TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

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The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

Kenya

Country name	Kenya
State title	Republic of Kenya (*eng*); Jamhuri ya Kenya (*swa*)[1]
Name of citizen	Kenyan
Official language(s)	English (*eng*) and Swahili[2] (*swa*)
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	KE/KEN
Capital	Nairobi
Population/Area	57,052,004 (2023 est.) / 580,367 sq km[3]

Introduction

Kenya lies in eastern Africa, on the Equator. It is bordered by South Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the north, Somalia to the east, Uganda to the west, Tanzania to the south, and the Indian Ocean to the southeast.

The Republic of Kenya gained independence from the British Empire in 1963. The country is named after Mount Kenya, the country's high point at 5199m.

Geographical names policy

Place names may derive from any of the local languages; these will be represented largely using English orthographic conventions. Since official government and mapping organisations use English, place names appropriate for HMG use may be taken directly from official Kenyan sources, such as those produced by the Kenyan national mapping agency, Survey of Kenya. In the event that official sources show inconsistent spellings, specific guidance from PCGN may be sought.

Some features may have alternative names in Swahili. PCGN advises using the English-language names as the primary names for HMG purposes. Alternative Swahili names can be included in secondary position for cross-reference if required.

Languages

English and Swahili (also known as Kiswahili) are the official languages of Kenya. Both are written in Roman script. The 2010 Constitution also describes Kiswahili as the national language.[4] These languages are both spoken as a *lingua franca* throughout the country. Additionally, there are some 60 indigenous languages spoken, these being principally from the Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan

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[1] ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.
[2] Also known as Kiswahili.
[3] https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kenya/
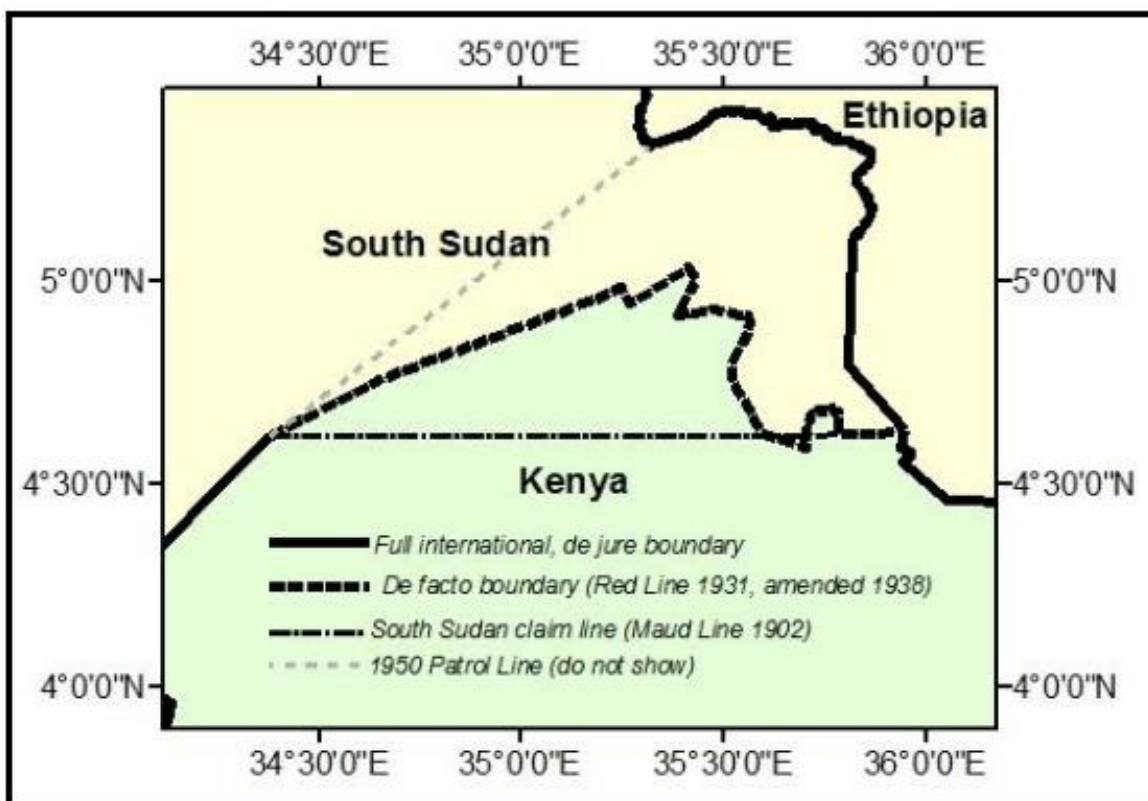[4] https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Kenya_2010

