



# Ghana

## KEY FACTS

**Joined Commonwealth:** 1957

**Population:** 25,905,000 (2013)

**GDP p.c. growth:** 3.2% p.a. 1990–2013

**UN HDI 2014:** World ranking 138

**Official language:** English

**Time:** GMT

**Currency:** Cedi (¢)

## Geography

**Area:** 238,537 sq km

**Coastline:** 539 km

**Capital:** Accra

The Republic of Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, is a West African country lying on the Gulf of Guinea. It is surrounded (clockwise, from the west) by Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Togo.

Ghana has ten regions: Greater Accra, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta and Western. After Greater Accra, Ashanti is the most populated region; Upper West, the least.

**Topography:** The Black Volta, Red Volta and White Volta rivers merge into one Volta River, which has been dammed at Akosombo to form Lake Volta (approximately 8,482 sq km). There are hills to the north (averaging 500 metres), but the country is generally flat. The central forest area is broken up into ridges and valleys. There are lagoons on the coast, and many sandy beaches with coconut trees.

**Climate:** Tropical; warm and fairly dry in northern areas, hot and humid on the coastal belt. Temperatures usually range between 21°C and 32°C. Annual rainfall varies from 700 mm to 2,150 mm. In 2007, large parts of West Africa were the subject of severe flooding. Ghana was the worst hit with more than 300,000 of its people made homeless.

**Environment:** The most significant environmental issues are deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion; drought in the north; poaching and habitat destruction threatening wildlife populations; and water pollution and inadequate supplies of drinking water.

**Vegetation:** Grass occurs on much of the central plain, dense rainforest in the south and west; woodland and dry savannah to the north. Forest covers 21 per cent of the land

area, having declined at 2.0 per cent p.a. 1990–2010. Arable land comprises 21 per cent and permanent cropland 12 per cent of the total land area.

**Wildlife:** Ghana is rich in animal life and in 2003 had protected areas comprising 5.6 per cent of the total land area. The Mole National Park comprises some 736 sq km in the western part of the northern region of Damonoyo and has many species including elephants, hippos, eagles, kites and hornbills. The Digya National Park on the shores of Lake Volta has hippos, water bucks, crocodiles and manatees. There are 222 species of mammals, 16 of which are endangered, and 206 species of birds, 16 endangered (2014).

**Main towns:** Accra (capital, pop. 2.45m in 2010), Kumasi (Ashanti, 1.93m), Tamale (Northern, 466,700), Ashiaman (Greater Accra, 289,100), Takoradi (Western, 273,900), Cape Coast (Central, 182,900), Teshie (Greater Accra, 182,100), Tema (Greater Accra, 178,800), Obuasi (Ashanti, 173,100), Sekondi (Western, 156,200), Madina (Greater Accra, 140,800), Koforidua (Eastern, 111,700), Wa (Upper West, 96,500), Techiman (Brong Ahafo, 91,400), Nungua (Greater Accra, 89,100), Tema New Town (Greater Accra, 87,400), Ho (Volta, 83,700), Sunyani (Brong Ahafo, 83,600), Bawku (Upper East, 66,200) and Bolgatanga (Upper East, 63,500).

**Transport:** There are 109,520 km of roads, 13 per cent paved, and a railway network of 953 km, connecting Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi – the network was originally built to link mining centres to the ports but also provides passenger services.

Main ports are at Tema, near Accra, and Takoradi, and the main international airport is at Accra (Kotoka), 10 km to the north of the city; other airports are at Takoradi, Kumasi, Sunyani and Tamale.

## Society

### KEY FACTS 2013

**Population per sq km:** 109

**Life expectancy:** 61 years

**Net primary enrolment:** 87%

**Population:** 25,905,000 (2013); 53 per cent of people live in urban areas and 17 per cent in urban agglomerations of more than one million people; growth 2.5 per cent p.a.



1990–2013; birth rate 31 per 1,000 people (47 in 1970); life expectancy 61 years (49 in 1970).

The population is predominantly of African groups: Akan (45 per cent in 2000 census), Mole-Dagbani (15 per cent), Ewe (12 per cent), Ga-Adangbe (seven per cent), Guan (four per cent), Gurma (four per cent) and Grusi (three per cent). There are very small minorities of other races.

**Language:** The official language is English. The principal indigenous language group is Akan, of which Twi and Fanti are the most commonly used forms. Ga is spoken in the Accra region, Ewe in Volta, and the Mole-Dagbani language group in northern Ghana.

