

Gabon



Introduction Gabon

Background: Only two autocratic presidents have ruled Gabon since independence from France in 1960. The current president of Gabon, El Hadj Omar BONGO Ondimba - one of the longest-serving heads of state in the world - has dominated the country's political scene for almost four decades. President BONGO introduced a nominal multiparty system and a new constitution in the early 1990s. However, allegations of electoral fraud during local elections in 2002-03 and the presidential elections in 2005 have exposed the weaknesses of formal political structures in Gabon. Gabon's political opposition remains weak, divided, and financially dependent on the current regime. Despite political conditions, a small population, abundant natural resources, and considerable foreign support have helped make Gabon one of the more prosperous and stable African countries.

Geography Gabon

Location: Western Africa, bordering the Atlantic Ocean at the Equator, between Republic of the Congo and Equatorial Guinea

Geographic coordinates: 1 00 S, 11 45 E

Map Africa

- references:**
- Area:** *total:* 267,667 sq km
land: 257,667 sq km
water: 10,000 sq km
 - Area - comparative:** slightly smaller than Colorado
 - Land boundaries:** *total:* 2,551 km
border countries: Cameroon 298 km, Republic of the Congo 1,903 km, Equatorial Guinea 350 km
 - Coastline:** 885 km
 - Maritime claims:** *territorial sea:* 12 nm
contiguous zone: 24 nm
exclusive economic zone: 200 nm
 - Climate:** tropical; always hot, humid
 - Terrain:** narrow coastal plain; hilly interior; savanna in east and south
 - Elevation extremes:** *lowest point:* Atlantic Ocean 0 m
highest point: Mont Iboundji 1,575 m
 - Natural resources:** petroleum, natural gas, diamond, niobium, manganese, uranium, gold, timber, iron ore, hydropower
 - Land use:** *arable land:* 1.21%
permanent crops: 0.64%
other: 98.15% (2005)
 - Irrigated land:** 70 sq km (2003)
 - Natural hazards:** NA
 - Environment - current issues:** deforestation; poaching
 - Environment - international agreements:** *party to:* Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands
signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements
 - Geography - note:** a small population and oil and mineral reserves have helped Gabon become one of Africa's wealthier countries; in general, these circumstances have allowed the country to maintain and conserve its pristine rain forest and rich biodiversity

People	Gabon
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Population: 1,424,906
note: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population and growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected (July 2006 est.)

Age structure: 0-14 years: 42.1% (male 300,914/female 299,141)
 15-64 years: 53.9% (male 383,137/female 384,876)
 65 years and over: 4% (male 23,576/female 33,262) (2006 est.)

Median age: *total:* 18.6 years
male: 18.4 years
female: 18.8 years (2006 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.13% (2006 est.)

Birth rate: 36.16 births/1,000 population (2006 est.)

Death rate: 12.25 deaths/1,000 population (2006 est.)

Net migration rate: -2.65 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2006 est.)

Sex ratio: *at birth:* 1.03 male(s)/female
under 15 years: 1.01 male(s)/female
15-64 years: 1 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.71 male(s)/female
total population: 0.99 male(s)/female (2006 est.)

Infant mortality rate: *total:* 54.51 deaths/1,000 live births
male: 63.65 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 45.1 deaths/1,000 live births (2006 est.)

Life expectancy at birth: *total population:* 54.49 years
male: 53.21 years
female: 55.81 years (2006 est.)

Total fertility rate: 4.74 children born/woman (2006 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate: 8.1% (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS: 48,000 (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS - 3,000 (2003 est.)

deaths:

Major infectious diseases: *degree of risk:* very high
food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever
vectorborne disease: malaria (2005)

Nationality: *noun:* Gabonese (singular and plural)
adjective: Gabonese

Ethnic groups: Bantu tribes, including four major tribal groupings (Fang, Bapounou, Nzebi, Obamba); other Africans and Europeans, 154,000, including 10,700 French and 11,000 persons of dual nationality

Religions: Christian 55%-75%, animist, Muslim less than 1%

Languages: French (official), Fang, Myene, Nzebi, Bapounou/Eschira, Bandjabi

Literacy: *definition:* age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 63.2%
male: 73.7%
female: 53.3% (1995 est.)