language families, as well as languages introduced from migrant communities, notably Hindi and Arabic.

Toponymic/Boundary Disputes

Ilemi Triangle
A dispute exists between Kenya and South Sudan over the boundary between 4°37'41"N, 34°24'22"E and 4°37'52"N, 35°46'50"E, an area measuring over 10,000 km², known as the Ilemi Triangle. The area is bordered to the east by Ethiopia, which does not make a claim to the area.

On HMG mapping, the Ilemi Triangle should be represented as a disputed area by use of two boundary lines with a broken line, disputed boundary symbol: the 1902 Maud Line and the 1938 Red Line. The area between the Red Line and the Maud Line should be shaded as part of Kenyan territory, reflecting continuing Kenyan *de facto* control of the area. Maps should also carry a label identifying the disputed area as being "Under Kenyan administration" or "Administered by Kenya".

Note: this map is for illustrative purposes. It is not to be taken as necessarily representing the view of the UK Government on boundaries or political status.

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Map of Kenya

Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

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Administrative structure

In August 2010, Kenyans overwhelmingly adopted a new constitution in a national referendum. The new constitution introduced devolved power and resources to 47 newly created counties. These counties constitute the first-order administrative divisions (ADM1) and are listed in the table below. Below ADM1 level, the counties are sub-divided into sub-counties, constituencies or wards for various different purposes.

Counties of Kenya

	County (ADM1)	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative Centre (PPLA)	PPLA Location
1	Baringo	KE-01	Kabarnet	0°29'31"N 35°44'35"E
2	Bomet	KE-02	Bomet	0°47'0″S 35°21'0″E
3	Bungoma	KE-03	Bungoma	0°33'49"N 34°33'38"E
4	Busia	KE-04	Busia	0°27'31"N 34°06'58"E
5	Elgeyo-Marakwet[5]	KE-05	Iten	0°40'13"N 35°30'29"E
6	Embu	KE-06	Embu	0°32'24"S 37°27'27"E
7	Garissa	KE-07	Garissa	0°27'13"S 39°38'24"E
8	Homa Bay	KE-08	Homa Bay	0°31'38"S 34°27'26"E
9	Isiolo	KE-09	Isiolo	0°21'17"N 37°34'56"E
10	Kajiado	KE-10	Kajiado	1°51'09"S 36°46'37"E
11	Kakamega	KE-11	Kakamega	0°17'03"N 34°45'08"E
12	Kericho	KE-12	Kericho	0°22'04"S 35°16'59"E
13	Kiambu	KE-13	Kiambu	1°10'17"S 36°50'08"E
14	Kilifi	KE-14	Kilifi	3°37'50"S 39°51'00"E
15	Kirinyaga	KE-15	Kerugoya / Kutus[6]	0°29'56"S 37°16'49"E
16	Kisii	KE-16	Kisii	0°40'26"S 34°46'20"E
17	Kisumu	KE-17	Kisumu (City)	0°06'08"S 34°45'42"E
18	Kitui	KE-18	Kitui	1°22'01"S 38°00'38"E
19	Kwale	KE-19	Kwale	4°10'25"S 39°27'07"E
20	Laikipia	KE-20	Nanyuki	0°00'22"N 37°04'26"E
21	Lamu	KE-21	Lamu	2°16'08"S 40°54'03"E
22	Machakos	KE-22	Machakos	1°31'20"S 37°15'55"E
23	Makueni	KE-23	Wote	1°46'51"S 37°37'44"E
24	Mandera	KE-24	Mandera	03°56'29"N 41°51'45"E
25	Marsabit	KE-25	Marsabit	02°20'05"N 37°59'27"E