**Religion:** Christians 71 per cent in 2010 census and Muslims 18 per cent; traditional animist religions are often practised alongside both of these religions.

**Health:** Public spending on health was three per cent of GDP in 2012. Public hospital and other medical care is provided at nominal rates. As well as public hospitals and clinics, some are private and some operated by religious missions. Some 87 per cent of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 14 per cent have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2012). Infant mortality was 52 per 1,000 live births in 2013 (126 in 1960). AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis pose serious problems, and there have been cases of yellow fever, bilharzia and intestinal worms in rural areas. In 2013, 1.3 per cent of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

**Education:** Public spending on education was eight per cent of GDP in 2011. There are 11 years of compulsory education starting at the age of four. Primary school comprises six years and secondary seven, with cycles of three and four years. Some 72 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2008). The school year starts in September.

The longest established public universities are the University of Ghana (Legon, Accra, established 1948); Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Kumasi, 1952); University of Cape Coast (1962); University for Development Studies (main campus at Tamale, 1992); University of Education (Winneba, 1992); and University of Mines and Technology (Tarkwa, 2004). Other major tertiary institutions include the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (Achimota, Accra, 1961). There are also many teacher-training colleges, polytechnics and specialised tertiary institutions; and many private universities. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 0.60:1 (2012). Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 81 per cent (2010).

In 1977 Ghana hosted the Seventh Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Accra. Commonwealth Education Ministers meet every three years to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

**Media:** *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* (both state-owned), *The Ghanaian Chronicle* and *Daily Guide* are daily newspapers. *The Herald* publishes three times a week and *The Mirror* weekly.

Ghana Broadcasting Corporation is the public TV and radio provider, broadcasting in Ghanaian languages and English; many private radio stations and TV channels are also available, particularly in the urban areas.

Some 51 per cent of households have TV sets (2010). There are 11 personal computers per 1,000 people (2008).

**Communications:** Country code 233; internet domain '.gh'. Mobile phone coverage is good around main towns but patchy elsewhere. Internet connections exist in most towns and speeds are increasing.

For every 1,000 people there are ten landlines, 1,082 mobile phone subscriptions and 123 internet users (2013).

**Public holidays:** New Year's Day, Independence Day (6 March), Workers' Day (1 May), Africa Day (25 May), Republic Day (1 July), Farmers' Day (first Friday in December), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan) and Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice).

## Economy

### KEY FACTS 2013

**GNI:** US\$46.8bn

**GNI p.c.:** US\$1,760

**GDP growth:** 8.6% p.a. 2009–13

**Inflation:** 11.8% p.a. 2009–13

Ghana's formerly strong economy was badly affected by a series of military coups and failed development plans. A highly protected economy and substantial state investment created a large manufacturing sector, which by the 1980s was becoming a heavy burden on national resources. While the economy depended heavily on the export of two commodities, gold and cocoa, it would remain vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity prices and poor harvests.

The economic situation began to improve with government austerity programmes in the late 1980s, but the early 1990s presented new difficulties including a decline in the international price of cocoa. Donors pledged substantial aid from 1993, in support of IMF-

backed economic recovery and reform programmes, which aimed to diversify exports, control public expenditure and privatise a number of state-owned enterprises.

Ghana has benefited from the G8 debt-relief programme launched at the Gleneagles Summit in Scotland, UK, in July 2005.

From the mid-1990s, there followed a period of vigorous economic growth, only dipping below four per cent p.a. in 2000, when cocoa prices were weak and oil costs rising. After dipping once again to four per cent in 2009 in the global economic downturn, strong growth continued in 2010–13, generally of some eight per cent p.a. but, with the start of oil production in December 2010, it soared to 15 per cent in 2011. Then in 2014, as oil prices weakened, growth fell to an estimated 4.5 per cent. Keeping inflation under control, however, proved more challenging.

### Mining

Gold and diamonds are the main mineral exports. There are large reserves of bauxite and manganese. Ghana's aluminium smelter was closed in 2007. The government assumed ownership of the operating company, Valco, in 2010 and announced plans to rehabilitate it and establish a domestic aluminium industry.

### Oil and gas

Significant discoveries of offshore oil were announced in 2007. Oil production began in December 2010 at a rate of 55,000 barrels a day and was at 99,000 barrels a day in 2013. As new wells come on stream, production is expected to rise rapidly.

