

Botswana

KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth: 1966

Population: 2,021,000 (2013)

GDP p.c. growth: 2.8% p.a. 1990–2013

UN HDI 2014: World ranking 109

Official languages: Setswana, English

Time: GMT plus 2 hrs

Currency: Pula (P)

Geography

Area: 582,000 sq km

Coastline: None

Capital: Gaborone

The Republic of Botswana is a large, landlocked plateau in the centre of Southern Africa, bordered by South Africa, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Topography: The average elevation of the country is 1,000 metres. To the south-east are hills, the highest being 1,491 metres Otse Mountain near Lobatse. In the north-west are the Tsodilo Hills, famous for rock-paintings. Also in the north-west, the Okavango River flows into an enormous inland delta, home of a great variety of wildlife. To the north-east is the salt desert of the Makgadikgadi Pans. However, about 85 per cent of the country consists of the tableland of the Kalahari desert, a vast sandveld.

Climate: Botswana lies across the Tropic of Capricorn. The climate ranges from semi-arid through subtropical to temperate. Eastern Botswana is temperate, with enough rainfall to support arable farming, but rainfall decreases and temperature range increases westwards and southwards. Summer (October–April) is the rainy season and is very hot. Rainfall varies from 650 mm p.a. in the east to 230 mm in the south-west. May–October is usually dry. In winter the nights can be cold and sometimes frosty, especially in the desert. Mean maximum temperature at Gaborone is 32.5°C. From August, annual seasonal winds cross the Kalahari from the west, raising dust and sandstorms.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are overgrazing, desertification and limited resources of fresh water.

Vegetation: Mostly dry savannah with grasslands and thornbush to semi-desert and some true desert. Acacia, bloodwood and Rhodesian teak trees in the forest in the north-west. Forest covers 20 per cent of the land area, having declined at 0.9 per cent p.a. 1990–2010.

Wildlife: Wildlife is protected in the three national parks and five game reserves, extending to 105,000 sq km or 18.5 per cent of the total land area. The Okavango Delta supports a world-famous variety of water-birds and attracts thousands of animals in the dry season. The Chobe National Park, also in the north, has more than 50,000 elephants. The Gemsbok National Park abuts South Africa's Kalahari Gemsbok NP, which together make one of the world's biggest wilderness regions. The country has recorded 164 species of mammals, seven of which are threatened with extinction (2014).

Main towns: Gaborone (capital, pop. 244,900 in 2014), Francistown (104,600 in 2014), Molepolole (66,466 in 2011), Maun (60,263 in 2011), Mogoditshane (58,079 in 2011), Selebi-Phikwe (52,200 in 2014), Serowe (50,820 in 2011), Kanye (47,007 in 2011), Mochudi (44,815 in 2011), Mahalapye (43,298 in 2011), Palapye (37,256 in 2011), Tlokweng (36,323 in 2011), Lobatse (30,700 in 2014), Ramotswa (28,952 in 2011), Thamaga (21,471 in 2011) and Bobonong (19,389 in 2011). Most of Botswana's main settlements are in the south-east of the country.

Transport: There are 25,800 km of roads, 33 per cent paved. The north-south highway links South Africa with Zambia. The Trans-Kalahari highway, completed in 1998, links Botswana to Walvis Bay on the Namibian coast, shortening the route between Johannesburg and the Namibian capital, Windhoek, and opening up the hitherto inaccessible western regions of the country.

The 888-km railway line runs north-south along the eastern side of the country from Plumtree in Zimbabwe to the border with South Africa. Exports from Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Southern Africa use this line to reach the South African ports of Durban and Richards Bay. Local railway lines service Botswana's mining industries.

Air services operate to several regional destinations plus regular domestic flights



between Gaborone and Francistown, Maun, Selebi-Phikwe, Ghanzi, Pont Drift and Kasane.

Society

KEY FACTS 2013

Population per sq km: 3

Life expectancy: 48 years

Net primary enrolment: 84% (2009)

Population: 2,021,000 (2013); 57 per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 1.6 per cent p.a. 1990–2013, with rapid growth in urban areas; birth rate 24 per 1,000 people (46 in 1970); life expectancy 48 years, down from a peak of 63 years in the early 1990s, as a result of AIDS (52 in 1970).

Around 80 per cent of the people are of Setswana-speaking origin and most of the rest of Kalanga-speaking origin. Bushmen (i.e. San or Basarwa), Herero, Mbukushu, Yei and Mazezuru, whites and others constitute the balance.

Language: Setswana is the national language; English is an official language.

Religion: Most people are Christians (81 per cent in 2011 census) or hold traditional beliefs. Traditional religions incorporate some Christian practices.

