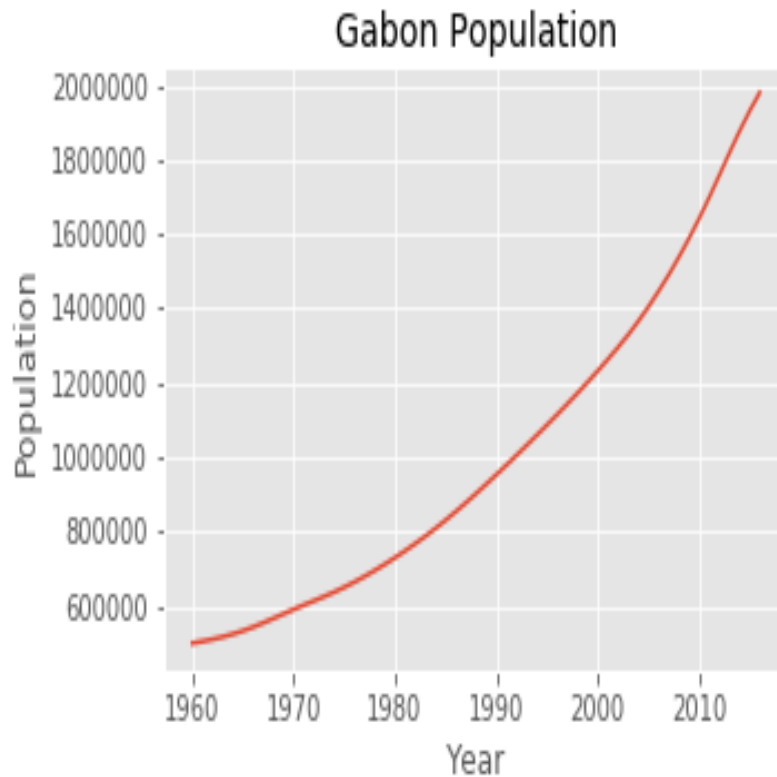


Gabon



Gabon (; French pronunciation: **[gabɔ̃]**), officially the Gabonese Republic (French: République gabonaise), is a sovereign state on the west coast of Central Africa. Located on the equator, Gabon is bordered by Equatorial Guinea to the northwest, Cameroon to the north, the Republic of the Congo on the east and south, and the Gulf of Guinea to the west. It has an area of nearly 270,000 square kilometres (100,000 sq mi) and its population is estimated at 2 million people. Its capital and largest city is Libreville. Since its independence from France in 1960, Gabon has had three presidents. In the early 1990s, Gabon introduced a multi-party system and a new democratic constitution that allowed for a more transparent electoral process and reformed many governmental institutions. Gabon was also a temporary member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2010–2011 term. Abundant petroleum and foreign private investment have helped make Gabon one of the most prosperous countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the 4th highest HDI and the fourth highest GDP per capita (PPP) (after Mauritius, Equatorial Guinea and Seychelles) in the region. GDP grew by more than 6% per year from 2010 to 2012. However, because of inequality in income distribution, a significant proportion of the population remains poor. == Etymology == Gabon's name originates from gabão, Portuguese for "cloak", which is roughly the shape of the estuary of the Komo River by Libreville. == History == The earliest inhabitants of the area were Pygmy peoples. They were largely replaced and absorbed by Bantu tribes as they migrated. In the 15th century, the first Europeans arrived. By the 18th century, a Myeni speaking kingdom known as Orungu formed in Gabon. On February 10, 1722, Bartholomew Roberts, a Welsh pirate known as Black Bart, died at sea off Cape Lopez. He raided ships off the Americas and West Africa from 1719 to 1722. French explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza led his first mission to the Gabon-Congo area in 1875. He founded the town of Franceville, and was later colonial governor. Several Bantu groups lived in the area that is now Gabon when France officially occupied it in 1885. In 1910, Gabon became one of the four territories of French Equatorial Africa, a federation that survived until 1959. In World War II, the Allies invaded Gabon in order to overthrow the pro-Vichy France colonial administration. The territories of French Equatorial Africa became independent on

