

Ghana



KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	1957
Population:	23,837,000 (2009)
GDP p.c. growth:	2.2% p.a. 1990–2009
UN HDI 2010:	world ranking 130
Official language:	English
Time:	GMT
Currency:	cedi (¢)

Geography

Area:	238,537 sq km
Coastline:	539km
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, 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.

Main towns: Accra (capital, pop. 2.37m in 2009), Kumasi (Ashanti, 1.85m), Tamale (Northern, 447,300), Takoradi (Western, 308,300), Tema (Greater Accra, 175,700), Cape Coast (Central, 175,700), Sekondi (Western, 171,000), Obuasi (Ashanti, 167,000), Koforidua (Eastern, 109,500), Wa (Upper West, 93,400), Techiman (Brong Ahafo, 87,400), Sunyani (Brong Ahafo, 81,700), Ho (Volta, 81,500), Bawku (Upper East, 64,800) and Bolgatanga (Upper East, 62,100).

Topography: The Black Volta, Red Volta and White Volta rivers merge into one river Volta, which has been dammed at Akosombo

did you know?

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, delivered the 3rd Annual Commonwealth Lecture, on 'Africa Wants to Trade its Way out of Poverty', in 2000.

Three Ghanaians have excelled in international football in recent times: Abédi Pelé was voted African Footballer of the Year in 1991, 1992 and 1993; Michael Essien came third in the poll in 2005 and 2006, and second in 2008; and Samuel Kuffour, second in 1999 and 2001.

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).

to form Lake Volta (approximately 8,482 sq km). There are hills to the north (averaging 500m), 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 700mm to 2,150mm. 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 23% of the land area, having declined at 2.0% p.a. 2000–07. Arable land comprises 18% and permanent cropland 11% of the total land area.

Wildlife: Ghana is rich in animal life and had in 2003 protected areas comprising 5.6% 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 buck, crocodiles and manatees. There are 222 species of mammals, 14 of which are endangered, and 206 species of birds, eight endangered.

Transport: There are 57,610km of roads, 15% paved, and a 953-km railway network, connecting Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi, originally built mainly 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), 10km to the north of the city; other airports are at Takoradi, Kumasi, Sunyani and Tamale.

Society

KEY FACTS 2009

Population per sq km: 100
 Life expectancy: 57 years
 Net primary enrolment: 77%

Population: 23,837,000 (2009); 51% lives in urban areas and 16% in urban agglomerations of more than 1 million people; growth 2.5% p.a. 1990–2009; birth rate 32 per 1,000 people (47 in 1970); life expectancy 57 years (49 in 1970).

The population is predominantly of African groups: Akan (45% in 2000 census), Mole–Dagbani (15%), Ewe (12%), Ga-Adangbe (7%), Guan (4%), Gurma (4%), Grusi (3%). 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 69% in 2000 census, Muslims 16%, and traditional animist religions are often practised alongside both of these religions.

Media: *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* (both state-owned), *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, *Daily Guide* and *The Accra Daily Mail* are daily newspapers. *Ghana Palaver*, *The Independent*, *The Mirror* and *Sunday Herald* are weeklies.

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

Some 26% of households have TV sets (2007). There are 11 personal computers (2008) and 54 internet users (2009) per 1,000 people.

Education: There are eight years of compulsory education starting at age six. Primary school comprises six years and secondary six, with two cycles each of three years. The school year starts in September.

There are five universities, including the most recently established University for Development Studies at Tamale. There are also many teacher-training colleges, polytechnics and specialised tertiary institutions. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 54:100 (2007). Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 79% (2008).

Health: 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. 82% of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 13% have adequate sanitation facilities (2009). Infant mortality was 47 per 1,000 live births in 2009 (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 2009, 1.8% of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

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.

There are 11 main telephone lines and 634 mobile phone subscriptions per 1,000 people (2009).

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 2009

GNI:	US\$28.4bn
GNI p.c.:	US\$1,190
GDP growth:	6.4% p.a. 2005–09
Inflation:	27.7% p.a. 2005–09

Overview: 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 to poor harvests.

