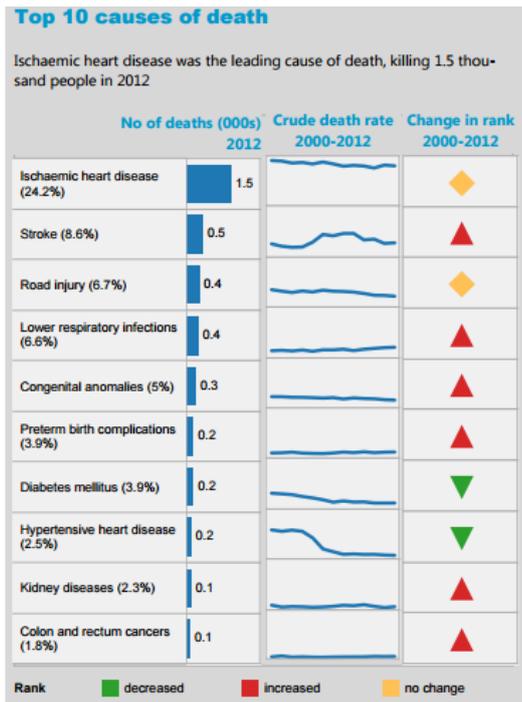
Mortality

Neonatal mortality rate per 1000 live births: 5 (2013)

Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births: 8 (2013)

Under 5 mortality rate per 1000 live births: 10 (2013)





Infectious diseases

- TB - There is a low rate of tuberculosis in Kuwait (less than 40/100,000).
- HIV - There is a low rate of HIV in Kuwait of $\leq 1\%$.
- Hepatitis B - Kuwait has an intermediate prevalence of hepatitis B.
- Hepatitis C - Kuwait has a considerably higher prevalence of hepatitis C than the UK.
- Thyphoid - There is a risk of thyphoid infection in Kuwait.

Immunisations

Percentage coverage in under 1s:

DPT3/pentavalant Hib	99%	combination vaccine: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B and Hib
Measles	99%	
BCG	99%	
PCV3	99%	
HBV3 (hepatitis B)	99%	
Rotavirus	0%	
Hib	99%	
Polio	99%	

Newborns protected against tetanus 95%

Nutrition

Percentage of babies born with low birthweight:

8.3% (2009-2013)



Percentage of children who are underweight:	2.2% (2009-2013)
Percentage of children under 5 years whose growth was stunted:	4.3% (2009-2013)
Percentage of children under 5 years whose growth was wasted:	2.4% (2009-2013)
Percentage who are exclusively breastfed until 6 months of age:	38.3%
Anaemia - The estimated prevalence of anaemia in pre-school children in this country is 20-40%.	