August 17, 1960. The first president of Gabon, elected in 1961, was Léon M'ba, with Omar Bongo Ondimba as his vice president. After M'ba's accession to power, the press was suppressed, political demonstrations banned, freedom of expression curtailed, other political parties gradually excluded from power, and the Constitution changed along French lines to vest power in the Presidency, a post that M'ba assumed himself. However, when M'ba dissolved the National Assembly in January 1964 to institute one-party rule, an army coup sought to oust him from power and restore parliamentary democracy. French paratroopers flew in within 24 hours to restore M'ba to power. After a few days of fighting, the coup ended and the opposition was imprisoned, despite widespread protests and riots. French soldiers still remain in the Camp de Gaulle on the outskirts of Gabon's capital to this day. When M'ba died in 1967, Bongo replaced him as president. In March 1968, Bongo declared Gabon a one-party state by dissolving the BDG and establishing a new party—the Parti Democratique Gabonais (PDG). He invited all Gabonese, regardless of previous political affiliation, to participate. Bongo sought to forge a single national movement in support of the government's development policies, using the PDG as a tool to submerge the regional and tribal rivalries that had divided Gabonese politics in the past. Bongo was elected President in February 1975; in April 1975, the position of vice president was abolished and replaced by the position of prime minister, who had no right to automatic succession. Bongo was re-elected President in both December 1979 and November 1986 to 7-year terms. In early 1990 economic discontent and a desire for political liberalization provoked violent demonstrations and strikes by students and workers. In response to grievances by workers, Bongo negotiated with them on a sector-by-sector basis, making significant wage concessions. In addition, he promised to open up the PDG and to organize a national political conference in March–April 1990 to discuss Gabon's future political system. The PDG and 74 political organizations attended the conference. Participants essentially divided into two loose coalitions, the ruling PDG and its allies, and the United Front of Opposition Associations and Parties, consisting of the breakaway Morena Fundamental and the Gabonese Progress Party. The April 1990 conference approved sweeping political reforms, including creation of a national Senate, decentralization of the budgetary process, freedom of assembly and press, and cancellation of an exit visa requirement. In an attempt to guide the political system's transformation to multiparty democracy, Bongo resigned as PDG chairman and created a transitional government headed by a new Prime Minister, Casimir Oye-Mba. The Gabonese Social Democratic Grouping (RSDG), as the resulting government was called, was smaller than the previous government and included representatives from several opposition parties in its cabinet. The RSDG drafted a provisional constitution in May 1990 that provided a basic bill of rights and an independent judiciary but retained strong executive powers for the president. After further review by a constitutional committee and the National Assembly, this document came into force in March 1991. Opposition to the PDG continued after the April 1990 conference, however, and in September 1990, two coup d'état attempts were uncovered and aborted. Despite anti-government demonstrations after the untimely death of an opposition leader, the first multiparty National Assembly elections in almost 30 years took place in September–October 1990, with the PDG garnering a large majority. Following President Omar Bongo's re-election in December 1993 with 51% of the vote, opposition candidates refused to validate the election results. Serious civil disturbances led to an agreement between the government and opposition factions to work toward a political settlement. These talks led to the Paris Accords in November 1994, under which several opposition figures were included in a government of national unity. This arrangement soon broke down, however, and the 1996 and 1997 legislative and municipal elections provided the background for renewed partisan politics. The PDG won a landslide victory in the legislative election, but several major cities, including Libreville, elected opposition mayors during the 1997 local election. Facing a divided opposition, President Omar Bongo coasted to easy re-election in December 1998, with large majorities of the vote. While Bongo's major opponents rejected the outcome as fraudulent, some international observers characterized the results as representative despite many perceived irregularities, and there were none of the civil disturbances that followed the 1993 election. Peaceful though flawed legislative elections held in 2001–2002, which were boycotted by a number of smaller opposition parties and were widely criticized for their administrative weaknesses, produced a National Assembly almost completely dominated by the PDG and allied independents. In November 2005 President Omar Bongo was elected for his sixth term. He won re-election easily, but opponents claim that the balloting process was marred by irregularities. There were some instances of violence following the announcement of his win, but Gabon generally remained peaceful. National Assembly elections were held again in December 2006. Several seats contested because of voting irregularities were overturned by the Constitutional Court, but the

