

# The Gambia

## Geography

Location: Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean and Senegal

Area:

total area: 11,300 sq km

land area: 10,000 sq km

Land boundaries: total 740 km, Senegal 740 km

Coastline: 80 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 18 nm

continental shelf: not specified

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: tropical; hot, rainy season (June to November); cooler, dry season (November to May)

Terrain: flood plain of the Gambia River flanked by some low hills

Natural resources: fish

Land use:

arable land: 16%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 9%

forest and woodland: 20%

other: 55%

Irrigated land: 120 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: deforestation; desertification; water-borne diseases prevalent

natural hazards: rainfall has dropped by 30% in the last thirty years

Note: almost an enclave of Senegal; smallest country on the continent of Africa

# People

Population: 989,273 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 47% (female 231,636; male 231,053)

15-64 years: 51% (female 257,329; male 244,947)

65 years and over: 2% (female 11,850; male 12,458) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 3.08% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 45.97 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 15.19 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 120.8 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 50.55 years

male: 48.25 years

female: 52.92 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 6.23 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Gambian(s)

adjective: Gambian

Ethnic divisions: African 99% (Mandinka 42%, Fula 18%, Wolof 16%, Jola 10%, Serahuli 9%, other 4%), non-Gambian 1%

Religions: Muslim 90%, Christian 9%, indigenous beliefs 1%

Languages: English (official), Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, other indigenous vernaculars

Literacy:

total population: 27%

male: 39%

female: 16%

## Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of The Gambia

conventional short form: The Gambia

Capital: Banjul

National holiday: Independence Day, 18 February (1965)

Constitution: 24 April 1970

Legal system: based on a composite of English common law, Koranic law, and customary law; accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction, with reservations

Suffrage: 21 years of age; universal

Flag: three equal horizontal bands of red (top), blue with white edges, and green

## Economy

Overview: The Gambia has no important mineral or other natural resources and has a limited agricultural base.

Industries: peanut processing, tourism, beverages, agricultural machinery assembly, woodworking, metalworking, clothing

Agriculture: accounts for 30% of GDP; one-third of food requirements is imported; major export crop is peanuts; other principal crops - millet, sorghum, rice, corn, cassava, palm kernels; livestock - cattle, sheep, goats; forestry and fishing resources not fully exploited

Transportation

Railroads: 0 km

Highways:  
total: 3,083 km

Inland waterways: 400 km

Ports: Banjul

Airports:  
total: 1

Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Navy, National Police