Government	Gabon
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Country name: *conventional long form:* Gabonese Republic
conventional short form: Gabon
local long form: Republique gabonaise
local short form: Gabon

Government type: republic; multiparty presidential regime

Capital: *name:* Libreville
geographic coordinates: 0 23 N, 9 27 E
time difference: UTC+1 (6 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions: 9 provinces; Estuaire, Haut-Ogooue, Moyen-Ogooue, Ngounie, Nyanga, Ogooue-Ivindo, Ogooue-Lolo, Ogooue-Maritime, Woleu-Ntem

Independence: 17 August 1960 (from France)

National holiday: Founding of the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG), 12 March (1968)

Constitution: adopted 14 March 1991

Legal system: based on French civil law system and customary law; judicial review of legislative acts in Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court; has not accepted compulsory ICJ

jurisdiction

Suffrage: 21 years of age; universal

Executive branch: *chief of state:* President El Hadj Omar BONGO Ondimba (since 2 December 1967)
head of government: Prime Minister Jean Eyeghe NDONG (since 20 January 2006)
cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the prime minister in consultation with the president
elections: president elected by popular vote for a seven-year term (no term limits); election last held 27 November 2005 (next to be held in 2012); prime minister appointed by the president
election results: President El Hadj Omar BONGO Ondimba reelected; percent of vote - El Hadj Omar BONGO Ondimba 79.2%, Pierre MAMBOUNDOU 13.6%, Zacharie MYBOTO 6.6%

Legislative branch: bicameral legislature consists of the Senate (91 seats; members elected by members of municipal councils and departmental assemblies to serve six-year terms) and the National Assembly or Assemblée Nationale (120 seats; members are elected by direct, popular vote to serve five-year terms)
elections: Senate - last held 26 January and 9 February 2003 (next to be held by January 2009); National Assembly - last held 17 and 24 December 2006 (next to be held December 2011)
election results: Senate - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PDG 53, RNB 20, PGP 4, ADERE 3, RDP 1, CLR 1, independents 9; National Assembly - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PDG 82, RPG 8, UPG 8, UGDD 4, ADERE 3, CLR 2, PGP-Ndaot 2, PSD 2, independents 4, others 5

Judicial branch: Supreme Court or Cour Supreme consisting of three chambers - Judicial, Administrative, and Accounts; Constitutional Court; Courts of Appeal; Court of State Security; County Courts

Political parties and leaders: Circle of Liberal Reformers or CLR [General Jean Boniface ASSELE]; Congress for Democracy and Justice or CDJ [Jules Aristide Bourdes OGOULIGUENDE]; Democratic and Republican Alliance or ADERE [Divungui-di-Ndinge DIDJOB]; Gabonese Democratic Party or PDG [Simplice Nguedet MANZELA] (former sole party); Gabonese Party for Progress or PGP [Pierre-Louis AGONDJO-OKAWE]; Gabonese Union for Democracy and Development or UGDD [Zacherie MYBOTO]; National Rally of Woodcutters or RNB; National Rally of Woodcutters-Rally

for Gabon or RNB-RPG (Bucherons) [Fr. Paul M'BA-ABESOLE]; People's Unity Party or PUP [Louis Gaston MAYILA]; Rally for Democracy and Progress or RDP [Pierre EMBONI]; Social Democratic Party or PSD [Pierre Claver MAGANGA-MOUSSAVOU]; Union for Democracy and Social Integration or UDIS; Union of Gabonese Patriots or UPG [Pierre MAMBOUNDOU]

Political pressure groups and leaders: NA

International organization participation: ACCT, ACP, AfDB, AU, BDEAC, CEMAC, FAO, FZ, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCt, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ITU, ITUC, MIGA, NAM, OIC, OIF, OPCW, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNMIS, UNWTO, UPU, WCL, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US: *chief of mission:* Ambassador Jules Marius OGOUEBANDJA
chancery: Suite 200, 2034 20th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009
telephone: [1] (202) 797-1000
FAX: [1] (202) 332-0668
consulate(s): New York

Diplomatic representation from the US: *chief of mission:* Ambassador Barrie R. WALKLEY
embassy: Boulevard du Bord de Mer, Libreville
mailing address: Centre Ville, B. P. 4000, Libreville
telephone: [241] 76 20 03 through 76 20 04, after hours - 74 34 92
FAX: [241] 74 55 07