subsequent run-off elections in early 2007 again yielded a PDG-controlled National Assembly. On June 8, 2009, President Omar Bongo died of cardiac arrest at a Spanish hospital in Barcelona, ushering in a new era in Gabonese politics. In accordance with the amended constitution, Rose Francine Rogombé, the President of the Senate, became Interim President on June 10, 2009. The first contested elections in Gabon's history that did not include Omar Bongo as a candidate were held on August 30, 2009 with 18 candidates for president. The lead-up to the elections saw some isolated protests, but no significant disturbances. Omar Bongo's son, ruling party leader Ali Bongo Ondimba, was formally declared the winner after a 3-week review by the Constitutional Court; his inauguration took place on October 16, 2009. The court's review had been prompted by claims of fraud by the many opposition candidates, with the initial announcement of election results sparking unprecedented violent protests in Port-Gentil, the country's second-largest city and a long-time bastion of opposition to PDG rule. The citizens of Port-Gentil took to the streets, and numerous shops and residences were burned, including the French Consulate and a local prison. Officially, only four deaths occurred during the riots, but opposition and local leaders claim many more. Gendarmes and the military were deployed to Port-Gentil to support the beleaguered police, and a curfew was in effect for more than three months. A partial legislative by-election was held in June 2010. A newly created coalition of parties, the Union Nationale (UN), participated for the first time. The UN is composed largely of PDG defectors who left the party after Omar Bongo's death. Of the five hotly contested seats, the PDG won three and the UN won two; both sides claimed victory. == Government == Gabon is a republic with a presidential form of government under the 1961 constitution (revised in 1975, rewritten in 1991, and revised in 2003). The president is elected by universal suffrage for a seven-year term; a 2003 constitutional amendment removed presidential term limits and facilitated a presidency for life. The president can appoint and dismiss the prime minister, the cabinet, and judges of the independent Supreme Court. The president also has other strong powers, such as authority to dissolve the National Assembly, declare a state of siege, delay legislation, and conduct referenda. Gabon has a bicameral legislature with a National Assembly and Senate. The National Assembly has 120 deputies who are popularly elected for a 5-year term. The Senate is composed of 102 members who are elected by municipal councils and regional assemblies and serve for 6 years. The Senate was created in the 1990–1991 constitutional revision, although it was not brought into being until after the 1997 local elections. The President of the Senate is next in succession to the President. === Political culture === In 1990, the government made major changes to Gabon's political system. A transitional constitution was drafted in May 1990 as an outgrowth of the national political conference in March–April and later revised by a constitutional committee. Among its provisions were a Western-style bill of rights, creation of a National Council of Democracy to oversee the guarantee of those rights, a governmental advisory board on economic and social issues, and an independent judiciary. After approval by the National Assembly, the PDG Central Committee, and the President, the Assembly unanimously adopted the constitution in March 1991. Multiparty legislative elections were held in 1990–91, despite the fact that opposition parties had not been declared formally legal. In spite of this, the elections produced the first representative, multiparty National Assembly. In January 1991, the Assembly passed by unanimous vote a law governing the legalization of opposition parties. After President Omar Bongo was re-elected in 1993, in a disputed election where only 51% of votes were cast, social and political disturbances led to the 1994 Paris Conference and Accords. These provided a framework for the next elections. Local and legislative elections were delayed until 1996–97. In 1997, constitutional amendments put forward years earlier were adopted to create the Senate and the position of vice president, as well as to extend the president's term to seven years. In October 2009, newly elected President Ali Bongo Ondimba began efforts to streamline the government. In an effort to reduce corruption and government bloat, he eliminated 17 minister-level positions, abolished the vice presidency and reorganized the portfolios of numerous ministries, bureaus and directorates. In November 2009, President Bongo Ondimba announced a new vision for the modernization of Gabon, called "Gabon Emergent". This program contains three pillars: Green Gabon, Service Gabon, and Industrial Gabon. The goals of Gabon Emergent are to diversify the economy so that Gabon becomes less reliant on petroleum, to eliminate corruption, and to modernize the workforce. Under this program, exports of raw timber have been banned, a government-wide census was held, the work day has been changed to eliminate a long midday break, and a national oil company was created. In provisional results, the ruling Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) won 84 out of 120 parliamentary seats. On January 25, 2011, opposition leader André Mba Obame claimed the presidency, saying the country should be run by someone the people really wanted. He also selected 19 ministers for his government, and the entire group, along with hundreds of others, spent the night at