Health: Public spending on health was three per cent of GDP in 2011. There are some 30 hospitals and more than 500 clinics and health centres. Malaria is endemic in northern Botswana. Some 97 per cent of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 64 per cent have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2012). Infant mortality was 36 per

1,000 live births in 2013 (118 in 1960). In 2013, 22 per cent of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive. Full AIDS control and prevention programmes are in place.

Education: Public spending on education was eight per cent of GDP in 2009. There are ten years of compulsory education starting at the age of six. Primary school comprises seven years and secondary five. Some 93 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2008). The school year starts in January. The Brigades movement was founded in 1963 in Serowe by Patrick van Rensburg to provide vocational training in skilled trades for early school-leavers.

There are about 30 vocational and technical training centres, four teacher-training colleges, two colleges of education and one university, the University of Botswana. A second public university, the Botswana International University of Science and Technology, is under construction at Palapye. It opened in August 2012, initially admitting a few hundred students, and based at the Oodi College of Applied Arts and Technology, until the Palapye campus is ready. The Institute of Development Management was established in 1974 as a regional institution with campuses in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Other tertiary institutions include Botswana College of Agriculture, Botswana Institute of Administration and Commerce, and Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning. Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 95 per cent (2010).

In 1997 Botswana hosted the 13th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Gaborone – Commonwealth Education Ministers meet every three years to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

Media: The government-owned *Daily News* is published in English and Setswana, and *Mmegi* is an independent daily. There are several privately owned weeklies including *The Botswana Gazette* (Wednesday, since 1985), *Botswana Guardian* (weekend), *The Midweek Sun*, *The Sunday Standard* and *The Voice*.

Botswana's media has a long tradition of lively public debate. The country's constitution provides for freedom of expression, this is generally respected by the government. Press circulation is limited to urban areas and radio is the main source of information for most people. Radio Botswana is the public service, broadcasting in Setswana and English. There are a number of privately owned radio stations, including Yarona FM and Gabz FM. Public service TV, Botswana Television, was launched in 2000. There are a number of privately owned TV stations, the most popular of which is eBotswana.

Some nine per cent of households have TV sets (2006). There are 63 personal computers per 1,000 people (2008).

Communications: Country code 267; internet domain '.bw'. There are very few public phone boxes. Mobile phone coverage is generally confined to the most populous areas. Gaborone and Maun have a number of internet cafes. There are post offices in all towns and the larger villages.

For every 1,000 people there are 86 landlines, 1,606 mobile phone subscriptions and 150 internet users (2013).

Public holidays: New Year (two days), Labour Day (early May), Sir Seretse Khama Day (1 July), President's Day (Monday in July), Botswana Day (30 September), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday and Ascension Day.

Economy

KEY FACTS 2013

GNI: US\$14.6bn

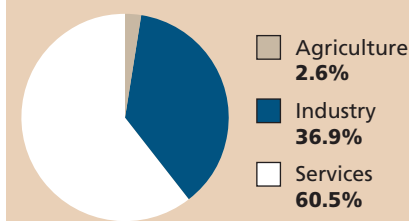
GNI p.c.: US\$7,730

GDP growth: 3.2% p.a. 2009–13

Inflation: 7.4% p.a. 2009–13

Botswana has benefited from a stable social structure and a wealth of natural mineral resources; it has an unbroken record of

GDP by sector (2013)



parliamentary democracy and one of Africa's highest sustained records of economic growth since independence. However, the economy is dependent on mining and agriculture, and has had to cope with the vagaries of the diamond market and frequent droughts. During 1999–2003, only the year 2000 was free of drought. It is also strongly influenced by economic trends in South Africa, the economic giant of the region. Moreover, the country has one of the world's highest HIV infection rates, which has an effect on productivity.

Minerals have provided the financial base for welfare projects and the development of manufacturing. Since the 1990s the government has encouraged foreign investment in export-oriented industries, especially in manufacturing, and notably car assembly (which started in 1994, boosted exports for the rest of the decade and then ceased production in 2000 when the South African investor company went into liquidation); textiles; and diamond jewellery (the first jewellery factory was established with Indian investment in 2010).

The economy generally grew well in the 2000s, but in the face of the global downturn, world demand for diamonds and eco-tourism slumped, and the Botswana economy moved sharply into recession, shrinking by 7.8 per cent in 2009, but recovering very strongly in 2010 with rises in world commodity prices, recording growth of 8.6 per cent in 2010 and 6.2 per cent in 2011, and continuing at more than four per cent p.a. in 2012–15.