Flag description: three equal horizontal bands of green (top), yellow, and blue

Economy	Gabon
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Economy - overview: Gabon enjoys a per capita income four times that of most of sub-Saharan African nations. This has supported a sharp decline in extreme poverty; yet, because of high income inequality, a large proportion of the population remains poor. Gabon depended on timber and manganese until oil was discovered offshore in the early 1970s. The oil sector now accounts for 50% of GDP. Gabon continues to face fluctuating prices for its oil, timber, and manganese exports. Despite the abundance of natural wealth, poor fiscal management hobbles the economy. Devaluation of its currency by 50% in January 1994 sparked a one-time inflationary surge, to 35%; the rate dropped to 6% in 1996.

The IMF provided a one-year standby arrangement in 1994-95, a three-year Enhanced Financing Facility (EFF) at near commercial rates beginning in late 1995, and stand-by credit of \$119 million in October 2000. Those agreements mandated progress in privatization and fiscal discipline. France provided additional financial support in January 1997 after Gabon met IMF targets for mid-1996. In 1997, an IMF mission to Gabon criticized the government for overspending on off-budget items, overborrowing from the central bank, and slipping on its schedule for privatization and administrative reform. The rebound of oil prices in 1999-2000 helped growth, but drops in production hampered Gabon from fully realizing potential gains. In December 2000, Gabon signed a new agreement with the Paris Club to reschedule its official debt. A follow-up bilateral repayment agreement with the US was signed in December 2001. Gabon signed a 14-month Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF in May 2004, and received Paris Club debt rescheduling later that year. Short-term progress depends on an upbeat world economy and fiscal and other adjustments in line with IMF policies.

GDP (purchasing power parity):	\$10.21 billion (2006 est.)
GDP (official exchange rate):	\$7.052 billion (2006 est.)
GDP - real growth rate:	2.8% (2006 est.)
GDP - per capita (PPP):	\$7,200 (2006 est.)
GDP - composition by sector:	<i>agriculture: 5.9%</i> <i>industry: 59.7%</i> <i>services: 34.4% (2006 est.)</i>
Labor force:	581,000 (2006 est.)
Labor force - by occupation:	<i>agriculture: 60%</i> <i>industry: 15%</i> <i>services: 25%</i>
Unemployment rate:	21% (1997 est.)
Population below poverty line:	NA%
Household income or	<i>lowest 10%: NA%</i> <i>highest 10%: NA%</i>

**consumption
by percentage
share:**

**Inflation rate
(consumer
prices):** 2.2% (2006 est.)

**Investment
(gross fixed):** 22.4% of GDP (2006 est.)

Budget: *revenues:* \$3.1 billion
expenditures: \$2.181 billion; including capital expenditures
of \$325 million (2006 est.)

Public debt: 28.6% of GDP (2006 est.)

**Agriculture -
products:** cocoa, coffee, sugar, palm oil, rubber; cattle; okoume (a
tropical softwood); fish

Industries: petroleum extraction and refining; manganese, gold;
chemicals, ship repair, food and beverages, textiles,
lumbering and plywood, cement

**Industrial
production
growth rate:** 1.6% (2002 est.)

**Electricity -
production:** 1.543 billion kWh (2004)

**Electricity -
production by
source:** *fossil fuel:* 34.5%
hydro: 65.5%
nuclear: 0%
other: 0% (2001)

**Electricity -
consumption:** 1.435 billion kWh (2004)

**Electricity -
exports:** 0 kWh (2004)

**Electricity -
imports:** 0 kWh (2004)

**Oil -
production:** 268,900 bbl/day (2005 est.)

**Oil -
consumption:** 13,000 bbl/day (2004 est.)

Oil - exports: NA bbl/day (2001)

Oil - imports: NA bbl/day (2001)

**Oil - proved
reserves:** 1.827 billion bbl (2006 est.)

Natural gas - 100 million cu m (2004 est.)

production:

Natural gas - consumption: 100 million cu m (2004 est.)

Natural gas - exports: 0 cu m (2004 est.)

Natural gas - imports: 0 cu m (2004 est.)

Natural gas - proved reserves: 33.98 billion cu m (1 January 2005 est.)