UN headquarters. On January 26, the government dissolved Mba Obame's party. AU chairman Jean Ping said that Mba Obame's action "hurts the integrity of legitimate institutions and also endangers the peace, the security and the stability of Gabon." Interior Minister Jean-François Ndongou accused Mba Obame and his supporters of treason. The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said that he recognized Ondimba as the only official Gabonese president. === Foreign relations === Since independence, Gabon has followed a nonaligned policy, advocating dialogue in international affairs and recognizing each side of divided countries. In inter-African affairs, Gabon espouses development by evolution rather than revolution and favors regulated private enterprise as the system most likely to promote rapid economic growth. Gabon played an important leadership role in the stability of Central Africa through involvement in mediation efforts in Chad, the Central African Republic, Angola, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.), and Burundi. In December 1999, through the mediation efforts of President Bongo, a peace accord was signed in the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville) between the government and most leaders of an armed rebellion. President Bongo was also involved in the continuing D.R.C. peace process, and played a role in mediating the crisis in Ivory Coast. Gabonese armed forces were also an integral part of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) mission to the Central African Republic. Gabon is a member of the United Nations (UN) and some of its specialized and related agencies, as well as of the World Bank; the IMF; the African Union (AU); the Central African Customs Union/Central African Economic and Monetary Community (UDEAC/CEMAC); EU/ACP association under the Lome Convention; the Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA); the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC); the Nonaligned Movement; and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS/CEEAC), among others. In 1995, Gabon withdrew from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), rejoining in 2016. Gabon was elected to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for January 2010 through December 2011 and held the rotating presidency in March 2010. === Military === Gabon has a small, professional military of about 5,000 personnel, divided into army, navy, air force, gendarmerie, and police. Gabonese forces are oriented to the defense of the country and have not been trained for an offensive role. A 1,800-member guard provides security for the president. === Administrative divisions === Gabon is divided into nine provinces, which are further subdivided into 50 departments. The president appoints the provincial governors, the prefects, and the subprefects. The provinces are (capitals in parentheses): Estuaire (Libreville) Haut-Ogooué (Franceville) Moyen-Ogooué (Lambaréné) Ngounié (Mouila) Nyanga (Tchibanga) Ogooué-Ivindo (Makokou) Ogooué-Lolo (Koulamoutou) Ogooué-Maritime (Port-Gentil) Woleu-Ntem (Oyem) == Geography == Gabon is located on the Atlantic coast of central Africa. Located on the equator, between latitudes 3°N and 4°S, and longitudes 8° and 15°E. Gabon generally has an equatorial climate with an extensive system of rainforests covering 85% of the country. There are three distinct regions: the coastal plains (ranging between 20 and 300 km [10 and 190 mi] from the ocean's shore), the mountains (the Cristal Mountains to the northeast of Libreville, the Chaillu Massif in the centre), and the savanna in the east. The coastal plains form a large section of the World Wildlife Fund's Atlantic Equatorial coastal forests ecoregion and contain patches of Central African mangroves especially on the Muni River estuary on the border with Equatorial Guinea. Gabon's largest river is the Ogooué which is 1,200 kilometres (750 mi) long. Gabon has three karst areas where there are hundreds of caves located in the dolomite and limestone rocks. Some of the caves include Grotte du Lastoursville, Grotte du Lebamba, Grotte du Bongolo, and Grotte du Kessipougou. Many caves have not been explored yet. A National Geographic Expedition visited the caves in the summer of 2008 to document them. Gabon is also noted for efforts to preserve the natural environment. In 2002, President Omar Bongo Ondimba designated roughly 10% of the nation's territory to be part of its national park system (with 13 parks in total), one of the largest proportions of nature parkland in the world. The National Agency for National Parks manages Gabon's national park system. Natural resources include petroleum, magnesium, iron, gold, uranium, and forests. == Economy == Gabon's economy is dominated by oil. Oil revenues comprise roughly 46% of the government's budget, 43% of the gross domestic product (GDP), and 81% of exports. Oil production is currently declining rapidly from its high point of 370,000 barrels per day in 1997. Some estimates suggest that Gabonese oil will be expended by 2025. In spite of the decreasing oil revenues, planning is only now beginning for an after-oil scenario. The Grondin Oil Field was discovered in 50 m (160 ft) water depths 40 km (25 mi) offshore, in 1971 and produces from the Batanga sandstones of Maastrichtian age forming an anticline salt structural trap which is about 2 km (1.2 mi) deep. Gabonese public expenditures from the years of significant oil revenues were not spent efficiently. Overspending on the Trans-Gabon Railway, the CFA

