



Source: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/countries-by-share-of-earths-surface/>

Visualizing Countries by Share of Earth's Surface

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There are over 510 million square kilometres of area on the surface of Earth, but less than 30% of this is covered by land. The rest is *water*, in the form of vast oceans.

Today's visualisation uses data primarily from the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) to rank the world's countries by their share of Earth's surface.

Breakdown of Countries Share of Earth's Surface

The largest countries by surface area are Russia (3.35%), Canada (1.96%), and China (1.88%).

Together they occupy roughly 7.2% of Earth's surface. Russia is so big that even if we divided the country between its Asian and European sections, those new regions would still be the largest in their respective continents.

Country / Dependency	Total in km ² (mi ²)	Percentage of Earth's Surface
Russia	17,098,246 (6,601,670)	3.352%
Antarctica	14,000,000 (5,400,000)	2.745%
Canada	9,984,670 (3,855,100)	1.958%
China	9,596,961 (3,705,407)	1.881%
United States	9,525,067 (3,677,649)	1.867%
Brazil	8,515,767 (3,287,956)	1.670%
Australia	7,692,024 (2,969,907)	1.508%
India	3,287,263 (1,269,219)	0.644%
Argentina	2,780,400 (1,073,500)	0.545%
Kazakhstan	2,724,900 (1,052,100)	0.534%

Antarctica, although not a country, covers the second largest amount of land overall at 2.75%. Meanwhile, the other nations that surpass the 1% mark for surface area include the United States (1.87%), Brazil (1.67%), and Australia (1.51%).

The remaining 195 countries and regions below 1%, combined, account for the other half of Earth's land surface. Among the world's smallest countries are the island nations of the Caribbean and the South Pacific Ocean. However, the tiniest of the tiny are Vatican City and Monaco, which combine for a total area of just 2.51 km².

The remaining 70% of Earth's surface is water: 27% territorial waters and 43% international waters or areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

In the past, nations adhered to the freedom-of-the-seas doctrine, a 17th century principle that limited jurisdiction over the oceans to a narrow area along a nation's coastline. The rest of the seas did not belong to any nation and were free for countries to travel and exploit.

This situation lasted into the 20th century, but by mid-century there was an effort to extend national claims as competition for offshore resources became increasingly fierce and ocean pollution became an issue.

In 1982, the United Nations adopted the Law of the Sea Convention which extended international law over the extra-territorial waters. The convention established freedom-of-navigation rights and set territorial sea boundaries 12 miles (19 km) offshore with exclusive economic zones up to 200 miles (322 km) offshore, extending a country's influence over maritime resources.

Does Size Matter?

The size of countries is the outcome of politics, economics, history, and geography. Put simply, borders can change over time.

In 1946, there were 76 independent countries in the world, and today there are 195. There are forces that push together or pull apart landscapes over time. While physical geography plays a role in the identity of nations, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the former ruler of UAE, a tiny Gulf nation, put it best:

"A country is not measured by the size of its area on the map. A country is truly measured by its heritage and culture."

WEB & INFOGRAPHIC RESOURCE: VISUAL CAPITALIST

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Relevant to physical geography topics including Landscapes and Landforms, Water in the World, Sustainable Biomes and Environmental Change and Management.

Countries by Share of Earth's Surface poster

1. Begin with some thinking questions such as:

- Will the proportion of Earth covered by oceans increase or decrease with climate change?
- What might Australia's proportion of earth's surface be as a result of a global 1 metre rise in sea level?
- Why is Antarctica and not the Arctic shown on the graphic as a portion of Earth's surface?

Discuss and explain correct answers

2. A. Predict how the graphic depicted would change with a 1 metre rise in sea level.

B. Predict how the graphic depicted would be different by 2100 as a result of the impact of climate change on weather and climate.

- Create a hand drawn simplified infographic to illustrate your predictions.
- Conduct an inquiry to determine the accuracy of your predictions.