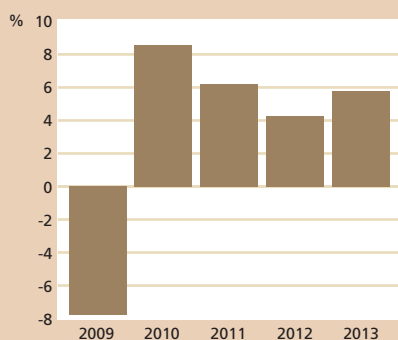
Mining

Mining started near Orapa in 1967 only a year after independence. The country is among the world's largest producers of diamonds. Minerals – notably diamonds, copper and nickel – generate most of the government's revenue.

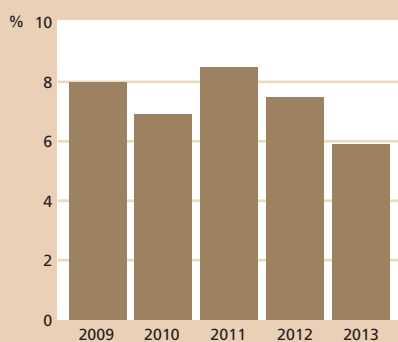
History

The earliest inhabitants of Botswana were San or Basarwa (Bushmen) who have been in the area an estimated 30,000 years. Their nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle has left few traces except rock paintings (there are some

Real growth in GDP



Inflation



3,500 paintings at 350 sites in the Tsodilo Hills). More technologically advanced and powerful pastoral and agricultural Bantu groups moved in from the north-west and east around the first and second century CE. The first Setswana-speaking group, the Bakgalagadi, arrived sometime in the 14th century. While there was plenty of land, the different peoples coexisted peacefully but in the early 19th century, Mzilikazi (a captain of Zulu chief Shaka) broke away and led a Zulu force northwards. The local people were scattered and forced into more arid lands.

The upheavals of the region were greatly exacerbated when, from around 1836, the Boer Trekkers, escaping British rule, began to arrive and displace other groups. In the 1840s British missionaries David Livingstone and Robert Moffat established stations among the Bakwena; Moffat translated the Bible into Setswana.

In 1872 Khama III became chief of Bamangwato, one of the tribes of the Batswana group. A capable general and administrator, he secured immunity from Matabele raids and increased order and stability. To avoid Boer rule, particularly after the discovery of gold at Tati, Khama asked for British protection; this was given in 1885. The terms were that Khama retained control of administration, law and justice, while Britain was responsible for security.

The territory south of the Molopo River was annexed to the Cape Colony in 1895 while the rest remained under British protection as Bechuanaland. A capital was chosen at Mafikeng, a town settled almost exclusively by Tswana-speaking tribes. At Mafikeng, which was actually in South Africa, outside the Protectorate, the now global boy scout movement was started by Lord Baden-Powell. Bechuanaland successfully resisted pressure to grant mining concessions to the British South Africa Company and also (in 1909) successfully resisted becoming part of South Africa.

Over the next half-century, the country languished: it became a provider of cheap labour for South Africa's mines, education and welfare were neglected, and the administration came entirely into colonial hands.

In 1923 Khama III died; his son and successor, Sekgoma, died after being in power only two years. Three-year-old Seretse Khama then inherited the leadership, with his uncle, Tshekedi Khama, as Regent.

Seretse Khama's accession in 1950 changed the tone of Bechuanaland politics. While studying law in London, he married a white English woman. This was rated as a serious breach of tribal custom in Botswana, and also in racially segregated South Africa and

Rhodesia. Seretse Khama was forced to stand down as chief of the Ngwato. The UK yielded to pressure and held him in exile until 1956. On his return to Bechuanaland, Seretse Khama campaigned for change and in the 1960s founded the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). Its policy sought a non-racial and democratic but traditional society in which chiefs and traditional courts still had a role.

In 1960 a representative legislative council was set up; there was now a formal negotiating mechanism and independence was achieved in a series of peaceful moves. Central authority was strengthened, the position of the chiefs and African courts defined. The seat of government was transferred from Mafikeng to Gaborone. In the pre-independence elections of 1965, the BDP won 28 of the 31 elective seats. The country achieved independence as a republic on 30 September 1966 with Seretse Khama as President.

Seretse Khama led the country from 1965 until his death in 1980, when he was succeeded by Dr Quett Masire, formerly Vice-President, who was knighted as Sir Ketumile Masire in 1991.

Although the BDP had easily won every election since multiparty democracy was established in 1965, in the general election of 1994 the main opposition party, the Botswana National Front (BNF), won 13 seats (37 per cent of the vote) as against the BDP's 27 seats (54 per cent), with the smaller parties failing to win any seats.

In November 1997 at the age of 73, President Masire announced he would retire in March 1998. On 1 April 1998 Festus Mogae, who had served as Vice-President since 1992, was sworn in as President. He also became leader of the BDP. The only new member of Mogae's first cabinet was Ian Khama (son of former President Sir Seretse Khama), who retired as commander of the Botswana Defence Force to take up the key post of Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration and was appointed Vice-President in July 1998.