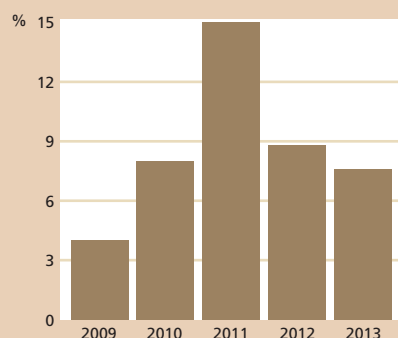
In 2015 the country was set to become a major gas exporter too, with the opening of its first LNG plant – linked by pipeline to offshore field – with the capacity to produce 4.2 million cubic metres of gas a day.

### History

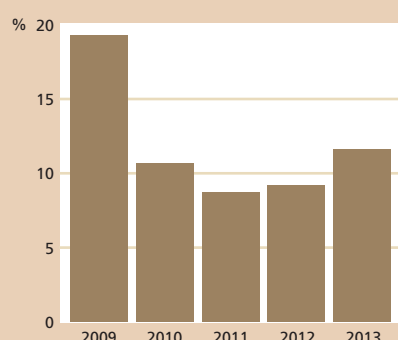
According to oral traditions, the ancestors of the Akan people, today the largest ethnic group, entered the country from the north and spread southwards between 1200 and 1600 CE. The Fanti State of Denkyira was at that period already established on the coast. By 1400 the Akan had established their Bono and Buida kingdoms in the forested central region.

Their highly developed culture was centred on the city-state, surrounded by vassal villages, and ruled by a court where the queen mother was often a more powerful figure than the king who, being sacred, was hidden from the people and consequently often politically isolated. The Akan traded gold and kola nuts for salt and cloth, in the west and north, and were also involved in the

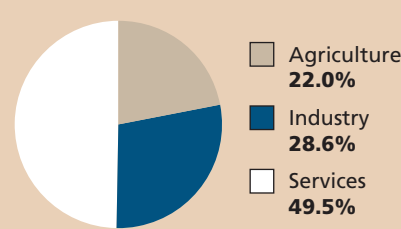
Real growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by sector (2013)



slave trade. In the 15th century, the Ashanti people waged war against the Denkyira Kingdom and by 1700 had gained control of the slave trade. They developed a powerful army and a centralised state, ruled by the Asantehene (king of the Ashanti nation).

Portuguese traders, arriving after 1450 in search of gold and ivory, named the country the Gold Coast; appropriately since, by the end of the 16th century, it produced ten per cent of the world's gold.

From the middle of the 16th century other Europeans began arriving; in the mid-18th century there were Dutch, Danish and British settlements. The British became involved in internal conflicts when they backed the Fanti against the Ashanti who were extending their power into the coastal areas. There were four wars in the 19th century.

The Bond of 1844, entered into by Britain and the Fanti chiefs, endorsed British control of small pockets of settlement; six years later Britain set up a legislative council to govern these areas. The British took over abandoned Danish settlements in 1850 and the Dutch settlements in 1871. By Orders in Council (1901) Britain declared the southern territory a colony by settlement, the northern territory a protectorate and Ashanti a colony by conquest. In 1922 a part of the adjoining German territory of Togoland was placed under British administration by a League of Nations Mandate and after World War II it became a UN Trust Territory. The principle of elections was introduced under the 1925 constitution.

During the first half of the 20th century, there was growing national pressure for self-determination, and the UK gradually surrendered control. The 1946 constitution required the legislative council to have an African majority. Following civic disturbances in 1948, the UK agreed that a committee consisting entirely of Africans should examine the structure of the country's government.

In 1949, Kwame Nkrumah set up the Convention People's Party (CPP) to campaign for independence. Elections took place in 1951, and the following year Nkrumah

became the country's first Premier. The 1954 constitution provided for a Legislative Assembly of 104 directly elected members, and an all-African Cabinet; the UK kept responsibility for foreign affairs and defence. The CPP campaigned for full independence. The general election of 1956 returned the CPP with a big majority.

Modern-day Ghana was formed when the British-administered part of Togoland voted to join the Gold Coast in an independent state, in a UN-supervised plebiscite in May 1956. Ghana achieved independence within the Commonwealth on 6 March 1957.

In 1960 Ghana became a republic, with Nkrumah as President, and in 1964 a one-party state, the CPP being the sole authorised party. However, less than a year later, Nkrumah was removed by military coup, the first of four coups.

