



# Gabon



**Background** Gabon, a sparsely populated country known for its dense rainforests and vast petroleum reserves, is one of the most prosperous and stable countries in central Africa. Approximately 40 ethnic groups are represented, the largest of which is the Fang, a group that covers the northern third of Gabon and expands north into Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. From about the early 1300s, various kingdoms emerged in present-day Gabon and the surrounding area, including the Kingdoms of Loango and Orungu. Because most early Bantu languages spoken in these kingdoms did not have a written form, much of Gabon's early history was lost over time. Portuguese traders who arrived in the mid-1400s gave the area its name of Gabon. At that time, indigenous trade networks began to engage with European traders, exchanging goods such as ivory and wood. For a century beginning in the 1760s, trade came to focus mostly on enslaved people. While many groups in Gabon participated in the slave trade, the Fang were a notable exception. As the slave trade declined in the late 1800s, France colonized the country and directed a widespread extraction of Gabonese resources. Anti-colonial rhetoric by Gabon's educated elites increased significantly in the early 1900s, but no widespread rebellion materialized. French decolonization after World War II led to the country's independence in 1960.

Within a year of independence, the government changed from a parliamentary to a presidential system, and Leon M'BA won the first presidential election in 1961. El Hadj Omar BONGO Ondimba was M'BA's vice president and assumed the presidency after M'BA's death in 1967. BONGO went on to dominate the country's political scene for four decades (1967-2009). In 1968, he declared Gabon a single-party state and created the still-dominant Parti Democratique Gabonais (PDG). In the early 1990s, he reintroduced a multiparty system under a new constitution in response to growing political opposition. He was reelected by wide margins in 1995, 1998, 2002, and 2005 against a divided opposition and amidst allegations of fraud. After BONGO's death in 2009, a new election brought his son, Ali BONGO Ondimba, to power, and he was reelected in 2016. He won a third term in the August 2023 election but was overthrown in a military coup a few days later. Gen. Brice OLIGUI Nguema led a military group called the Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions that arrested BONGO, canceled the election results, and dissolved state institutions. In September 2023, OLIGUI was sworn in as transitional president of Gabon.

**Capital** name: Libreville

**Government type** presidential republic

**Area**  
total : 267,667 sq km  
land: 257,667 sq km  
water: 10,000 sq km

**Climate** tropical; always hot, humid

**Natural resources** petroleum, natural gas, diamond, niobium, manganese, uranium, gold, timber, iron ore, hydropower

**Population** total: 2,455,105 (2024 est.)

<b>Population growth rate</b>	2.37% (2024 est.)
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	Fang 23.5%, Shira-Punu'Vii 20.6%, Nzabi-Duma 11.2%, Mbede-Teke 5.6%, Myene 4.4%, Kota-Kele 4.3%, Okande-Tsogho 1.6%, other 12.6%, foreigner 16.2% (2021 est.)
<b>Religions</b>	Protestant 46.4% (Revival Church 37%, other Protestant 9.4%), Roman Catholic 29.8%, other Christian 4%, Muslim 10.8%, traditional/animist 1.1%, other 0.9%, none 7% (2019-21 est.)
<b>Languages</b>	French (official), Fang, Myene, Nzebi, Bapounou/Eschira, Bandjabi
<b>Executive branch</b>	chief of state: President Brice OLIGUI Nguema (since 3 May 2025) head of government: President Brice OLIGUI Nguema (since 3 May 2025)
<b>Legislative branch</b>	legislature name: Transitional Parlement (Parlement de la transition)
<b>Diplomatic representation in the US</b>	chief of mission: Ambassador Noël Nelson MESSONE (12 December 2022)
<b>Diplomatic representation from the US</b>	chief of mission: Ambassador Vernelle Trim FITZPATRICK (since 26 January 2024); note - also accredited to Sao Tome and Principe
<b>Economic overview</b>	natural-resource-rich, upper-middle-income, Central African economy; significant reliance on oil and mineral exports; highly urbanized population; high levels of poverty and unemployment; uncertainty on institutional and development reform progress following 2023 military coup
<b>Real GDP (purchasing power parity)</b>	\$48.045 billion (2024 est.) \$46.472 billion (2023 est.) \$45.363 billion (2022 est.)
<b>Real GDP per capita</b>	\$18,900 (2024 est.) \$18,700 (2023 est.) \$18,700 (2022 est.)
<b>Exports</b>	\$13.622 billion (2024 est.) \$12.869 billion (2023 est.) \$13.814 billion (2022 est.)
<b>Exports - partners</b>	China 26%, Indonesia 8%, Spain 7%, Israel 6%, Congo, Republic of the 5% (2023)
<b>Exports - commodities</b>	crude petroleum, ships, manganese ore, refined petroleum, wood (2023)
<b>Imports</b>	\$6.094 billion (2024 est.) \$5.38 billion (2023 est.) \$5.005 billion (2022 est.)
<b>Imports - partners</b>	France 14%, China 13%, S. Korea 13%, USA 7%, India 4% (2023)
<b>Imports - commodities</b>	ships, refined petroleum, iron pipes, cars, packaged medicine (2023)

Population Pyramid