franc devaluation of 1994, and periods of low oil prices caused serious debt problems that still plague the country. Gabon earned a poor reputation with the Paris Club and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over the management of its debt and revenues. Successive IMF missions have criticized the government for overspending on off-budget items (in good years and bad), over-borrowing from the Central Bank, and slipping on the schedule for privatization and administrative reform. However, in September 2005 Gabon successfully concluded a 15-month Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF. Another 3-year Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF was approved in May 2007. Because of the financial crisis and social developments surrounding the death of President Omar Bongo and the elections, Gabon was unable to meet its economic goals under the Stand-By Arrangement in 2009. Negotiations with the IMF were ongoing. Gabon's oil revenues have given it a per capita GDP of \$8,600, unusually high for the region. However, a skewed income distribution and poor social indicators are evident. The richest 20% of the population earn over 90% of the income while about a third of the Gabonese population lives in poverty. The economy is highly dependent on extraction, but primary materials are abundant. Before the discovery of oil, logging was the pillar of the Gabonese economy. Today, logging and manganese mining are the next-most-important income generators. Recent explorations suggest the presence of the world's largest unexploited iron ore deposit. For many who live in rural areas without access to employment opportunity in extractive industries, remittances from family members in urban areas or subsistence activities provide income. Foreign and local observers have lamented the lack of diversity in the Gabonese economy. Various factors have so far limited the development of new industries: the market is small, about a million dependent on imports from France unable to capitalize on regional markets entrepreneurial zeal not always present among the Gabonese a fairly regular stream of oil "rent", even if it is diminishing Further investment in the agricultural or tourism sectors is complicated by poor infrastructure. The small processing and service sectors that do exist are largely dominated by a few prominent local investors. At World Bank and IMF insistence, the government embarked in the 1990s on a program of privatization of its state-owned companies and administrative reform, including reducing public sector employment and salary growth, but progress has been slow. The new government has voiced a commitment to work toward an economic transformation of the country but faces significant challenges to realize this goal.

== Society ==

=== Demographics === Gabon has a population of approximately 2 million. Historical and environmental factors caused Gabon's population to decline between 1900 and 1940. Gabon has one of the lowest population densities of any country in Africa, and the fourth highest Human Development Index in Sub-Saharan Africa.