The army and police set up a National Liberation Council, which dissolved the Legislative Assembly and suspended the constitution while a new one was drafted. Political activity was permitted again in 1969; a general election followed in August. It returned the Progress Party; its leader Dr Kofi Busia became Prime Minister, with the National Alliance of Liberals as the opposition.

In 1972, another military coup led by Colonel Ignatius Acheampong overthrew Busia's government and set up a National Redemption Council. In 1978 Acheampong was replaced by General Frederick Akuffo, who promised civilian rule by the middle of the following year.

Two weeks before the elections were to be held in June 1979, a military coup led by junior officers ousted the government. Flt-Lt Jerry J Rawlings and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council declared that they had assumed power so that an honest election could take place. Elections were held as scheduled; they returned the People's National Party, whose leader Dr Hilla Limann took office as President in September 1979.

Another coup, in 1981, put Rawlings back in power. He suspended the constitution and banned political parties. From December 1981 until November 1992 Ghana was ruled by a Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC).

In May 1991 the PNDC government set up a 260-member consultative assembly to oversee the restoration of multiparty democracy. A committee of constitutional experts was appointed to draft a new constitution for submission to this assembly. In April 1992 the draft constitution was overwhelmingly approved in a referendum; political associations were unbanned; and six opposition movements were granted legal recognition. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) was formed to contest the elections on behalf of the PNDC.

The November 1992 presidential election (witnessed by Commonwealth observers, and considered 'overall free and fair') returned Jerry Rawlings (with 58.3 per cent of the vote). The parliamentary elections of December 1992 returned the NDC with 189 of 200 seats in the new Parliament. The NDC united with the National Convention Party (NCP) and the Every Ghanaian Living Everywhere Party to form the Progressive Alliance. In January 1993 Rawlings was sworn in as President, and the Fourth Republic was inaugurated. In May 1995, the NCP left the coalition.

In the December 1996 elections, President Rawlings was re-elected with 58 per cent of the votes. Turnout was 75 per cent. His party, the NDC, won 133 seats. The opposition alliance of the New Patriotic Party and the People's Convention Party won 66 seats, just reaching the level at which they could successfully oppose constitutional changes (which need a two-thirds majority). The elections were seen as a step towards full multiparty democracy; the opposition had boycotted the 1992 parliamentary elections, but accepted defeat the second time round. Ghana thus acquired a significant legislative opposition for the first time in 15 years.

After Rawlings was chosen as 'life chairman' of the party in December 1998, the NDC suffered a serious split in its ranks with the formation by some of its founding members of the National Reform Party, which was registered in July 1999.

## Ghana on the international stage

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, was born in Kumasi in 1938. After studying international relations, he began working for UN agency the World Health Organization in 1962, rising through the ranks of the UN to become Secretary-General in 1997.

Four Ghanaians have been regional winners in the Commonwealth Writers' Prize: Ama Ata Aidoo (1992), Lawrence Darmani (1992), Lucy Safo (1994) and Benjamin Kwakye (1999 and 2006).

Abédi Pelé, born in Accra in 1964, was voted African Footballer of the Year in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

## Constitution

**Status:** Republic with executive President

**Legislature:** Parliament of Ghana

**Independence:** 6 March 1957

A new constitution, based on the US model, was approved by national referendum in April 1992. Ghana is a unitary republic with an

executive presidency and a multiparty political system. The national legislature is the unicameral Parliament, whose 275 members are elected by universal adult suffrage every four years. Parliament was enlarged from 230 to 275 members before the elections of 7–8 December 2012.

The President, who is head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, is elected by universal suffrage for a maximum of two four-year terms. If no presidential candidate receives more than 50 per cent of votes, a new election between the two leading candidates must take place within 21 days.

The President appoints a Vice-President and nominates a council of ministers, subject to approval by the Parliament. The constitution also provides for two advisory bodies to the President: a 25-member council of state, composed mainly of regional representatives and presidential nominees, and a 20-member national security council, chaired by the Vice-President.

Ten regional ministers, one for each region, are each assisted by a regional co-ordinating council. There are 138 administrative districts, each having a district assembly, headed by a district chief executive. Regional colleges, which comprise representatives selected by the district assemblies and by regional houses of chiefs, elect a number of representatives to the council of state.