3. Research two sources that will validate the data used in the infographic.

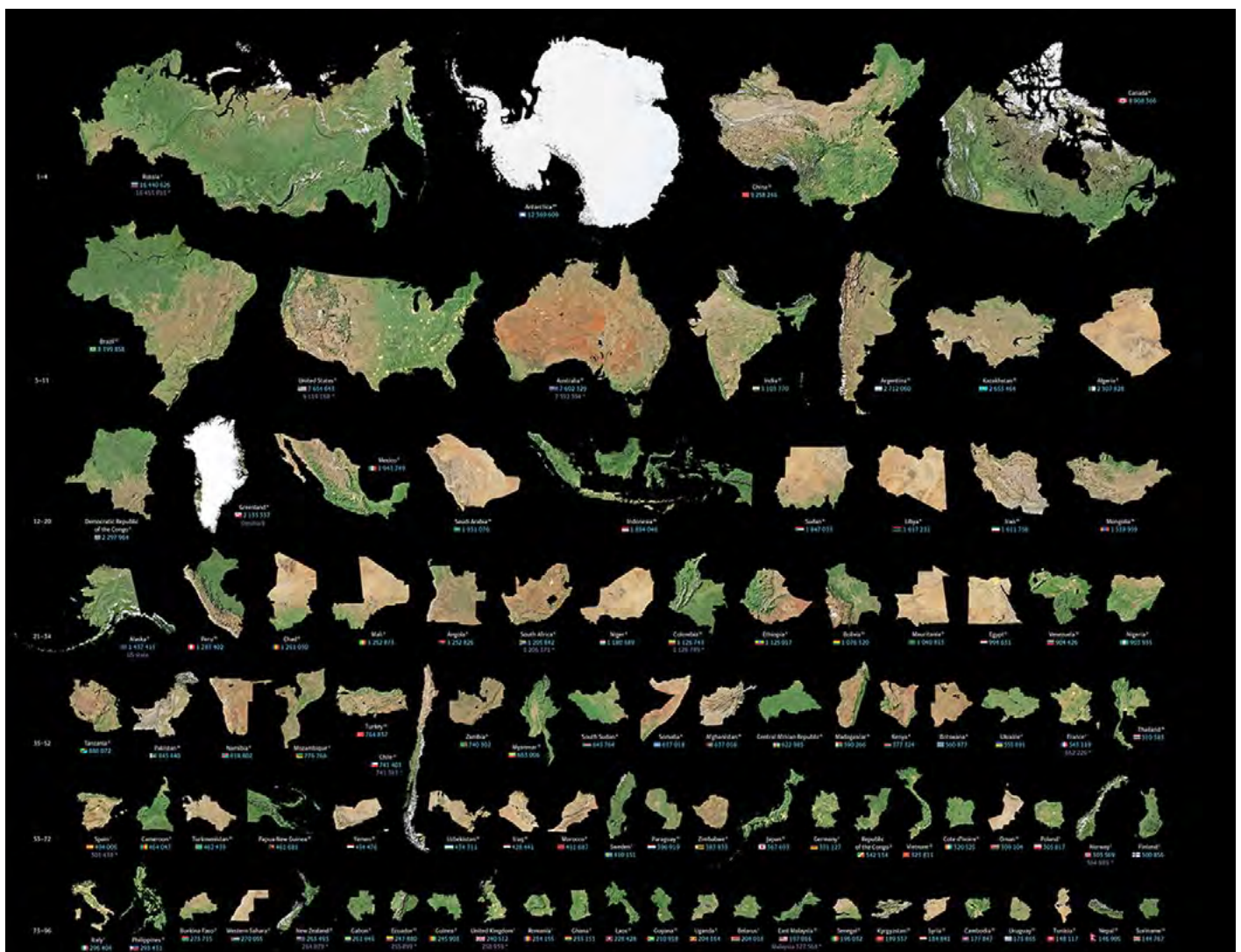
4. Calculate the % of Earth's surface occupied by China PLUS India

5. Explain the difference between Territorial Waters and International Waters.

What message is the following quote giving?

"A country is not measured by the size of its area on the map. A country is truly measured by its heritage and culture."

Visualising the True Size of Land Masses from Largest to Smallest (detail)



Source: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/visualizing-the-true-size-of-land-masses-from-largest-to-smallest/>