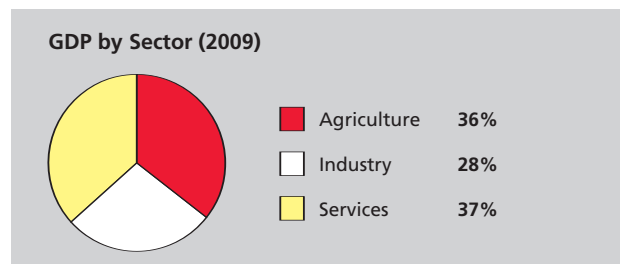
The economic situation began to improve with government austerity programmes in the late 1980s, but the early 1990s presented new difficulties including a decline in the international price of cocoa. Donors pledged substantial aid from 1993, in support of IMF-backed economic recovery and reform programmes, which aimed to diversify exports, control public expenditure and privatise a number of state-owned enterprises.

From the mid-1990s, there followed a period of sustained economic growth, only dipping below 4% p.a. in 2000, when cocoa prices were weak and oil costs rising. Vigorous growth continued, even in 2008 and 2009 in the teeth of the global economic downturn. Keeping inflation under control, however, proved more challenging.

Ghana has benefited from the G8 debt-relief programme launched at the Gleneagles Summit in Scotland, UK, in July 2005; a US\$38 million Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility; and a Millennium Challenge Corporation grant in 2006.

Trade: Exports of goods and services account for 42% of GDP (2008). Main exports are gold, diamonds, bauxite, manganese, cocoa beans, cocoa products, timber, cork and timber products.

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. The country is among the world's largest exporters of manganese.

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. As new wells come on stream during 2011, production was expected at least to double.

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 230 members are elected by universal adult suffrage every four years.

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% of votes, a new election between the two leading candidates must take place within 21 days.

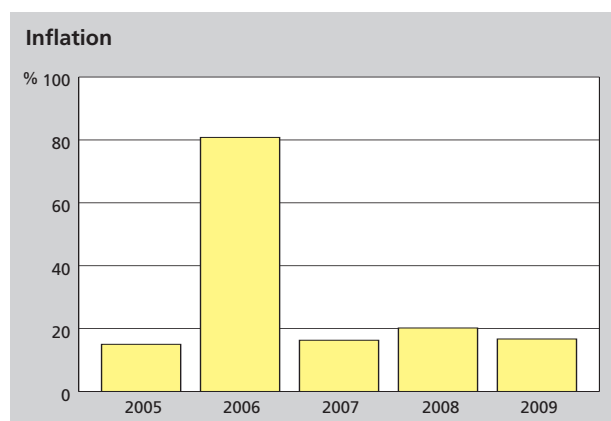
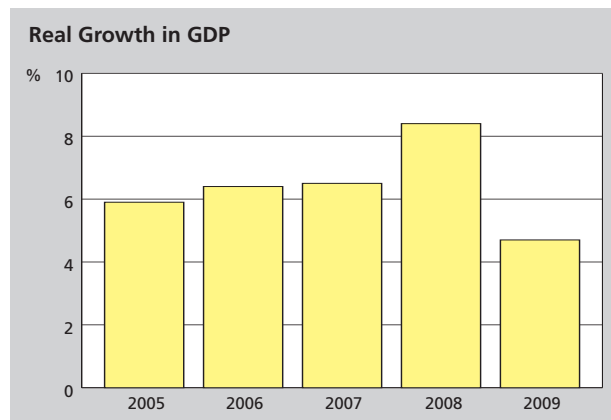
The president appoints a vice-president and nominates a council of ministers, subject to approval by the parliament. The constitution also provides for two advisory bodies to the president: a 25-member council of state, composed mainly of regional representatives and presidential nominees, and a 20-member 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: December 2008 (presidential and legislative)
Next elections: 2012/2013 (presidential and legislative)
Head of state: President John Atta Mills
Head of government: the president
Ruling party: National Democratic Congress

The process towards restoration of multiparty democracy began in May 1991. The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)



government commissioned a report by the National Commission for Democracy, endorsed its recommendations for a multiparty system, and set up a 260-member consultative assembly to direct the change. 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 from 1992, and six opposition movements were subsequently 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% of the vote). The parliamentary elections of December 1992 returned the NDC with 189 out of 200 seats. The NDC united with the National Convention Party (NCP) and the Every Ghanaian Living Everywhere



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 AD 1200 and 1600. 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 rule 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 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 Gold Coast; appropriately since, by the end of the 16th century, it produced 10% 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 the Second World War 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, in order 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).