## Politics

**Last elections:** 7–8 December 2012 (presidential and legislative)

**Next elections:** 2016/2017 (presidential and legislative)

**Head of state:** President John Dramani Mahama

**Head of government:** The President

**Ruling party:** National Democratic Congress

**Women MPs:** 11%

After 19 years at the helm, President Jerry Rawlings was barred by the constitution from seeking another term of office in the December 2000 presidential election. For the first time in Ghana's history there was a democratic transfer of power, after National Democratic Congress (NDC) candidate Vice-President John Atta Mills was defeated in the second round of the presidential contest by New Patriotic Party (NPP) leader, John Kufuor. The NPP also won the parliamentary elections held on the same day in December 2000 as the first round of the presidential election.

## Further information

Government of Ghana:	<a href="http://www.ghana.gov.gh">www.ghana.gov.gh</a>
Electoral Commission:	<a href="http://www.ec.gov.gh">www.ec.gov.gh</a>
Parliament of Ghana:	<a href="http://www.parliament.gh">www.parliament.gh</a>
Ghana Statistical Service:	<a href="http://www.statsghana.gov.gh">www.statsghana.gov.gh</a>
Bank of Ghana:	<a href="http://www.bog.gov.gh">www.bog.gov.gh</a>
Ghana Tourism:	<a href="http://www.touringghana.com">www.touringghana.com</a>
Commonwealth Secretariat:	<a href="http://www.thecommonwealth.org">www.thecommonwealth.org</a>
Commonwealth of Nations:	<a href="http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Ghana">www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Ghana</a>

### Media

<i>Ghanaian Times:</i>	<a href="http://newtimesgh.com">newtimesgh.com</a>
<i>The Chronicle:</i>	<a href="http://thechronicle.com.gh">thechronicle.com.gh</a>
<i>The Herald:</i>	<a href="http://theheraldghana.com">theheraldghana.com</a>
Ghana Broadcasting Corporation:	<a href="http://www.gbcghana.com">www.gbcghana.com</a>
Ghana News Agency:	<a href="http://www.ghananewsagency.org">www.ghananewsagency.org</a>

Kufuor won the December 2004 presidential election gaining an outright majority in the first round with 53.4 per cent of the votes. His main rival, Atta Mills of the NDC, received 43.7 per cent and the turnout was 83 per cent. In parliamentary elections on the same day the NPP took 128 seats, the NDC 94, People's National Convention (PNC) four and Convention People's Party (CPP) three. Kufuor promised to make reducing poverty his priority in his second term.

The parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2008 were very close. The NDC won the general election but just fell short of an overall majority; the NDC took 115 seats, NPP 108, PNC two, CPP one and independents four. In the second round of the presidential election, the NDC's Atta Mills (50.2 per cent) narrowly beat the NPP's Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo (49.8 per cent), reversing the first-round result of Akufo-Addo 49.1 per cent and Atta Mills 47.9 per cent. Commonwealth observers were present.

Following the death of President Atta Mills on 24 July 2012, Vice-President John Dramani Mahama was sworn in as President, in accordance with the law.

At the December 2012 elections, when turnout was more than 80 per cent, the NDC won 148 of 275 seats in the enlarged Parliament and the NPP 123. The NDC's candidate, the incumbent President Mahama, won a very close presidential contest in the first round with 50.7 per cent of votes cast, the NPP's Akufo-Addo securing 47.7 per cent and the other six candidates the remaining 1.6 per cent. The elections were conducted in the presence of Commonwealth observers led by former Lesotho PM Pakalitha Mosisili, who said that the election had been generally peaceful but that the level of women's

participation as candidates, and thus as representatives, was very low.

## International relations

Ghana is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, Non-Aligned Movement, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (associated state), United Nations and World Trade Organization.

## Traveller information

**Immigration and customs:** Passports must be valid for at least six months from the date of visa application. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers aged over nine months.

**Travel within the country:** Traffic drives on the right. An international driving permit is required to drive in Ghana. Seat belts are compulsory and drink-driving is illegal. Grass or leaves strewn across the road indicates an accident or hazard ahead.

There are domestic flights between Accra, Kumasi and Tamale. The rail network forms a loop of 953 km in the south of the country, connecting Accra, Takoradi and Kumasi. Taxis are available in the main towns. Tro-tros (small private buses) are abundant.

**Travel health:** Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include cholera, diphtheria, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, malaria, meningococcal meningitis, rabies, schistosomiasis (bilharzia), typhoid and yellow fever. The World Health Organization recommends vaccination against yellow fever.

There were 931,000 tourist arrivals in 2010.



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