

Countries Considered Part of the West

Union of Saints

The term “the West” generally refers to countries associated with Western European history, cultural traditions, political institutions, and philosophical influences. These include traditions associated with constitutional government, liberal democracy, individual liberty, and the development of European and North American societies. There is no universally agreed list of Western countries, and the definition varies depending on whether the discussion concerns history, culture, politics, economics, or military alliances.

North America

The United States and Canada are commonly considered part of the Western world. Both countries have historical, cultural, political, and economic connections to Europe.

Western and Northern Europe

Countries commonly considered part of the West include the United Kingdom, France, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland.

Southern Europe

Southern European countries commonly associated with the Western world include Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Malta, Andorra, San Marino, Monaco, and Vatican City.

Oceania

Australia and New Zealand are generally considered part of the Western world because of their historical, cultural, political, and institutional connections to Europe and their close relationships with the United States and other Western countries.

Central and Eastern Europe

Depending on the context, the Western world can also include Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Many of these countries are members of the European Union and NATO and participate in Western political and security partnerships.

Western-Aligned Countries Outside Europe

Japan, South Korea, Israel, and Taiwan are sometimes included in discussions of the broader Western-aligned world. These countries have distinct cultural and historical identities, but their political, economic, or security relationships with Western countries may place them within discussions of the Western geopolitical sphere.

The West and NATO

The West and NATO are not interchangeable terms. NATO is a military alliance, while the West is a broader cultural, historical, political, and geopolitical concept. Many Western countries belong to NATO, while other countries associated with the West or aligned with Western interests do not.

Conclusion

The Western world most commonly encompasses the United States, Canada, Western and Northern Europe, much of Southern Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Depending on the historical or geopolitical context, it may also encompass Central and Eastern European countries and Western-aligned partners elsewhere in the world. For precision in formal writing, the terms “Western countries,” “Western alliance,” and “Western-aligned countries” can be used to distinguish cultural and historical identity from political and military partnerships.