(EGLE) 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, Rawlings was re-elected as president with 58% of the votes. Turnout was 75%. His party, the NDC, won 133 of the 200 seats. The opposition alliance of the pro-business New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the left-wing 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 (NRP), which was registered in July 1999.

After 19 years at the helm, 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 NDC candidate Vice-President John Atta Mills was defeated in the second round of the presidential contest by 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.

Kufuor won the December 2004 presidential election gaining an outright majority in the first round with 53.4% of the votes. His main rival, Atta Mills, received 43.7% and the turnout was 83%. 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 114 seats, NPP 107, PNC two, CPP one and independents four. In the second round of the presidential election, NDC's Atta Mills narrowly beat NPP's Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo (50.2%:49.8%), reversing the first-round result of Akufo-Addo 49.1% and Atta Mills 47.9%. Commonwealth observers were present.

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, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Traveller information

Local laws and conventions: Ghana has a mixture of Christian, Muslim and traditional beliefs which have a strong influence on Ghanaian daily life.

A conservative and deeply religious country, respect must be shown for traditional values. Wearing immodest clothing in public will cause offence and disrespect and the wearing of camouflage or military clothing by civilians is banned. Ghanaians prefer to be asked before they are photographed.

Drugs are a growing concern and the authorities are determined to control the problem. Penalties for drug offences are severe.

Ghanaians should always be addressed by their formal titles unless they specifically request otherwise. Handshaking is the usual form of greeting. In Ghana, as in much of West Africa, it is customary not to touch food with the left hand.

Dress is conservative and respectful. Appointments for business meetings are customary and punctuality is important. The best time to visit on business is September to April. Office hours are Mon–Fri 0800–1200 and 1300–1700.

Immigration and customs: Passports need to be valid for at least six months at the time of applying for a visa. Visitors are advised to copy the photopage of their passport and the entry stamp and to keep their passports with them at all times.

A yellow fever vaccination certificate will be required by visitors arriving from an affected country.

Lone parents must carry documentation showing that they have parental responsibility for the child in their care.

Animals, firearms, ammunition and explosives are prohibited imports.

Duty must be paid on gifts. The export of non-exempt handicrafts and antiques requires a certificate from the Museums and Monuments Board available from the main craft centre or National Museum.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the right. An international driving permit is required to drive in Ghana. Driving licences should be carried at all times. Car hire is available.

The speed limit is 80kph, seatbelts are compulsory and drink-driving is illegal. Grass or leaves strewn across the road indicates an accident or hazard ahead. The use of Tro-tros (small private buses) is common.

There are domestic flights between Accra, Kumasi and Tamale. The rail network does a 965km loop by the coast connecting Accra, Takoradi and Kumasi. There are bus and taxi services in Accra and taxis in the main towns.

Travel health: Comprehensive medical insurance is recommended for visitors. Serious medical conditions may require evacuation.

Visitors will need protection against malaria together with repellent and suitable clothing to discourage bites. Bilharzia, Hepatitis E, B and C, dengue fever, tuberculosis and meningitis are also present.

Water should be boiled or bought in sealed bottles. Powdered or tinned milk is recommended.

Money: Credit cards are accepted at many hotels and guesthouses (although Mastercard is not widely accepted). ATMs in Accra and

Kumasi will accept most cards. Travellers cheques can be changed in large hotels, banks and bureaux. Banking hours: Mon–Thur 0800–1400, Fri 0800–1500.

There were 803,000 tourist arrivals in 2009.

Further information

Ghana Government Official Portal: www.ghana.gov.gh

Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org

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