Current account balance: \$1.807 billion (2006 est.)

Exports: \$6.677 billion f.o.b. (2006 est.)

Exports - commodities: crude oil 77%, timber, manganese, uranium (2001)

Exports - partners: US 52.6%, France 6.3%, China 6.2% (2005)

Imports: \$1.607 billion f.o.b. (2006 est.)

Imports - commodities: machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, construction materials

Imports - partners: France 40.5%, US 6.4%, Cameroon 4.2% (2005)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold: \$835 million (2006 est.)

Debt - external: \$3.971 billion (2006 est.)

Economic aid - recipient: \$331 million (1995)

Currency (code): Communauté Financière Africaine franc (XAF); note - responsible authority is the Bank of the Central African States

Currency code: XAF

Exchange rates: Communauté Financière Africaine francs (XAF) per US dollar - 522.592 (2006), 527.47 (2005), 528.29 (2004), 581.2 (2003), 696.99 (2002)

Fiscal year: calendar year

Communications	Gabon
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Telephones - main lines in use:	39,100 (2005)
Telephones - mobile cellular:	649,800 (2005)
Telephone system:	<p><i>general assessment:</i> adequate service by African standards and improving with the help of the growing mobile cell system</p> <p><i>domestic:</i> adequate system of cable, microwave radio relay, tropospheric scatter, radiotelephone communication stations, and a domestic satellite system with 12 earth stations</p> <p><i>international:</i> country code - 241; satellite earth stations - 3 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean); fiber optic submarine cable (SAT-3/WASC) provides connectivity to Europe and Asia</p>
Radio broadcast stations:	AM 6, FM 7 (and 11 repeaters), shortwave 4 (2001)
Radios:	208,000 (1997)
Television broadcast stations:	4 (plus four low-power repeaters) (2001)
Televisions:	63,000 (1997)
Internet country code:	.ga
Internet hosts:	322 (2006)
Internet Service Providers (ISPs):	1 (2001)
Internet users:	67,000 (2005)

Transportation	Gabon
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Airports:	56 (2006)
Airports - with paved runways:	<p><i>total:</i> 11</p> <p><i>over 3,047 m:</i> 1</p> <p><i>2,438 to 3,047 m:</i> 1</p> <p><i>1,524 to 2,437 m:</i> 8</p> <p><i>914 to 1,523 m:</i> 1 (2006)</p>

Airports - with unpaved runways: *total: 45*
1,524 to 2,437 m: 7
914 to 1,523 m: 15
under 914 m: 23 (2006)

Pipelines: gas 272 km; oil 1,354 km (2006)

Railways: *total: 814 km*
standard gauge: 814 km 1.435-m gauge (2005)

Roadways: *total: 9,170 km*
paved: 937 km
unpaved: 8,233 km (2004)

Waterways: 1,600 km (310 km on Ogooue River) (2005)

Merchant marine: *registered in other countries: 2 (Cambodia 1, Panama 1)*
(2006)

Ports and terminals: Gamba, Libreville, Lucinda, Owendo, Port-Gentil

Military	Gabon
Military branches:	Army, Navy, Air Force, National Gendarmerie, National Police
Military service age and obligation:	18 years of age for compulsory and voluntary military service (2001)
Manpower available for military service:	<i>males age 18-49: 278,826</i> <i>females age 18-49: 279,865 (2005 est.)</i>
Manpower fit for military service:	<i>males age 18-49: 159,198</i> <i>females age 18-49: 156,122 (2005 est.)</i>
Manpower reaching military service age annually:	<i>males age 18-49: 15,325</i> <i>females age 18-49: 15,367 (2005 est.)</i>
Military expenditures - dollar figure:	\$253.5 million (2005 est.)
Military expenditures - percent of GDP:	3.4% (2005 est.)

Transnational Issues	Gabon
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Disputes - international: UN presses Equatorial Guinea and Gabon to resolve the sovereignty dispute over Gabon-occupied Mbane Island and to establish a maritime boundary in hydrocarbon-rich Corisco Bay; only a few hundred out of the 20,000 Republic of the Congo refugees who fled militia fighting in 2000 remain in Gabon

Refugees and internally displaced persons: *refugees (country of origin):* 7,298 (Republic of Congo) (2006)