Botswana on the international stage

Botswana was the largest producer of gem-quality diamonds in the world in 2014, a position it has held since it displaced Australia in 1999.

Gaborone is the setting for the fictional book series, *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith, the Zimbabwe-born writer who chose the location for the book after teaching law at the University of Botswana. The books were turned into a television series by the BBC in conjunction with US channel HBO. Homegrown Botswanan writer Leetile Disang Raditladi (1910–1971), known for his historical plays and poems, has a crater on Mercury named after him.

Sprinter Amantle Montsho, born in 1983, holds the Commonwealth Record for the 400 Metres Women's race.

Constitution

Status: Republic with executive President

Legislature: Parliament of Botswana

Independence: 30 September 1966

Under the 1965 constitution, Botswana is a republic with an executive President chosen by the National Assembly for the concurrent five-year term. After the 2004 general election, the National Assembly had 57 members directly elected by universal adult suffrage plus the President, Speaker, Attorney-General and four members nominated by the President. The 35-member Ntlo ya Dikgosi (formerly known as the House of Chiefs) advises on tribal matters; 30 of the members are elected by senior tribal authorities and five members appointed by the President.

The Botswana Democratic Party has ruled that the party leadership is only to be held by any one person for two full terms.

Substantive constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly and major amendments, a national referendum. Constitutional amendments approved in April 1997 retained the system by which the President is elected by Parliament but allowed the Vice-President automatically to succeed in the event of the President's death or resignation during his term of office. It also reduced the voting age from 21 to 18.

Local elections for the nine district councils, two city councils and four town councils are held – also on a party basis – simultaneously with general elections.

Politics

Last elections: 24 October 2014

Next elections: 2019

Head of state: President Lt-Gen Seretse Khama Ian Khama

Head of government: The President

Ruling party: Botswana Democratic Party

Women MPs: 10%

Further information

Government of Botswana:	www.gov.bw
Independent Electoral Commission:	www.iec.gov.bw
Parliament of Botswana:	www.parliament.gov.bw
Central Statistics Office:	www.cso.gov.bw
Bank of Botswana:	www.bankofbotswana.bw
Botswana Tourism Organisation:	www.botswana-tourism.gov.bw
Southern African Development Community:	www.sadc.int
Commonwealth Secretariat:	www.thecommonwealth.org
Commonwealth of Nations:	www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Botswana

Media

<i>Daily News:</i>	www.dailynews.gov.bw
<i>Mmegi:</i>	www.mmegi.bw
<i>Botswana Gazette:</i>	www.gazettebw.com
<i>Botswana Guardian:</i>	www.botswanaguardian.co.bw
<i>Sunday Standard:</i>	www.sundaystandard.info
<i>The Midweek Sun:</i>	www.themidweeksun.co.bw
Botswana TV:	www.btv.gov.bw

The October 1999 general election was won by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), led by Festus Mogae, taking 33 seats, with 57 per cent of the votes, while the Botswana National Front (BNF) held six seats, with 26 per cent of the votes. There was an increase in the numbers of female and younger parliamentarians.

At the elections of October 2004 the BDP won 44 of the 57 seats in the enlarged National Assembly, securing 52 per cent of the votes and Mogae was returned for a second term as President. The BNF took 12 seats and 26 per cent of the votes, and Botswana Congress Party (BCP), one seat and 17 per cent.

On Festus Mogae's retirement in April 2008, Ian Khama (the son of former President Sir Seretse Khama) became the country's fourth President. In October 2009, he led the BDP to victory in the general election, taking 45 seats and 53 per cent of the votes. The BNF took six seats (22 per cent), the BCP four (19 per cent), the Botswana Alliance Movement one (two per cent) and independents one. Khama was shortly afterwards sworn in again as President.

At the elections held on 24 October 2014, the BDP won 37 seats and 46.7 per cent of the votes, the Umbrella for Democratic Change 17 seats and 30.1 per cent and the BCP three seats and 20.4 per cent. President

Khama was sworn in for another term of office on 28 October 2014.

International relations

Botswana is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, African Union, Non-Aligned Movement, Southern African Customs Union, Southern African Development Community, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Botswana hosts the headquarters of the Southern African Development Community in Gaborone.

Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid for at least six months from the date of departure. Visas are required by some Commonwealth nationals.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left. An international driving permit is recommended.

Flying is an efficient way to travel around the country and chartered flights are available.

Bus services link the main towns and taxis are available within towns. Botswana Railway runs a daily service between Francistown, Gaborone and Lobatse.

Travel health: Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include hepatitis A, hepatitis B, malaria, rabies, schistosomiasis (bilharzia) and typhoid.

There were 2,145,000 tourist arrivals in 2010.

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