=== Ethnic groups === Almost all Gabonese are of Bantu origin. Gabon has at least forty ethnic groups with differing languages and cultures. The Fang are generally thought to be the largest, although recent census data seem to favor the Nzebi. Others include the Myene, Kota, Shira, Puru, and Kande. There are also various Pygmy peoples: the Bongo, Kota, and Baka; the latter speak the only non-Bantu language in Gabon. More than 10,000 native French live in Gabon, including an estimated 2,000 dual nationals. Ethnic boundaries are less sharply drawn in Gabon than elsewhere in Africa. Most ethnicities are spread throughout Gabon, leading to constant contact and interaction among the groups, and there is no ethnic tension. One important reason for this is that intermarriage is extremely common and every Gabonese person is connected by blood to many different tribes. Indeed, intermarriage is often required because among many tribes, marriage within the same tribe is prohibited because it is regarded as incest. This is because those tribes comprise of the descendants of a specific ancestor, and therefore all members of the tribe are regarded as close kin to each other (identical to the clan system of Scotland or the Gotra system in India). French, the language of its former colonial ruler, is a unifying force. The Democratic Party of Gabon (PDG)'s historical dominance also has served to unite various ethnicities and local interests into a larger whole.

=== Population centres ===

=== Languages === It is estimated that 80% of Gabon's population can speak French, and that 30% of Libreville residents are native speakers of the language. Nationally, 32% of the Gabonese people speak the Fang language as a mother tongue. In October 2012, just before the 14th summit of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, the country declared an intention to add English as a second official language, reportedly in response to an investigation by France into corruption in the African country, though a government spokesman insisted it was for practical reasons only. It was later clarified that the country intended to introduce English as a first foreign language in schools, while keeping French as the general medium of instruction and the sole official language.

=== Religion === Major religions practiced in Gabon include Christianity (Roman Catholicism and Protestantism), Bwiti, Islam, and indigenous animistic religion. Many persons practice elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religious beliefs. Approximately 73 percent of

the population, including noncitizens, practice at least some elements of Christianity, including the syncretistic Bwiti; 12 percent practice Islam (of whom 80 to 90 percent are foreigners); 10 percent practice traditional indigenous religious beliefs exclusively; and 5 percent practice no religion or are atheists. A vivid description of taboos and magic is provided by Schweitzer. === Health === Most of the health services of Gabon are public, but there are some private institutions, of which the best known is the hospital established in 1913 in Lambaréné by Albert Schweitzer. Gabon's medical infrastructure is considered one of the best in West Africa. By 1985 there were 28 hospitals, 87 medical centers, and 312 infirmaries and dispensaries. As of 2004, there were an estimated 29 physicians per 100,000 people. Approximately 90% of the population had access to health care services. In 2000, 70% of the population had access to safe drinking water and 21% had adequate sanitation. A comprehensive government health program treats such diseases as leprosy, sleeping sickness, malaria, filariasis, intestinal worms, and tuberculosis. Rates for immunization of children under the age of one were 97% for tuberculosis and 65% for polio. Immunization rates for DPT and measles were 37% and 56% respectively. Gabon has a domestic supply of pharmaceuticals from a factory in Libreville. The total fertility rate has decreased from 5.8 in 1960 to 4.2 children per mother during childbearing years in 2000. Ten percent of all births were low birth weight. The maternal mortality rate was 520 per 100,000 live births as of 1998. In 2005, the infant mortality rate was 55.35 per 1,000 live births and life expectancy was 55.02 years. As of 2002, the overall mortality rate was estimated at 17.6 per 1,000 inhabitants. The HIV/AIDS prevalence is estimated to be 5.2% of the adult population (ages 15–49). As of 2009, approximately 46,000 people were living with HIV/AIDS. There were an estimated 2,400 deaths from AIDS in 2009 – down from 3,000 deaths in 2003. === Education === Gabon's education system is regulated by two ministries: the Ministry of Education, in charge of pre-kindergarten through the last high school grade, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Innovative Technologies, in charge of universities, higher education, and professional schools. Education is compulsory for children ages 6 to 16 under the Education Act. Most children in Gabon start their school lives by attending nurseries or "Crèche", then kindergarten known as "Jardins d'Enfants". At age 6, they are enrolled in primary school, "École Primaire" which is made up of six grades. The next level is "École Secondaire", which is made up of seven grades. The planned graduation age is 19 years old. Those who graduate can apply for admission at institutions of higher learning, including engineering schools or business schools. Gabon's literacy rate is 83.2%. The government has used oil revenue for school construction, paying teachers' salaries, and promoting education, including in rural areas. However, maintenance of school structures, as well as teachers' salaries, has been declining. In 2002 the gross primary enrollment rate was 132 percent, and in 2000 the net primary enrollment rate was 78 percent. Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. As of 2001, 69 percent of children who started primary school were likely to reach grade 5. Problems in the education system include poor management and planning, lack of oversight, poorly qualified teachers, and overcrowded classrooms. == Culture == A country with a primarily oral tradition up until the spread of literacy in the 21st century, Gabon is rich in folklore and mythology. "Raconteurs" are currently working to keep traditions alive such as the mvett among the Fangs and the ingwala among the Nzebis. Gabon also features internationally celebrated masks, such as the n'goltang (Fang) and the reliquary figures of the Kota. Each group has its own set of masks used for various reasons. They are mostly used in traditional ceremonies such as marriage, birth and funerals. Traditionalists mainly work with rare local woods and other precious materials. === Music === Gabonese music is lesser-known in comparison with regional giants like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon. The country boasts an array of folk styles, as well as pop stars like Patience Dabany and Annie-Flore Batchiellilys, a Gabonese singer and renowned live performer. Also known are guitarists like Georges Oyendze, La Rose Mbadou and Sylvain Avara, and the singer Oliver N'Goma. Imported rock and hip hop from the US and UK are popular in Gabon, as are rumba, makossa and soukous. Gabonese folk instruments include the obala, the ngombi, the balafon and traditional drums. === Media === Radio-Diffusion Télévision Gabonaise (RTG), which is owned and operated by the government, broadcasts in French and indigenous languages. Color television broadcasts have been introduced in major cities. In 1981, a commercial radio station, Africa No. 1, began operations. The most powerful radio station on the continent, it has participation from the French and Gabonese governments and private European media. In 2004, the government operated two radio stations and another seven were privately owned. There were also two government television stations and four privately owned. In 2003, there were an estimated 488 radios and 308 television sets for