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[5] This name may also be seen spelt Elgeyo/Marakwet or Elgeyo Marakwet.
[6] The municipality of Kerugoya / Kutus is the PPLA of Kirinyaga County. Some sources cite only one town, either Kerugoya or Kutus as being the PPLA. The address of the county administration is in Kutus.

	County (ADM1)	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative Centre (PPLA)	PPLA Location
26	Meru	KE-26	Meru	0°02'47"N 37°39'21"E
27	Migori	KE-27	Migori	1°03'48"S 34°28'23"E
28	Mombasa	KE-28	Mombasa (City)	4°03'17"S 39°39'49"E
29	Murang'a	KE-29	Murang'a	0°43'16"S 37°09'09"E
30	Nairobi City	KE-30	Nairobi (City)	01°17'00"S 36°49'00"E
31	Nakuru	KE-31	Nakuru	0°18'26"S 36°04'20"E
32	Nandi	KE-32	Kapsabet	0°12'14"N 35°06'18"E
33	Narok	KE-33	Narok	1°04'51"S 35°52'16"E
34	Nyamira	KE-34	Nyamira	0°33'48"S 34°56'09"E
35	Nyandarua	KE-35	Ol Kalou	0°15'52"S 36°22'44"E
36	Nyeri	KE-36	Nyeri	0°25'12"S 36°56'51"E
37	Samburu	KE-37	Maralal	01°05'48"N 36°41'53"E
38	Siaya	KE-38	Siaya	0°03'39"N 34°17'17"E
39	Taita/Taveta[7]	KE-39	Mwatate	3°30'18"S 38°22'38"E
40	Tana River	KE-40	Hola	1°29'58"S 40°01'48"E
41	Tharaka-Nithi	KE-41	Kathwana	0°19'53"S 37°52'07"E
42	Trans Nzoia	KE-42	Kitale	01°00'57"N 35°00'22"E
43	Turkana	KE-43	Lodwar	03°07'12"N 35°35'47"E
44	Uasin Gishu	KE-44	Eldoret	0°31'13"N 35°16'12"E
45	Vihiga	KE-45	Mbale	0°04'56"N 34°44'17"E
46	Wajir	KE-46	Wajir	01°44'50"N 40°03'26"E
47	West Pokot	KE-47	Kapenguria	01°14'20"N 35°06'43"E

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[7] Also seen spelt as Taita-Taveta or Taita Taveta.

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Mount Kenya (Kirinyaga)		0°09′30″S 37°19′00″E	Mountain
Lake Rudolf (Lake Turkana)[8]		3°30′39″N 36°03′21″E	Lake
Lake Victoria	Nyanza-Viktoria (*swa*)	1°S 33°E	Lake
Great Rift Valley	Bonde la Ufa (*swa*)	0°26′33″N 3614′24″E	Valley
Maasai Mara	Masai Mara, The Mara	1°26′06″S 35°06′38″E	Game Reserve
Tana River		2°32′08″S 40°31′53″E	River

Useful references

- BBC Kenya Country Policy: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13681341
- CIA World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kenya/
- Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics: https://www.knbs.or.ke/
- Map of the counties of Kenya: https://www.kra.go.ke/images/publications/The-Map-of-Kenya.pdf
- Omniglot www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
- PCGN Country Names list: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names
- State Department for Devolution: https°//www.devolution.go.ke/county-information/
- US Board on Geographic Names Geographic Names Server: https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSHome/index.html

[8] This feature is principally in Kenya, where the name is Lake Turkana, but as an international feature, PCGN recommends using the conventional name rather than the Kenyan name in primary position.