






De Mare Ad Mare  
– BALTIC –

THE BALTIC STATES

FACT SHEET

Wikipedia mainly was used to prepare this presentation

	Latvia	Lithuania	Estonia
Flag			
Capital	Riga	Vilnius	Tallinn
Area (km ²)	64,589	65,300	45,339
Water area %	1.5%	1.35%	4.56%
Population (2015)	1,978,700	2,902,832	1,313,271
GDP (nominal, 2015)	\$27.822 billion	\$41.776 billion	\$22.934 billion
GDP (nominal) per capita (2016)	\$14,496	\$18,452	\$18,452
Internet domain	.lv	.lt	.ee
Calling code	+371	+370	+372

The Baltic states are the three countries in northern Europe on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea



While the native populations of Latvia and Lithuania are known as Baltic people, those of Estonia are Finnic people together with the Finns.

Despite considerable linguistic proximity, politically Latvia and Lithuania have gone different ways for most of their history.

Lithuania formed a commonwealth with Poland, giving rise to one of the largest countries in Europe at the time; while Latvia and also Estonia were ruled by the Baltic German elite for over 700 years.

After the collapse of Livonia, parts of Latvia and Estonia came under influence of the Commonwealth and Sweden. In the 18th century the lands of all three countries were gradually absorbed into the Russian Empire.

The Baltic states gained independence after the First World War, but were incorporated into the Soviet Union during the Second World War, regaining independence in the early 1990s.

All three countries are members of the European Union, NATO and the Eurozone.



The languages of Baltic nations belong to two distinct language families.

The Latvian and Lithuanian languages belong to the Indo-European language family and are the only extant members of the Baltic language group (or more specifically, Eastern Baltic subgroup of Baltic).

The Estonian and Livonian language, on the other hand, are not Indo-European languages and instead they belong to the Balto-Finnic branch of the Uralic languages, being closely related to the Finnish language.

Livonian language however has had an important role in the development of Latvian.

German was the dominant language in Estonia and Latvia in academics, professional life, and upper society from the 13th century until World War I. Polish served a similar function in Lithuania.

Numerous Swedish loanwords have made it into the Estonian language; it was under the Swedish rule that schools were established and education propagated in the 17th century. Swedish remains spoken in Estonia. There is also significant proficiency in Finnish in Estonia owing to its closeness to the native Estonian and also the widespread practice of listening to Finnish broadcasts during the Soviet era. Russian also achieved significant usage particularly in commerce.

Russian was commonly studied language at all levels of schooling during the Soviet era. Despite schooling available and administration conducted in local languages, Russian speaking settlers were neither encouraged nor motivated to learn the official local languages, so knowledge of Russian became a practical necessity in daily life. Even to this day, a majority of all Baltic inhabitants (regardless of ethnicity) profess to be proficient in Russian, especially among those who lived during Soviet rule.



The Baltic Germans were mostly ethnically German inhabitants of the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, in what today form the countries of Estonia and Latvia.

Lithuania followed a completely different historical path and some of its cities were home to a small German trading class, but never a German noble or ruling class.

In 1881, there were approximately 46,700 Germans in Estonia (5.3% of the population). According to the Russian Empire Census of 1897, there were 120,191 Germans in Latvia, or 6.2% of the population.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, Germans, both colonists and crusaders, settled in the Baltic. After the Livonian Crusades they quickly came to control all the administrations of government, politics, economics, education and culture of these areas, despite remaining a minority ethnic group. German became the language of all official documents, commerce and government business until 1919.

The ethnic majority of Estonians and Latvians had restricted rights and privileges and resided mostly in rural areas as serfs, tradesmen, or as servants in urban homes. This was in keeping with the social scheme of things in Imperial Russia, and lasted well into the 19th century, when emancipation from serfdom brought those inhabitants increased political rights and freedoms.

The Baltic Germans' effective rule and class privileges came to the end due to the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917 and the independence of Estonia and Latvia in 1918–1919. After 1919, many Baltic Germans felt obliged to depart for Germany. Almost all the Baltic Germans were resettled by ships in late 1939, thus Baltic Germans no longer exist as a distinct ethnic group.

Since 1989, many elderly Baltic Germans, or their descendants, have taken holidays to Estonia and Latvia to look for traces of their own past, their ancestral homes, and their family histories.



RELIGION AND ETHNIC GROUPS

Religion

The population of the Baltic countries belong to different Christian denominations, a reflection of historical circumstances. Both Western and Eastern Christianity had been introduced by the end of the first millennium. The current divide between Lutheranism to the north and Catholicism to the south is the remnant of Swedish and Polish hegemony, respectively, with Orthodox Christianity remaining the dominant faith among Russian and other East Slavic minorities.

Ethnic groups and culture

Estonians and the small-numbered Livonian people in Latvia are descended from the Baltic Finns, sharing closely related languages and a common cultural ancestry. Ethnic Estonians currently constitute about 70% of the population of Estonia.

The Latvians and Lithuanians, linguistically and culturally related to each other, are descended from the Balts, an Indo-European people and culture. Ethnic Latvians currently comprise about 62% in Latvia and ethnic Lithuanians about 87% in Lithuania.

The peoples comprising the Baltic states have together inhabited the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea for millennia, although not always peacefully in ancient times, over which period their populations have remained remarkably stable within the approximate territorial boundaries of the current Baltic states. While separate peoples with their own customs and traditions, historical factors have introduced cultural commonalities across and differences within them.

Currently, the Baltic states have considerable Slavic populations: Latvia is 34.5% Slavic (including 26.7% Russian, 3.3% Belarusian, 2.2% Ukrainian, and 2.2% Polish), 28.8% of Estonia is Slavic (mostly Russian), and 13.8% of Lithuania is Slavic (including 6.5% Polish and 5.3% Russian).



POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

Politics

All three countries are parliamentary democracies, which have unicameral parliaments that are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms – Riigikogu of Estonia, Saeima of Latvia and Seimas of Lithuania. In Latvia and Estonia, the president is elected by parliament while Lithuania has a semi-presidential system and the president is elected by popular vote.

Each of the three countries has declared itself to be the restoration of the sovereign nations that had existed from 1918 to 1940, emphasizing their contention that Soviet domination over the Baltic nations during the Cold War period had been an illegal occupation and annexation.

Economics

The economies of the three countries have undergone rapid expansion in the early 2000s. However, the economies were hard-hit by the financial crisis of 2007–2010. In 2009, real aggregate GDP fell by 14.8% in Lithuania, by 18% in Latvia and 13.9% in Estonia. Currently, all three Baltic States are classified as "high income" economies by the World Bank. Estonia adopted the euro in January 2011, Latvia in January 2014, and Lithuania in January 2015.

Sports

Basketball is a notable sport across the Baltic states. Teams from the three countries compete in the respective national championships and the Baltic Basketball League. The Lithuanian teams have been the strongest, with the BC Žalgiris winning the 1999 FIBA Euroleague.

Ice hockey is popular in Latvia. Dinamo Riga is the country's strongest hockey club, playing in the Kontinental Hockey League. The 2006 Men's World Ice Hockey Championships were held in Latvia.

Estonian Markko Märtin was successful World Rally Championship in the early 2000, where he got five wins and 18 podiums, as well as a third place in the 2004 standings. Latvian tennis player Ernests Gulbis was semifinalist at the 2010 Rome Masters and 2014 French Open.