every 1,000 people. About 11.5 of every 1,000 people were cable subscribers. Also in 2003, there were 22.4 personal computers for every 1,000 people and 26 of every 1,000 people had access to the Internet. The national press service is the Gabonese Press Agency, which publishes a daily paper, Gabon-Matin (circulation 18,000 as of 2002). L'Union in Libreville, the government-controlled daily newspaper, had an average daily circulation of 40,000 in 2002. The weekly Gabon d'Aujourd'hui is published by the Ministry of Communications. There are about nine privately owned periodicals which are either independent or affiliated with political parties. These publish in small numbers and are often delayed by financial constraints. The constitution of Gabon provides for free speech and a free press, and the government supports these rights. Several periodicals actively criticize the government and foreign publications are widely available. == Sports == The Gabon national football team has represented the nation since 1962. The Under-23 football team won the 2011 CAF U-23 Championship and qualified for the 2012 London Olympics. Gabon were joint hosts, along with Equatorial Guinea, of the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations, and the sole hosts of the competition's 2017 tournament. Arsenal striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang plays for Gabon national team. The Gabon national basketball team, nicknamed Les Panthères, finished 8th at the AfroBasket 2015, its best performance ever. Gabon has competed at most Summer Olympics since 1972. The country's sole Olympic medalist is Anthony Obame, won a silver medal in taekwondo at the 2012 Olympics, held in London. == See also == Outline of Gabon Chronology of Gabon Index of Gabon-related articles Transport in Gabon == Footnotes == == References == == Bibliography == == External links == Official website Virtual Tour of the National Parks "Gabon". The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. Gabon from UCB Libraries GovPubs. Gabon at Curlie (based on DMOZ) Gabon from the BBC News Wikimedia Atlas of Gabon Key Development Forecasts for Gabon from International Futures 2009 report (PDF) from Direction générale de la statistique et des études économiques